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Resilience and Struggle: Exploring the Experiences of Undocumented College Students Through Chicana Feminist Theory and Dialogical Performance

Abstract

In an increasingly hostile political and social climate undocumented students in the United States continue to struggle to find space for themselves within universities. This research project undertakes a goal of illuminating how undocumented students make sense of their experiences on university campuses despite facing difficult climates at their respective universities. A goal of this project is to better understand how the experiences of undocumented students are shaped in contrast to institutional policies. Universities with inclusive excellence policies, a new iteration of multicultural diversity policies, intended to create practices that make college campuses more inclusive spaces.

The perspectives of undocumented students are examined through interviews conducted from dialogical performance and Chicana feminist perspectives. Dialogical performance from the perspective of Dwight Conquergood as a method is bridged with Chicana feminist theories of Gloria Anzaldua, theories of *Nepantla*, *New Tribalism*, *Spiritual Activism*, and the *Coyolxauhqui Imperative*, are bridged to. The bridging of these concepts heeds the calls by Chicana feminists to create a more inclusive research process and to develop anticolonial scholarship. Through these perspectives this project sheds light on the experiences of undocumented students on university campuses, specifically the challenges they face and their strategies for overcoming difficult situations.

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Resilience and Struggle: Exploring the Experiences of Undocumented College Students
through Chicana Feminist Theory and Dialogical Performance

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of Arts and Humanities
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Sergio F. Juarez
August 2017
Advisor: Bernadette M. Calafell

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION, CONTEXTUAL LANDSCAPE

Immigration is a national concern, particularly around the issue of undocumented people. Its implications continue to shape the political and social dynamics of the United States. In this dissertation, I examine the experiences of eight undocumented students attending three universities in the Rocky Mountain region. These students' families migrated to the U.S. for a variety of reasons but primarily on the premise of seeking better financial opportunities. Undocumented students are residents who are not citizens or do not hold a current permanent resident visa; still, through the executive order Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), some undocumented residents are eligible for a temporary stay and authorization to work (Garcia and Tierney 2740; Perez Huber et al. *Documented* 1). But without the ability to retain permanent residency status, many residents are forced to live in the shadows. Unable to engage government officials out of fear of detainment and deportation, undocumented residents face daunting challenges in the U.S. after already having undergone adversity in their countries of origin.

Undocumented students experience an uphill battle achieving a college degree. Dwight Conquergood states, "among most oppressed people in the United States today are the 'undocumented' immigrants the so called 'illegal aliens,' known in the vernacular as the people 'sin papeles,' the people without papers, indocumentado/as they are illegal because they are not legible" ("Performance Studies" 35). Conquergood points to

the challenges undocumented residents face, for example, lacking documentation in the U.S. makes it extremely difficult for youth to continue past high school and receive a college education. The graduation statistics for Latinx students are alarming. Per Perez-Huber et al. in their article, “DACAmented in California the Impact of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program on Latina/os,” out of every one hundred Latinx students, an average of fifty-eight students will graduate high school with a diploma, ten students will graduate with a bachelor’s degree; three students will achieve a graduate degree, and 0.2% Latinx students will graduate with a doctorate (1). These statistics are alarming for Latinx students and are even bleaker for undocumented students, showing that out of every one hundred students without documentation, thirty-four will graduate high school, three will receive an undergraduate degree, less than one will receive a master's or professional degree, and nearly zero will earn a doctorate degree (Perez-Huber et al. 2). A lack of institutional support and legitimacy through institutional practices deeply impact undocumented students. Latinx students are attending colleges and universities at much lower rates than their white and black counterparts (Perez-Huber et al. 2) . Still, as the previous data shows, undocumented students are nearly skipping a higher education altogether. This trend is happening despite the growth of the Latinx population in the U.S. Latinx folks are estimated to account for about thirty-one percent of the total U.S. population by the year 2060 (Santiago et al. 4). This has already begun to impact the population of college enrolled Latinx students, which is expected to grow to twenty-five percent of the entire U.S. student population by 2020 (Venegas and Hallet 68; Santiago et al. 4).

This dissertation seeks to better understand the experiences of undocumented students at three higher education campuses through a lens of Chicana feminist theory. One goal of this study is to interrogate how students make meaning of their experiences by bridging Chicana feminist theory with dialogical performance as method, both of which place significant value on social justice and therefore, the ethical dimensions of research. This contributes to ongoing conversations in research regarding undocumented students. I begin with my narrative of an impactful experience during a university campus visit, traveling through border patrol checkpoints. I then outline the national, state, and institutional context of educational access for undocumented Latinx students, providing some background of the political and social situations undocumented students face in our society. Additionally, I address the significance of the study, and provide the research questions and summary of the study's intentions.

Chapter Two outlines the theoretical frameworks employed in this study: Chicana Feminist Theory and Dialogical Performance. This chapter includes a review of literature, specifically focusing on the context of undocumented students in education. I also offer a brief review of research within Communication Studies that focuses on undocumented students. In Chapter Three, my methodological approach is explained, as I present a discussion of dialogical performance: a reflexive methodology. I also restate the research questions that drive this study. Chapter Three includes the development of the study's research design and methodology, including an explanation of my choice to use Chicana feminist theory in conjunction with dialogical performance as methodology, ultimately examining power dynamics embedded within interviews. Ethics of the research process influenced by Chicana feminist theories inform my methodological

choices, including a committed attentiveness to pedagogical practices, anticolonial methodologies, and theories that impact researcher subjectivity, positionality, and reflexivity.

In Chapter Four, I briefly introduce each of the interviewees and provide analysis of their experiences as undocumented students at their respective campuses. In addition, I include a section on policy development for each of the students' schools followed by a summary of the findings. In Chapter Five, I connect the students' experiences to Chicana feminist theory. Finally, in Chapter Six, I synthesize the study, consider its implications for communication studies, offer recommendations for future research, and end with my concluding thoughts.

INSIDER RESEARCH IN THE UNDOCUMENTED CONTEXT

Sin papeles, “without papers,”
a meaning I have known since I can remember.
At six I understood
these words, what they meant for our family.
Through the process of my mother’s “immigracion”
Gaining a perspective most six year olds in the United States
do not experience.
Traveling to Los Angeles to attend immigration appointments
for my mother. I went
so that I could help her with translation
because I could speak English.

From then I can remember seeing Border Patrol (BP) and
INS lettering on jackets.
But I never feared those letters
What they meant for my family
What they mean today.

It is the summer of 2010
my parents and I were on the road to visit New Mexico State
University.
We thought we would enjoy the trip
driving through the southwest,

we had driven to Phoenix several times and
thought this would be no different from those trips
and it was that way until we reached Lordsburg, New Mexico.

We saw a large brightly lit area,
where BP vehicles and patrol men stood about,
in the opposite westbound lane of the I-10 highway,
I wondered what it was and I asked what is that?
No one in the car responded and we kept driving.
We did not think it was a big deal
until we drove up to Deming
and we realized they were checkpoints.
We kept driving because
it would not do us any good to suddenly stop.
We arrived late
on a Thursday evening
to our hotel down the street from the university.
I had an appointment
the following day to meet the chair of the department
and have a tour of the school.
I remember there was no mention of the checkpoints,
even as we visited the school and
saw a very familiar white SUV with the green BP decals on it, not
a word,

we enjoyed the day up until sundown.
We were going to have dinner and as we were walking into a
restaurant I
asked, *que vamos hacer?*, what are we gonna do?.
My mom finally said *no se, que podemos hacer.*
My step-dad was quiet and
I said well let me take a look at google maps.
I researched quickly and
found out there was checkpoints on each major
highway and the side roads had border patrol cars
that could stop you for any reason.
We became very nervous
because my step-father did not have his papeles.
How were we going to get home?
What would happen if my dad was detained and deported?
What would happen to our family.
Questions flooded my mind,
how could I do this? Why didn't I know.
What am I going to do to fix this?

After dinner we went back to the hotel room
and gathered our thoughts.
I continued researching and
discovered that BP has jurisdiction
only within a threshold of one hundred miles from the border.
I realized that our best route was to go north on Interstate 25,
this way we avoid multiple checkpoints
that we would face going east on interstate 10 and
we could drive out of BP's jurisdiction.
We had an idea but all night we could not sleep,

Tossing and turning in my bed
filled with thoughts, praying
things would workout for us.
At daybreak, five am, it's morning and
sat up and asked my parents if they were awake.
They were and I told them my plan,
We're going to drive north,
I'm going to place NMSU stuff all around my car,
make sure the parking pass is visible and
I'll wear an NMSU shirt I was given.
I will be asked if I'm a U.S. citizen,
and just make sure you do not say a word and
I will drive us north to Albuquerque and then back home west.

We get ready, load up the car, and head north on I-25.
In about 15 to 20 minutes we will reach the checkpoint.
When we reach it there is a line of cars and
we are about twenty car lengths away.
Some relief, traffic means less likely to be inspected.
We are getting closer and we are growing more and more anxious.
I know that if I am not waived through and
If am asked instead to move toward the secondary check point it is
all over
for us.
There will be no way to leave that place with my father.
We finally reach the guard and he asks if I am a U.S. citizen and
I say yes,
which is then followed by a question about the reason for my visit.
I state to visit the university.
He looks away and looks back and waves us through.
I can't celebrate, we can't celebrate, not just yet.
We have to get out of sight and
disappear
before we can celebrate.

We exit on the very next off ramp and
celebrate with a McDonalds breakfast.
We drive away north beyond the sphere of border patrol
back home but that moment left a deep imprint on me.

From a young age, I had questions about U.S. politics and immigration. But, in the moment described above, I felt anger. I questioned why we had to hide, why we had to lie to survive, and why we were unwelcome. After that trip, I had no intention of attending the university because doing so meant my father could not attend my graduation. A month or so passed and I received a letter from the university that I had been accepted. I reasoned myself into going after all. I told myself that by attending the New Mexico State University (NMSU), I could understand what made these spaces unsafe for our family. I was comfortable in California but I could learn and grow by living in a southwestern state where Border Patrol had a strong presence. I could do my own pseudo-anthropological study of the cultural practices of monitoring and policing people, which would allow me to better understand how this exercise of power is communicated through language and performances.

Spending time at a university and city surrounded by Border Patrol proved to be valuable to my scholarship. Experiencing the borderlands of southern New Mexico and western Texas gave me an insight to the mechanisms of immigration as well as how people live along the border. I learned the stories of places like El Paso and Juarez, which were once understood as cities broken apart by fearful outsiders who did not know (much less understand) the border. This experience came at a price that I did not consider until a few weeks before graduation for my master's degree. Again, my privilege was made painfully aware to me and even though I was in the privileged position it was my family

who apologized to me for not being able to attend my graduation. I was sunk. Again, I “forgot.” I was careless, but still *they* apologized to me for something they had little to no control over. These experiences with my family underlie my commitment to investigating the context of immigration.

BRIEF CONTEXT OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS IN U.S.

The estimated population of United States residents who lack documentation is between ten and twenty million, but it is important to note that this specific population is part of the larger Latinx population, as well as other communities (Kim and Diaz 77-79). These populations are concentrated in the southwest with most students coming from California and Texas: the primary states of residence for migrants without documentation, with an estimated twenty-four and sixteen percent of residents (Kim and Diaz 79). In the U.S., there are approximately 2.5 million residents without documentation under the age of twenty-four (Kim and Diaz 77). Of this population, 1.2 million residents without documentation are under the age of eighteen and another 1.3 million residents without documentation are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four (Kim and Diaz 77). Every year, approximately sixty-five thousand students without documentation graduate high school and of these, only five to ten percent enroll in college (Aldana et al. 7; Ortiz and Hinojosa 54; Kim and Chambers 56).

Barriers to the Academy. Several universities and colleges in the Rocky Mountain region, including those within states offering in-state tuition to undocumented students, lack a clear school policy, and still many more nationally lack appropriate support for undocumented students. This lack of institutional support further contributes to the

hostile environment undocumented students face while trying to achieve a college degree (S. Muñoz 41). For example, at the Private University of the Rockies, undocumented students are asked to matriculate as international students; it is the school's unofficial policy. Support for undocumented students is not institutionalized but institutional agents sympathetic to the struggle create unspoken practices, such as "underground" admission policies to admit students (S. Muñoz 41). Admitting students who lack documentation as international students is harmful to undocumented students because it pushes them further to the margins (S. Muñoz 41).

Undocumented students begin their journey on a campus as "foreigners" though they may have spent much of their lives living within a few miles of these schools. The lack of support from admission services point to a trend of institutional neglect for meeting the needs of this specific population of students (Perez-Huber and Malagnon 855). Though there have been initiatives at the federal level, from the executive branch of the government and state by state tuition initiatives, undocumented students still face what scholars have labeled as institutional neglect and invisibility (Perez-Huber and Malagnon 855). Some institutions are unwilling to acknowledge the presence of undocumented students on campus and their pursuit of a degree (Perez-Huber and Malagnon 856; Perez-Huber et al. "Struggling for Opportunity" 7). In turn, this causes undocumented students to feel unwelcome and marginalized (Perez-Huber and Malagnon 856; Perez-Huber et al. "Struggling for Opportunity" 7).

Five states (Alabama, Arizona, Indiana, Georgia, and South Carolina) strictly prohibit students without documentation from attending any public institution. As mentioned previously, college costs are much higher for undocumented students because

they must pay the international tuition rate to attend, if they are allowed to attend at all. As Perez-Huber et al. highlight in their article, both the completion of high school and affordability are large deterrents for undocumented students who might want to attend college. In addition to not being able to receive financial aid, the struggle to pursue college is compounded for undocumented residents who also have a difficult time finding employment because of federal policy that restricts undocumented residents from being legally employed. Thus, college costs are prohibitive throughout much of the nation.

In addition to prohibitive costs, as well as federal and state policies that make higher education inaccessible for undocumented students, there are institutional practices that keep students from finding much needed support in navigating their respective campuses. The lack of culturally relevant services on a campus negatively impacts undocumented students' ability to not only receive support, but to also gain necessary skills to continue improving as college students. For example, Ortiz and Hinojosa illuminate a gap in the practices of providing career counseling to undocumented students, career counselors lack of consideration of undocumented students, and undocumented students' lack of freedom to explore all career options (55). Career development concepts that assume students have the freedom to choose and achieve any career goal fail to consider the limitations imposed on undocumented students who do not have access to many careers (Ortiz and Hinojosa 55). The career and professional development for undocumented students is stunted. For example, undocumented students in Colorado and California are not allowed to sit on the State Bar of Attorneys (Aldana et al. 18). Undocumented students in states like Arizona and Georgia are not given the opportunity to sit on medical boards or their State Bar of law. Thus, providing students

guidance for choosing a career path is a challenging task because in some fields they are not allowed to practice. Furthermore, the process of finding a job is fraught with stress (Ortiz and Hinojosa 58). Students feel the effects of the stress from the process of finding a job, but they also experience stress due to career indecision, which leads to career barriers. Students who lack documentation feel shameful and burdened when having to fabricate stories to justify why they are not working in their field, and they also experience fear when having to speak with someone they do not trust (Ortiz and Hinojosa 60).

Further exacerbating the situation for students without documentation is the presence of Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) on university and college campuses along the borders. CBP recruits on college campuses but also conducts security patrols within their one-hundred-mile jurisdiction. Experiencing CBP on college campuses is likely a source of stress for undocumented students, yet this fear is not only reserved for students attending campuses along the southwest, but a reality students face across the nation (Fricke “Undocumented Students”; Kabbany “College Students”). Over time, the criminalization of undocumented status has subjected the Latinx community to excessive policing by both border patrol and local police (Gleeson and Gonzalez 3). Undocumented residents fear the police, including campus police. They fear that being stopped by any police officer may lead to deportation. For an undocumented resident, what may be a minor traffic violation can lead to being detained and deported. Not being able to show a driver’s license can lead officers to question someone’s legal residency status, and that may lead to federal agencies being notified. Then, individuals are detained and deported from the country (Banks 1426; King and Puntí 204). This adds to the already strained

relationship with authorities and prevents students from reporting crimes even when they themselves have been assaulted (Moreman and Persona Non-Grata 314). Institutions must recognize this reality for undocumented students, and address specific policies for interactions between their campus police and federal agents. Students' lives are filled with fears of being apprehended by federal agents who may be collaborating with local police or have a presence within the university, as is the case with universities along the north and south border. Despite a strong presence on campus by university policy or by BP, undocumented students find a way to attend classes.

University institutions must also recognize that not only do students face traumatic experiences on their campuses, but also have likely faced traumatic experiences within their country of origin and during their migration to the U.S. (like many who have crossed the southern border through southwest deserts). Recognizing the traumatic experiences undocumented students face by psychological counseling staff will benefit the students' access to mental health services on a campus. While many have come to the U.S. seeking a K-12 education as authorized by the ruling of *Plyler v Doe* in 1982, post-secondary education and other services average citizens take for granted are unavailable (King and Puntti 235).

The climate encountered in higher education most closely resembles the sentiment of past presidential candidate Mitt Romney. He stated, "The answer is self-deportation, which is people deciding they can do better by going home because they can't find work here because they don't have legal documentation to allow them to work here..." (Boroff and Planas "Mitt Romney"). The suggestion of creating a suffocating climate that forces people to leave is one that reflects negative attitudes toward undocumented residents.

These attitudes underlie the policies in states like Arizona and Georgia that purposely make the experiences of undocumented residents so miserable they want to leave the country, barring residents from participating in higher education. Although this attitude is much more evident in select states, Lisa Flores describes the climate encountered by undocumented students within higher education institutions as “chilly” for ethnic minorities (646). It is an atmosphere where students have a difficult time finding people like themselves to identify with in academic spaces, which means not having professors, mentors, counselors, nor leadership who can relate to them, as well as textbooks that do not reflect their lived experiences (Bañuelos 99; Moreira and Divirsi 231).

The difficulties undocumented students face in these biased spaces can be traumatic, and the support system of schools, like counselors, may not possess the knowledge or ability to serve undocumented students, even though having knowledgeable academic, admission, career, and financial aid counselors has been extremely beneficial to undocumented students (Aldana et al. 73; Gilbert 51; Gin 20; Ortiz and Hinojosa 63; Oseguera 41; Storlie and Jach 100; Tierney and Garcia 2761; Tierney and Venegas 366). Undocumented students may feel neglected when they ask for support from schools as their administrators and services often fall short. For example, administrators may lack the understanding that, at times, undocumented students are expected to be primary sources of financial support to their families and feel pressured to leave school to work. Undocumented students must face professors, other students, administrators, and security with caution; this anxiety is augmented by the pressure students face from their families.

In an essay by Shane Moreman and Persona Non-Grata, an undocumented graduate student writes, “I’m quitting graduate school. I want to try and be happy, and I think I won’t be able to create it in academia” (316). Persona Non-Grata felt that she did not have the ability to find happiness in the academy – a space of learning that is assumed to be safe where young people can grow. Yet she illuminates the reality experienced by undocumented students. For example, academic and career counselors should know that students without documentation are unable to acquire certain internships or jobs because of their immigration status in places such as public schools, government agencies, and positions related to defense contractors (Ortiz and Hinojosa 57). Undocumented students must navigate an often-unwelcome space, which may be indifferent, hostile, and sometimes a threat to their wellbeing (S. Muñoz 41). Outside of encountering faculty, staff, and/or leadership that is unaware of what it means to be undocumented, the students are also confronted with overt discrimination from their own peers with comments like, “why don’t you go back to your country?” and, in some cases, being called “illegal or “wetback” (Torres and Wicks-Asbun 199). They face a constant barrage of anti-immigrant sentiments that can materialize in the classroom and also occur within their communities, on television, and through social media (Torres and Wicks-Asbun 201). Such aggressions are disheartening and can lead to low self-esteem (Torres and Wicks-Asbun 201). Students become aware that they are being constructed as “illegal” and “criminals,” while wanting to be perceived as good, moral, law-abiding members of society (King and Puntí 246).

For undocumented students, schools, especially classroom spaces, are often sites of environmental and emotional violence (Bañuelos 164; S. Muñoz 96). Environmental

and emotional violence occurs when university officials (who students may expect to be a source of support) like professors, staff, and academic, psychological, and health counselors are often ill-equipped with the skills and knowledge to address these forms of trauma and thus, become sources of violence. A beginning step for college campuses to provide better services for undocumented students is being aware and acknowledging that students without documentation are limited in several aspects of academic career development (Ortiz and Hinojosa 57).

State Initiatives to Increase Access. The Higher Education Act of 1965 was the first federal legislation to affect undocumented students. The law allows documented residents the ability to receive federally funded financial aid, while excluding undocumented students from the opportunity to do so (Drachman 91; Kim and Diaz 80). This law has been significant given that nearly forty percent of all students live under the federal poverty line (Kim and Diaz 80). Decades later in 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), which impacted undocumented students' admission to college. This law does not prohibit states from admitting students without documentation but does state:

...an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible on the basis of residence within a state...for any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such a benefit (in no less amount, duration, and scope) without regard to whether the citizen or national is such a resident. (Kim and Diaz 81)

Undocumented students in K-12 education must be afforded the same benefits as students with documentation, but there is no such law that protects them from states that seek to restrict undocumented residents from being admitted or offered in-state tuition.

Additionally, in the same year, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) denied public benefits to immigrants and residents who are not legal permanent residents:

...an alien...is not eligible for any State or local public benefit...The term state or local benefits means...any retirement, welfare, health, disability, public or assisted housing, education aid, or food assistance, unemployment benefits, or any other similar benefit for which payments or assistance are provided to an individual, household, or family...by an agency or state or local government. (Kim and Diaz 81)

Interpretation of the law was placed in the hands of the nation's states. Alabama and South Carolina have interpreted PRWORA as permission to prohibit students without documentation from enrolling in postsecondary institutions and/or receiving state-funded financial aid (Kim and Diaz 82). In North Carolina, students may only attend community college because the North Carolina State Community College Board voted to allow undocumented students to attend and receive in-state tuition (Banks 1427; Nguyen and Serna 126). Angela Banks examined the states of Georgia and Massachusetts, which have both denied access to higher education to undocumented students, and found two prominent arguments for denying in-state tuition to undocumented students. Banks identified a limited resource argument framing resources as not only limited, but also perpetuating the myth that undocumented students are non-tax payers and therefore "not ours" (1425). This proved to be successful for both states. The second argument against in-state tuition for undocumented students insisted that allowing undocumented students to receive in-state tuition would be considered a reward for unlawful behavior (Banks 1425). Arizona has also denied undocumented students in-state tuition, enacting a forceful law restricting access to college campuses (Dougherty et al. 127).

In all but twelve states, undocumented students are charged out of state tuition regardless of their length of residency within that state (Kim and Diaz 82). Thirty states do not address undocumented students at all (Kim and Chambers 56). Some states have taken an initiative to provide in-state tuition rates to undocumented students who meet certain criteria that varies from state to state, and at times, from institution to institution. States that do not specifically address undocumented students and have policies regarding in-state tuition tend to require them to pay out-of-state or international fees. These fees for undocumented students are an average of three to six times higher than for students who pay in-state tuition (Rincon 29).

There have been several states that have increased access to undocumented students. Texas, California, and Colorado, to name a few, have allowed undocumented students to receive in-state tuition (Banks 1429; Dougherty et al. 126; Oseguera et al. 39). As of June 2014, there were eighteen states that offer in-state tuition to students without documentation (Banks 1429; Nguyen and Serna 125; “State Action” n.p.). Sixteen states offer these provisions through state legislation, and two states, Oklahoma and Rhode Island, allow in-state tuition rates for undocumented students (Banks 1427; Nguyen and Serna 126; “State Action” n.p.).

In the Rocky Mountain region, students may receive in-state tuition through a bill passed by the state assembly if they meet the criteria of having attended high school for three years right before graduation and having been admitted to a participating college within twelve months of graduating high-school. Additionally, they sign an affidavit, and if not legally present in the U.S., they must state that they are currently seeking or will seek legal status as soon as they are eligible (“What Is”). In the Rocky Mountain region

states have opened access to universities. In one state, in-state tuition was pioneered by a mid-size state university, offering in-state tuition prices to students before there was state legislation passed a bill offering in-state tuition from all public universities to residents regardless of citizenship status.

State laws that offer in-state tuition are open and available to all students that establish proof of residency within the state regardless of citizenship status. While this has been extremely beneficial, it is difficult to distinguish between documented and undocumented students. In addition, private schools in the region have not developed a mechanism to enroll undocumented students; thus, many students are enrolled as international students. Because of the difficulty distinguishing between documented and undocumented students at both public and private schools it is difficult to ascertain the number of undocumented students enrolled in universities across the Rocky Mountain region. Still, there are indicators that there are significant populations of undocumented students attending universities in this region. In the state of Colorado there are approximately 180,000 undocumented residents total in the state and approximately 19,500 school age children (Stiffler 4). Of that population, approximately 375 undocumented high school students graduate and are eligible for the state benefits (Stiffler 4).

States offering in-state tuition initiatives have proven to be successful, having increased the enrollment of Latinx students from fourteen to forty-one percent, and these same policies reduced the number of Latinx high school dropouts (Kim and Diaz 84). In the states of California, New York, Texas, and Utah such policies resulted in a thirty-one percent increase in college enrollment rates from students without documentation (Kim

and Diaz 85). Still, students face barriers because not all states offer in-state tuition. In North Carolina, where neither federal nor state policy has addressed undocumented students' enrollment, the community colleges' enrollment dropped sharply between 2004 and 2006, in part due to a lack of direction from legislative leadership (Oseguera et al. 40). In fact, a handful have excluded undocumented students altogether.

Federal Level Initiative. In response to a lack of legislative policy addressing comprehensive immigration reform, on June 15, 2012 President Obama announced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy for undocumented residents ("Deferred Action"). DACA is a policy that allows some undocumented youth to apply for a deferral of their detainment and/or deportation. It is a way to avoid being removed or deported from the United States, especially if already in deportation proceedings/immigration court ("Deferred Action" n.p.). Undocumented residents who apply must meet specific requirements: 1) They must be least fifteen years old at the time of filing their request; 2) Were under the age of thirty-one as of June 15, 2012; 3) Came to the United States before their sixteenth birthday; 4) Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time; 5) Were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making his or her request for DACA; 6) Entered without inspection before June 15, 2012, or his or her lawful immigration status expired as of June 15, 2012 (i.e. person was undocumented as of June 15, 2012); 7) Is currently in school, has graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, has obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, or is an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States; and 8) Has not been convicted (as an adult) of a felony, significant misdemeanor,

or three or more other misdemeanors, and does not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety (“Deferred Action” n.p.).

If the undocumented youth meet the criteria, then qualified DACA applicants are eligible to apply for a work authorization and, in some cases, driver’s licenses (depending on the state), with the possibility of renewal after a two-year period (“Deferred Action,” n.p.). However, many students who receive DACA continue to be ineligible for financial aid in several states, as well as lack access to driver’s licenses or affordable healthcare (Perez-Huber et al. “DACAmended” 5). Potentially hundreds of thousands of residents are eligible for DACA but have not yet applied. Though many have received benefits for applying for DACA, there is a fear of being identified as undocumented in a government database. Eligible residents are skeptical because of how difficult it is to obtain citizenship, believing that being identified may work against them in the future.

The lives of undocumented students are complex and the barriers they face are not isolated to academic spaces because for them, the political is personal. Their lives are impacted by federal and state policies that specifically discriminate against them and exclude them from receiving most public benefits. The academy is a hostile and exclusive environment for the Latinx community (Bañuelos 99). The social, political, and historical climate of immigration is a source of uncertainty faced by undocumented students. These uncertainties affect not only the undocumented residents themselves, but also the people surrounding them, like friends, family, and colleagues.

A CHICANA FEMNIST METHODOLOGY

Undocumented students are part of the growing Latinx community and can be found at colleges and universities across the United States. They are a vulnerable

population who tend to keep a low profile and not engage university leadership (Gilbert 52). Diversity initiatives throughout academia have attempted to address issues surrounding inclusiveness and equity on college campuses, yet at times policy has fallen short of creating safer spaces for undocumented students. The development of diversity initiatives as a guiding strategy for institutional change would benefit by being in conversation with performance studies' theories and methods, and Chicana feminist theories. Chicana feminist theories are extremely useful because they shed insight on the difficult problems undocumented students face in higher education. Chicana feminist theories offer transformative educational practices and a "critical language and praxis, that aims to alleviate social, political, and economic discrimination, and equality" (Elenes 132). Chicana feminist theory strives to illuminate social inequity and can inform the effective development of practices to help undocumented students.

Chicana feminist theories of *Coyolxauhqui*, *nepantla*, spiritual activism, new tribalism, and pedagogies of home are theories that provide space for Chicanas to make meaning of their experiences, resist oppression, and more importantly, allow Chicanas to articulate their own experiences (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 45). Chicana feminists have documented their resistance to patriarchal and colonial structures—from this research, we can gain insight to the performance of identity in response to power structures (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 45). Bañuelos states that Chicanas have theorized about academic spaces and interrogated how spaces have excluded their participation (99). My aim is to contribute to understanding how undocumented students make meaning of their lives in response to engaging academic institutions.

Teresa Cordova identifies four tenets of Chicana feminist theorizing, and these four tenets guide my methodological development. Guided by Chicana theory, we can make sense of the relationship between undocumented students and the policies of academic institutions that make commitments to create space for undocumented students. The four tenets described by Cordova begin with understanding that Chicana theories are theorized from the perspective of Chicanas themselves. They are theories steeped in the epistemological and ontological perspective of Chicanas. They also are conceptualized from a history of Chicanas, which is a history rooted in a legacy of struggle (Cordova 381). Second, it is a struggle to fight for space within Chicano scholarship, but also feminist scholarship. It is an intersectional struggle of fighting patriarchal, racial, and class dominant structures. Third, Chicana feminist theories are rooted in the experiences of contemporary Chicanas and must be understood through an intersectional lens (Cordova 381). Lastly, Chicanas address agency and are not inherently passive, nor are they stereotypical representations (Cordova 381). Chicanas advocate for anticolonial scholarship that imagines new realities.

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIALOGICAL PERFORMANCE

Building on Cordova's four tenets of Chicana feminist theory as a framework, Chicana feminist theory has provided Chicanas a way to build a coalition among scholars with similar identities. It has allowed Chicanas to be in conversation with one another, but also in conversation with other scholars from subjugated communities. It has been emancipatory for Chicanas permitting them to develop theory and knowledge from an ontological and epistemological perspective that honors and affirms the lived experiences of subjugated communities. Chicana feminist theory has been an anti-colonial endeavor,

actively seeking to resist racist narratives and practices that have traditionally silenced the voices of Chicanas and disciplined their bodies. Lastly, Chicana feminist theory encourages researchers to be activist-oriented and agents of change to societal inequality, allowing scholars from subjugated communities to resist racist narratives and practices that have been detrimental to the inclusions of Chicana understandings within the academy.

Dialogical performance is a Chicana feminist methodology because of its central focus to be in dialogue with participants. It also allows for the development of emancipatory scholarship that honors and affirms the lived experiences of subjugated communities. It is anti-colonial in that, if utilized correctly, it can resist racist narratives and practices. Lastly, it is social justice-oriented, requiring scholars to be reflexive of how we operate in the field (Conquergood).

By bridging Chicana feminist theory with dialogical performance as a method, I hope to mirror Bernadette Calafell's methodological approach in her research study, "Disrupting the Dichotomy: 'Yo soy Chicana/o?' in the New Latina/o South." In this study, Calafell takes a dialogical approach to ethnography ("Disrupting" 179). Calafell, a self-identified Chicana, explores the development of Latina/o identity in diasporic communities. She utilizes a dialogical approach, privileging both her voice and the voice of the participants in ethnography and interviews arguing for the possibility of dialogical performance to bridge the voice and body. She emphasizes two reasons for this: the ability of dialogical performance for reflexivity, but also its potential to examine the politics of voice ("Disrupting" 179). Utilizing this ethnographic approach opens up accounts for the

connection between voice and body. She states, “words are alive as they are embodied, unfixed with meaning of authority” (“Disrupting” 179).

Calafell connects voice to the body, but also experience. She resists a Western approach to ethnography by reducing the hierarchical distance between herself and her participants (“Disrupting” 179). I agree with Pelias and Schaffer who state that “Voice is intricately connected to body” (85). Narratives are intricately tied to the bodies of the communities from which they originate. But more intimately, our words are never said without the influence of our bodies; words do not exist without the nonverbal communication that adds context to what we say.

Performance, as a critical theory, interrogates everyday experiences through a rich perspective that resists Western notions of theorizing, while critiquing a Cartesian split by acknowledging the role of our bodies in shaping how we experience our subjective realities (“Performance Studies” 35). Theoretically, this is in alignment with Chicana feminist theories that place a distinct value on the ontology of bodies. Borderlands theory and Chicana feminist pedagogies of educational practices are noteworthy because they explore the lived experiences of students in higher education contexts. Embodiment of performance research methodologies exemplifies micro-level experiences of engagement with macro-level structures, and this can be a portal to the development of borderland and activist/decolonial methodologies.

Furthermore, ethnography has been criticized for centralizing social inequity yet has lacked a self-reflexive lens through which we can question our own actions of researching as acts of domination (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 7). The work of Conquergood emphasizes the “process of becoming” as a researcher, which considers the

dynamics of relationships and creation of knowledge throughout the research process. Emphasizing becoming also shifts from viewing ourselves and identities as spatialized products to a temporal process view (*Cultural Struggles*). Madison describes this as “understandings as we do that human beings are products and producers of culture in an ongoing and ever changing process of creating the world around us and beyond” (*Critical Ethnography* 184).

By bridging Chicana feminist theory and dialogical performance, I can forge new ontological and epistemological paths but I am also able to critique the research process itself (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 5). Calafell, by utilizing dialogical performance, builds a reflexive participatory knowledge giving authority to Other kinds of texts or cultural performances (“Disrupting” 179).

RESEARCH QUESTION

Chicana feminist studies have much to offer in our understanding of undocumented students’ experiences and help institutions create important, systemic changes to make campuses more accessible to students from marginalized communities. This study seeks to better understand how undocumented students make sense of their everyday experiences in contrast to institutional university practices. The central research question guiding this project, focuses on the experiences of undocumented students:

RQ1: What are the experiences of undocumented students on three universities through a lens of Chicana feminist theories and dialogical performance.

I hope to gain an understanding of how undocumented students are included or excluded from participating at their respective institutions. Many institutions attempt to address the inequalities impacting their institutions through institutional diversity

initiatives. Diversity initiatives like inclusive excellence are frameworks or policies that seek to intervene in the lives of marginalized students at various levels in institutions. Inclusive excellence is an approach to diversity used on campuses to consider histories of marginalization and inequity, by engaging institutional practices, pedagogical strategies, and practices and policies that impact student access to higher education. University leadership attempts to create welcoming spaces for underrepresented students, including undocumented students, through diversity and/or inclusive policies. These institutional practices are intervening and attempting to resist and change historical, political, and social pressures that have historically excluded communities from participating.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Theoretically, this study adds to the development of Chicana feminist theories in terms of praxis. Theories of *nepantla*, *Coyolxauhqui* imperative, new tribalism, spiritual activism, and pedagogies of the home, which I will define in the next chapter, are placed into practice to interrogate how undocumented students make sense of their experiences on university campuses. A goal of Chicana feminist scholars is to create scholarship that is activist in nature and creates tangible change for marginalized students. This is also possible by accessing intellectual spaces lacking both Chicana feminist and undocumented voices, and being in conversation with higher education professionals wanting to learn more about how the current climate shapes the experiences of students with an undocumented status. Articles on diversity offer advice to both students and higher education professionals on a variety of topics, ranging from financial aid, career development, recruitment, and support, but they lack the voices of constituents, such as undocumented students. Bridging the gap between Chicana feminist scholars and higher

education scholars in the development of diversity scholarship is potentially beneficial for undocumented students.

I argue that performance theories and methods, like dialogical performance, provide a complementary perspective to Chicana feminist scholarship in exploring the lives of undocumented students on university campuses. D. Soyini Madison, Dwight Conquergood, and John T. Warren have advanced performance scholarship that embodies activism. They promoted a scholarship of praxis through their methodological stances. On the one hand, Chicana feminist theories and methods have had limited application. On the other, performance theories can help us understand communicative phenomena at a micro-level. Performance theory and dialogical performance offer a form of politically conscious and ethically minded methods. It calls attention to not only how an ethnographer or critical qualitative researcher gathers data, but also brings attention to how that data is presented. Scholars who want to be activists may find the process of education difficult and sometimes fruitless. Scholarship that supports an activist consciousness is widely available, yet still it finds itself on the margins of Communication Studies. Chicana feminist scholarship addresses this need for an epistemological shift. This epistemological project bridges the mind and body with a fracture of life experiences.

The combination of Chicana feminist theory with the ethical implications of dialogical performance will contribute to the larger academic goal to create spaces where undocumented students feel safe on college and university campuses. There are opportunities to seek deeper understandings of the experiences of students with undocumented statuses by integrating principles of dialogic performance as imagined by

Conquergood (“Performing as a Moral” 71). Communication studies research would benefit from further initiating a conversation regarding epistemologies and ethical principles of research. Interrogating the experiences of undocumented students adds to Communication Studies because it is an exploration of power, how power moves through language, but also, how power operates through performances. The goal of this study is to examine the experiences of undocumented students, who are one of the most vulnerable populations in our society, and illuminate how power operates in their academic experiences to expose structural inequality impacting their lives.

CHAPTER TWO: CHICANA FEMINIST THEORY: COALITION, EMANCIPATION, ANTI-COLONIALISM, SOCIAL JUSTICE

In this study, my primary concern is directed at universities as institutional sites embedded within ideological borders in order to gain an understanding of the institutional mechanisms that create, manage, and maintain difference. Furthermore, I seek to understand how undocumented students negotiate and contest these spaces. My secondary concern centers on the ethics of research, therefore interrogating my participation in these institutional practices. Overall, I seek to understand how these institutional sites are a source of oppression and liberation—how undocumented students, and myself as a scholar, socially, culturally, and epistemically resist. To study the complexity of undocumented students' experiences on campuses and how they develop their identities in contrast to institutional policies, I build upon Chicana feminist theories. In this chapter, I draw on Chicana feminist pedagogies and explain how these assist in understanding how undocumented students make meaning of their experiences attending universities. Guided by Chicana feminist pedagogies, I also rely upon theories developed by Gloria Anzaldúa in her posthumously published book, *Light in the Dark, Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. From this work, I look to theories of Spiritual Activism, New Tribalism, *Nepantla*, and *Coyolxauhqui*. I will begin the following section by explicating the benefits of exploring the experiences of undocumented students through a Chicana feminist theoretical lens.

ESTABLISHING SPACE: RESISTANCE AND CHALLENGING POWER

Early Chicana feminist theory in the 1960s and 1970s focused on the struggles affecting working-class Chicana/o communities (Cordova 381). They highlighted gender, sex, education, labor, employment, and additional issues that affected them. These Chicanas refused to keep silent and remain obedient. They developed a *feminista consciousness* and gave a name to Chicana feminist struggles and thereby legitimized their struggles (Cordova 381). These early writings established four tenets of Chicana feminist theorizing: 1) Chicanas are in the best position to describe their experience; 2) The history of Chicanas is rooted in a legacy of struggle; 3) The history of contemporary Chicanas must be understood through an intersectional lens; and 4) Chicanas are not inherently passive nor are they stereotypical representations. Cruz argues that for Chicanas, the project of conducting research is a project of redemption; it is first necessary to recognize a politics of difference—one where local and multiple subjectivities are recognized—as being part of larger institutional structures. Second, it is a reclaiming of histories, narratives, and voices with a commitment “to exposing how systems of power have privileged certain kinds of narratives that serve to undermine and invalidate others” (Cruz 65).

Lisa Flores points to the “everydayness of our academic practices and patterns” calling for a reflexivity about how we participate in creating these “chilly” climates for students (“Striving” 646). These everyday practices in chilly climates shape the experiences of undocumented students. Negative campus climates affect students’ persistence and desire to graduate, and discourage students from continuing on to graduate school or pursuing a professional degree (Perez-Huber and Malagnon 845). The

daily practices within educational institutions have intentionally and unintentionally excluded individuals and communities from marginalized groups. Cruz argues one objective for Chicanas in educational theorizing is how brown bodies must be incorporated in the “discussion of representation, social control, and the constructions of normality” (68).

This does not allow for academic systems to truly embrace the lived experiences of undocumented students, and students of color, in general (Anzaldúa *Borderlands* 25). Undocumented students are unable to find a home and be part of the academic community because of purposeful exclusion in states like Arizona, which prohibits students from attending college (Bañuelos 99). Though their bodies are excluded like other brown bodies, they are being institutionally governed and regulated (Cruz 68). The experiences of undocumented students are best captured by Perez-Huber and Malagnon, when they describe the campus climate as one of institutional neglect (856). Institutional neglect is pervasive within higher education for undocumented students, and this sets the stage for how we do or do not understand their lived experiences. It points to the importance of utilizing a holistic approach to capture the complexity of undocumented students’ experiences within the academy. Students without documentation overcome daily obstacles within the academy. Gloria Anzaldúa posits the only “legitimate” inhabitants within the borderlands are those in power: whites and those who align themselves ideologically with whites (*Borderlands* 25). Academic spaces reflect a sentiment similar to the lands along the U.S/Mexico border—undocumented students’ bodies and identities are neglected and deemed alien and illegitimate. They are unwelcome in academic spaces, but from this difficult situation we can auspiciously

understand how bodies are regulated. Cruz tells us, “understanding the brown body and the regulation of its movements is fundamental in reclaiming narrative and developing of radical projects of transformation” (68). We need projects that will allow the voices of undocumented students to teach us about their own social, cultural, and personal realities (Holling 83).

Cherrie Moraga critiques the lack of ability for theories embedded within a Cartesian ideology to embody the lived realities of students (*Loving in the War Years* 177). She affirms, “[i]n academic life, theoretical language is, as a rule, profane. It is used to obfuscate rather than illuminate. It does not bring about physical change in the universe, except an increased deadening ... deadening ... deadening” (Moraga *Loving in The War Years* 177). Moraga is arguing we move away from theories embedded with a Cartesian ideology—one that concerns itself with marking difference in color, language, class, and culture as a threat to scholarship (Godinez 26). Moraga asks that we as scholars not continue to theorize from a disembodied perspective, one that is disconnected not only from our own bodies, but disconnected from bodies outside the academy. She asks we no longer contribute to a tradition of scholarship that has obstructed and perpetuated the exclusion of the lived experiences of marginalized communities from theoretical development in the academy.

By centering the body in scholarship, Chicana feminists implicate their own bodies. They are centering their subjective experiences as women and taking a political stance from a mestiza consciousness. By reorienting their bodies as the central site of experience and theory development, Chicanas have opened access to their experiences and multiple subjectivities as a form of knowledge. They have created opportunities

within intellectual spaces to understand how they are shaped by and experience institutional structures (Calafell “Monstrous” 111; Moraga *The Last Generation* 189).

Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa exemplify this pivoting of theoretical development through the body in their conceptualization of a theory in the flesh as “one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity... We do this bridging by naming ourselves and by telling our stories in our own words” (*This Bridge* 23). Calafell describes theories in the flesh as privileging subjectivity and embodied knowledge: “It is in these sites women of color develop theory about their experiences and challenge intellectual errors of knowing without understanding, feeling, or being impassioned” (*Latina/o Communication Studies* 8). The body is conceptualized as a material site of experiences that is impacted by contextual factors, such as historical, social, and geopolitical location (Cervantes-Soon 98). Theories in the flesh are an inward-oriented practice leading to praxis and social change. The body is a contextual site that is compartmentalized theoretically (Cervantes-Soon 98). It is a site of struggle and an ontological site imbued with knowledge (Cervantes-Soon 98).

Chicana scholars have theorized how their bodies have been pushed to the margins; as a result, they have developed a *mestiza consciousness*, which empowers women to speak for themselves and define their lived experiences on their own terms. Arrizon describes *mestiza consciousness* as a “border consciousness,” or a consciousness that is a source of rupture from oppressive systems. It may also be considered consciousness-raising, as it recognizes the indigenous roots one may possess (Arrizon 25). It is a border consciousness that is the awareness of the self and the oppressive

traditions inscribed on women's bodies. Recognizing the need for a tolerance for contradiction and ambivalence, a mestiza consciousness is a both/and way of thinking and acting in the world (Anzaldúa *Borderlands* 243). This understanding opens possibilities for framing identity as more fluid with multiple standpoints, simultaneously operating within a single body. A mestiza or border consciousness is a political consciousness. Chicana feminist theories can illuminate the everyday communicative phenomena—their experiences of practices that negatively impact them—but also their daily responses of resistance to these exclusionary practices. Chicana feminist theorists have fought to carve intellectual space within the academy: a vantage point from where we can better understand how academic spaces are contested spaces (Calafell “Monstrous” 111; Moraga *The Last Generation* 189).

Chicana feminists challenge the brutality of oppressive K-16 institutional structures, which have sought to erase their language, viewed their families and communities from a deficit perspective, and not acknowledged the inequitable relationships of power (Knight et al. 39). This is a consciousness developed over time from an oppositional perspective. Their bodies are in opposition to structures that would prefer to exclude them. Their bodies become a basis for intellectual knowledge that is “inexorably rooted in politics of resistance and liberation” (Cervantes-Soon 98). Chicana feminist theories challenge Eurocentric, male-centered research and educational practices that would cast their minds-bodies-spirits as passive or ignorant, and erase their realities. From this perspective, we must imagine a more complex view of identity and the construction of identities, as they are shaped in the experiences of undocumented students. We must be able to understand not only how bodies are the subjects of

oppression, but also how they resist these structures. Bañuelos contends that conceptualizing the cultural citizenship of Chicanas from a negative perspective, meaning that their participation is positioned from a deficit perspective, doing this repudiates their agency and resistance (99). In a similar vein, it is vital that undocumented students are afforded the freedom to express and reclaim their experiences in these spaces.

Chicana scholars address issues surrounding sexuality, gender, race, and class; the perspective they provide of these intersecting identities are a means to reach Chicax and Latinx students. Chicanas seek to understand educational practices that may benefit undocumented students; culturally relevant pedagogies and scholarship that connects to their cultural experiences, histories, and knowledge (Knight et al. 53). For example, Chicanas have interrogated the intersections of religion and sexuality (Castillo; Moraga *Loving in the War Years* 82). Generally, Chicanas identify as Catholic and through Chicana feminist theories they can explore the tense relationship between sexuality and Catholicism (De La Garza *Maria Speaks*). Women have experienced shame for exploring their sexuality and losing their virginity when having sex before marriage (Holling 85). They were also marginalized within the largely white feminist movement. Chicana feminists identified themselves as *Feministas* to distinguish themselves from both feminist and Chicano movements that they believed had excluded them, believing they had to speak out against both racism and sexism from White feminists and Chicanos who were largely unaware of the struggles of women of color in the academy (Castillo 34; Cortera 216; Nieto Gomez 86). Furthermore, in her book, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma*, Ana Castillo writes of the challenges she faced in the Chicano

movement, which sought to keep women in the background and in positions of subordination.

Their perspectives provide a local-level approach that some mainstream feminist scholarship fails to acknowledge, such as issues of race. Aurora Chang in the article, “Undocumented Intelligence: Laying Low by Achieving High- An ‘Illegal Alien’s’ Co-Option of School and Citizenship,” shares her perspective on what the process of schooling has taught her. She argues that her undocumented status provided her with intangible skills out of a necessity for survival (Chang “Undocumented Intelligence” 2). From her standpoint, we can better understand how an undocumented student developed critical thinking skills about her daily behavior and interactions with authority, and formed an “undocumented intelligence” she needed to survive and thrive within the academy (Chang “Undocumented Intelligence” 2). As Chang places her body in conversation with a Chicana feminist theoretical perspective, she pushes to achieve inclusive academic spaces and a new tomorrow that is a place of healing. Chicana feminists theorize from an *emic* or cultural insider perspective that provides insights that could effectively inform institutions’ attempts to make space for undocumented students (Carmona 114). Saavedra and Nymark describe it as a borderland-*mestizaje* feminism that centers *el cuerpo*, the body, and carnal knowing to further disrupt dualistic tendencies of Western theorizing (256).

One way Chicanas resist colonial structures is by adopting a view of spirituality and tradition as a source of refuge. They critically challenge ideologies to move from a place of pain to a place of recovery, and to ideally reach a place of resistance. The spiritual practices of Chicanas are a purposeful integration of their cultural influences and

inner sources of creativity that feed their souls and psyche (Cordova 386). This allows them to return to an indigenous-inspired spirituality that embraces the learning of their own senses and bodies. This practice of self-love is one that liberates them from both patriarchal and colonial shackles that teach self-hatred. In doing so, they can move from a place of pain and self-hatred to recover and view themselves as worthy. This also helps them to embrace anti-colonial practices that allow them to express their sexuality, to resist colonial pressures of keeping their sexuality hidden and shameful, and push them to move away from needing patriarchal authority of their own bodies.

Moraga also critiques the academy for what she argues is a theoretical shortcoming of a disembodied theorizing:

If the academy, in its very mission, denies the body, except as the object of theoretical disembodied discourse, The Body with a capital “B,” then what is the radically thinking “othered” body (the queer, the colored, the female) doing there? What skills does the academy offer for our survival? Is not the academy the locus of cultural genocide for non-dominant cultures? Ethnic Studies has not ensured the cultural survival of U.S. peoples of color; it has mostly served to produce a cadre of professors of color unwittingly wielding the Whiteman’s tools to, as Alfred Arteaga puts it, “define [our] world for the benefit of the colonizer. “See how we suffer, patron...” The body has been lost in the language of the academy because Art (as well as the Art of Writing) and the social-political movements it incites—that meeting place of mind and matter—cannot find expression there. (*Loving in the War Years* 175)

Moraga is describing the material impact of a historical practice found within the academy of excluding bodies from accessing intellectual space—both ideologically from the development of theories, but also physically. Moraga states that the academy is a source of cultural genocide; it is a space that asks students from marginalized communities to assimilate to specific, performative stances to access these spaces. Students must give up a part of themselves to perform well within this system. In

addition, scholars of color have wielded tools to construct knowledge that is both damaging to themselves and the communities they come from. The damage occurs despite having carved out space for Ethnic Studies programs within the academy. Having a department within a university does not change longstanding practices of omitting bodies from accessing intellectual space in departments outside of Ethnic Studies.

Chicana Views on the Research Process. Being in the academy is akin to being between worlds, where we struggle and face decisions about which world to listen to. Gloria Anzaldúa describes this internal struggle in Spanish as *el choque*: “El *choque* de un alma atrapado entre el mundo del espíritu y el mundo de la técnica a veces la deja entullada,” (*Borderlands* 100) meaning it is the crash of a soul trapped between a spirit world and technical world. Those in this space have a vantage point from two different angles because they occupy a space encompassed by overlapping perspectives. Our bodies are not separate from our minds and they are the “channels and agents of theory and praxis” (Cervantes-Soon 98). This perspective is grounded and capable of valuing emotional investment and struggle, both individually and as a community (Cervantes-Soon 98). Chicanas understand that articulating their own experiences is more than an individual project; it is a collective one through which they can create spaces for Othered people through activist-minded scholarship. By finding a place of healing, celebration, and self-love they can show other Chicanas how to love themselves. These Chicana theoretical frameworks benefit education scholarship because they recognize the interconnectedness of experiences relating to immigration status, language, gender, sexuality, class, and religion (Delgado Bernal 116). Furthermore, Chicana feminist theory impacts methods. Chicana/Latinx feminist methodologies actively engage issues of the

marginalization of brown, black, and mestiza bodies in the academy, illuminating hierarchies, dichotomies, imperialism, and patriarchy (Calafell “Monstrous Femininity” 115; Saavedra and Perez 78).

Methodologies are more than tools for Chicana/Latinx researchers; they are extensions of ways of knowing and being in this world. Methodologies are central to how we embody and perform research (Saavedra and Perez 78). As a site of knowledge, the body privileges the lived experiences of both the participants and the researcher (Saavedra and Nymark, 256). For Chicana researchers, the methods used are more than tools for gathering data—they are ways of knowing and being in the world. For example, little research:

“paints complex portraits of Chicana/Latinx lives from which we can consider their perspectives and resilience in interaction with institutions of power...their voices have largely gone unnoticed and the need to document and analyze these experiences remains a challenge” (Rodríguez 492).

Moraga further illuminates the importance of how Chicanxs approach the academy and learning while simultaneously resisting:

As a people of conscience, we write, we think, we work in the face of death. Some days it seems that the only thing worth doing, to counter injustice in this way; for injustice- for perpetrator and victim – kills spirit. We are in search of ideas that can separate strands of human exploitation and its consequent environmental ruin in order to illuminate the causes of the utter holocaust of the planet’s heart. (*A Xicana Codex* 174)

Moraga describes an underlying commitment of Chicanas in the academy to create social change in the academy even when this commitment is harmful (*A Xicana Codex*). Being committed to countering injustice for all scholars comes at a price that at times feels like a killing of their spirit. Still, though there will be a price to pay for engaging in social justice scholarship I concur with Lisa Flores who, in her Presidential address to the

Western Communication Association, urged that we must engage research from an activist perspective to transform spaces and strive for social justice (“Striving”). We must be better at understanding how to transform academic spaces where there is a lack of methods to capture a “thick description” of these students’ lives, while still honoring their perspectives and positionalities (Rodríguez 492). Knight, Dixon, Norton, and Bentley discuss a research design that sustains a multicultural feminist critical ethnography, drawing on what they describe as a differential and coalitional consciousness, which acknowledges a dialectical activism. This activism works to highlight the inequitable macro-level and micro-level structures operating in schools and research methodologies. Oppressive structures in schools and research exist at both macro-levels, meaning they occur at the levels of the individual and also at the institutional level (43). Knight et al. acknowledged the violence perpetrated through research on marginalized communities. Although they themselves are researchers identified as members of marginalized groups, they understood the harm they could cause as black, white, predominantly English-speaking, U.S. American-born educators conducting research with Latinx youth and their families. Knight et al. pushed toward a collective and reflexive research approach.

Like Knight et al., I seek to employ a collective reflexive approach that acknowledges how researchers change positions to be in dialogue with Latinx students, families, and communities “to promote social justice, and equitable practices in research and schools,” also with the goal of being able to “decolonize conventions that render the epistemologies, pedagogies, and methodologies of Latinx youth and their families invisible” (Knight et al. 43). As Elenes notes, this transformation is a social justice endeavor:

Social justice refers to the processes and efforts to ensure that human rights are recognized, and in doing so, seek and struggle for egalitarian societies and practices. Thus, human rights and social justice education should provide philosophical and ethical tools to engage in the struggle to achieve enduring just societies and communities at the local and global levels. (Elenes 133). The methodological shift that Chicana feminist scholarship calls for is an anti or decolonial project. The concepts of *nepantla*, new tribalism, spiritual activism, and the *Coyolxauhqui* process are important as we shift to constructing new understandings of research.

Nepantla. Gloria Anzaldúa wrote extensively on the term *nepantla*. She articulates this Chicana feminist approach through concepts she developed in her text, *In the Light of Dark*, furnishing us with multifaceted concepts that allow us to examine policies rooted in multiple forms of oppression (Elenes 134). Through her concepts, we can investigate institutional policies that impact undocumented students, whether explicitly or implicitly. The first concept Anzaldúa offers is *nepantla*. For Anzaldúa, *nepantla* is “the threshold of transformation” (*Light in the Dark* 56). It is the Nahuatl word for “middle ground” and describes an in-between space. This concept directs us to conceptualize our experiences in terms of mental, physical, and spiritual change in an innovative way. *Nepantla* affects our perceptions of diverse sexual, gender, and ability identities, while allowing us the opportunity to view our society from a space of reflection and Otherness. Living in this space can be tumultuous because it is also where these perspectives meet and come into conflict (Elenes 134). Still, as unstable and unpredictable as *nepantla* may be, this threshold between worlds is an opportunity to bridge spaces (Elenes 135).

Anzaldúa contends that *nepantla* is the uncertain terrain we experience when we shift from our existing and current identity to a new identity (*Light in the Dark* 56). *Nepantla* is more than a physical space; it is beyond our body and mind. It is a “midway point” between conscious and unconsciousness—a space where we can accept contradiction and paradox (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 56). *Nepantla* is also a “psychological, liminal space between the way things had been and an unknown future” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 17). Moreover, it is a space of transformation because it is where two or more forces collide; these forces are in turmoil, balancing unsteadily between order and chaos (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 56). Anzaldúa describes it as “entreguerras” or internal wars (*Light in the Dark*). It is the place where we are attached and detached from our various cultures. Anzaldúa posits that some communities, like Mexican immigrants, are in a constant state of *nepantla*, or a constant space of chaos (*Light in the Dark*). In describing the southwest desert from a view of *nepantla*, poet Pat Mora discusses the transformation of people of Mexican descent who thrive in inhospitable environments, despite colonial pressures, just as cacti that grow in difficult climates (292). Chicanas have survived and become bilingual librarians, superintendents, and principals (Mora 292).

Anzaldúa envisions the borderlands from the view of Jorge Luis Borges as “the one spot on earth containing other places within it” (*Light in the Dark* 57). It is a site that crosses all of our dimensions and in this place, we are simultaneously connected (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 35). Furthermore, it is where our ideologies become concrete; it is where tensions are so strong they create a crack or a tear in the membrane of our reality. These tears live in our psyche, our body, our spirit, and the earth itself

(Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 57). It is important to understand that all people in *nepantla* relate to both the border, and *nepantla* itself, in different ways. Within this space we become aware of symbolic processes attempting to rise from the level of unconscious to conscious. From this vantage point, *Nepantleras* have a skill. They are able to skillfully “mediate and move between identities and positions” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 93). *Nepantleras* help us navigate both physical and ideological borders; they have the knowledge of how to navigate spaces and places where dominant forces clash with non-dominant resistance. Anzaldúa posits those in the borderlands are in a constant state of *nepantla*, and I would argue undocumented students are border dwellers in a constant state of *nepantla*. It is precisely undocumented students who possess the knowledge of what it is like to experience and navigate academic spaces. Undocumented students are *Nepantleras* who must navigate academic spaces in constant state of flux of moving between differing communities, cultures, and ideological structures. It is from their perspective we can understand how students make sense of their experiences of marginalization and resistance in these structures embedded within dominant ideologies.

Reza-Lopez et al. describes the constant mental exercises Latinx students juggle from crossing psychological, social, cultural, physical appearance, and language borders in the academy as they assimilate or resist. Reza-Lopez writes that “the processes of rebordering our realities create a space of either possibilities or despair for students and teachers. Sadly, it is currently a culture of despair for many Mexican-Latinos” (109). Students are constantly navigating borders and must always be vigilant of their actions; because of this constant repositioning, students are also transforming and/or modifying their realities. Students are driven, out of necessity, to develop the knowledge and skills

to navigate the academy (Chang 2). However, there are social and political forces that strive to keep them from achieving their goals as we have seen with state laws purposely targeting undocumented students' access to higher education.

In the location of *nepantla*, there is much to learn from the perspectives of undocumented students who move through the borderlands constantly. They negotiate invisible borders and thresholds that are laws restricting their access to the academy and other public resources. In this border space, *mestiza/os* becomes mediators of values that can be transmitted between borders (Arrizon 26). Scholars in this middle space of *nepantla* are educators and because of the knowledge they have gained moving through borderlands, *nepantla* allows us to navigate toward new realities. Anzaldúa describes this as “*La nepantlera, artista-activista, with conciencia de mestiza* offers an alternative self” (*Light in the Dark* 82). Chicana feminists have fought for space for our Chicanx and Latinx bodies to be present in the academy and in our research, and this ontological shift has signaled a need for an epistemological shift. Through both an ontological and epistemological change, Chicanas strive to decolonize not only our methodologies, but also our identity construction. In this in-between space, we can hold paradoxical thoughts. From the *nepantla* experience, we can move toward healing our physical, psychological, and spiritual wounds inflicted on us by colonial and patriarchal ideologies (*Calafell Monstrosity*). Those who have not experienced *nepantla* are completely unaware of these forces and of the power being exercised in academic spaces. Thus, *nepantleras*, like undocumented students, become bridges to more inclusive educational structures. They are made painfully aware of the inequalities occurring in academic

spaces and forced to navigate these spaces and forced to develop the skills to effectively navigate the academy.

New Tribalism. New tribalism is an attempt is to break down universal and local dichotomies and move beyond “deterministic language” (Elenes 136). New tribalism is about working together to create “new” stories of identity and culture and to envision diverse futures (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 85). It is about rethinking our narratives of history, ancestry, and even reality itself (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 85). It is about creating new narratives that provide alternative potentials. New tribalism “transcends the barriers of polarized perspectives moving beyond ideas of assimilation and separatism to a point that define ourselves by what we include” (Elenes 136). It is a new option—not assimilation and not separation (Elenes 140). This permits us to theorize a cultural identity beyond binary thought while acknowledging that the practice of classification can be simultaneously liberating and oppressive (Elenes 136). By no means does the concept of new tribalism seek to erase difference; rather, it seeks to create connections between our multifaceted differences (Saavedra and Nymark 268).

New tribalism is a philosophy that addresses “racialized, classed, gendered, and sexualized (among many others) discourses...” and identities (Elenes 136). New tribalism is an innovative theory for how identity can be constructed and an alternative to how identity is constructed in that we are given the option of not having to choose from rigid dichotomous labels to identify our communities and ourselves. Anzaldúa stresses that we “unlearn stereotypical labels” and “description of realities,” to challenge traditional identity politics (*Light in the Dark* 85). Simultaneously, new tribalism does not require we renounce our ethnic or national identity, nor abstain from social movements.

Rather, it asks that we consider the realities of these perspectives as knowledge and that we theorize from these spaces. It constructs identity from in-between borders/worlds. Still, new tribalism is about being a part of a group, but never subsumed by it, and new tribalism does not encourages losing individuality to the group, or losing the group to an individual.

In addition, new tribalism is a collaborative approach to bridge building that focuses on building unity among disparate groups of people (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 84). It requires praxis; we must be able to place into practice our bridge positionalities to create new futures. Bridge positionalities is a term for marginalized people who often must shift to continue being in conversation with multiple groups. Our bridge positionalities place a positive value on the knowledge people living in the borderlands bring to education. These new tribal alliances recognize we are all connected not only with one another's communities, but also with the earth and our natural surroundings. This connection with one another and our natural world is vital to develop new realities, and it is fueled by a spiritual activism.

Spiritual Activism. Spiritual activism seeks a holistic interconnection between all aspects of life—a connection with the world. The spirit in spiritual activism refers to an “ontological belief in the existence of things outside the body (exosomatic) as opposed to the belief that material reality is a projection of mentally created images” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 39). Through spiritual activism, the goal is to create a balance with the natural world and to create a reciprocal relationship with our surrounding world. Reframing ourselves in connection with our natural surroundings opens our view of reality to a different perspective—an inclusive perspective. From this perspective of

being equals to our natural world and other beings within our world, we open up ourselves to learning a new kind of knowing about our world. We have passage to theorizing of spirituality; it is a spirit that connects us with our ancestors and descendants along with our contemporary relations (Elenes 137).

In addition, spiritual activism is a form of social activism engaged by a diverse collection of people with different spiritual practices or spiritual *mestizaje* (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 39). Ana Louise Keating discusses the spiritual activism of Anzaldúa and uses this term to describe experience-based epistemology and ethics (*Light in the Dark* 246). We can consider it a collective praxis as it is placing into practice our thoughts and ideas while considering our social positions. Seeking understanding of our surroundings to create knowledge, it is acknowledging social locations in the world but also seeking a path for transformation of social inequality (Elenes 136). It is an activism for social change connecting our minds, bodies, and spirits, and a tool for introspective work recognizing our subjectivity holistically (Elenes 137).

Anzaldúa is telling us that the spiritual is vital to our wellbeing as scholars (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 92). Being able to care for ourselves spiritually will also help alleviate the wounds we suffer from patriarchy and colonialism, and the ongoing wounding that occurs as we move through this world. Anzaldúa believes we must join our intellectual work with our spiritual work to create spiritual activism (*Light in the Dark*). Ethical spiritual activism requires we intervene and transform existing social conditions. Spiritual activism is spirituality for social change; it is a praxis of community healing: “Activism is engaging in healing work” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 90). We engage our communities to promote healing by taking on scholarship with our

communities that is dignifying of them. Anzaldúa uses the metaphor of “putting our hands in the dough, not merely think or talking about making tortillas” (*Light in the Dark* 90). This means we must create spaces and times for healing to happen. Healing is defined as “taking back the scattered energy and soul loss wrought by wounding” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 89). These are historical wounds impacting marginalized communities: “Wounds from racism, colonial abuses that affect our self-conceptions after a gender wound you fall to pieces and you lose part of your soul” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 90). This is a process where first, one must acknowledge a wound has occurred, and second, must intend to heal. This process of a wound, rupture, and psychic fragmentation can lead to dialogue about the wound as “we attempt to heal cultural ‘*sustos*,’ Spanish for fears, fears resulting from the trauma of colonial abuses, fragmenting our psyches” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 90).

Contemplation is needed in our academic and professional life. This allows us to process harmful experiences and sort out our anger and frustration. It also allows our compassion for others to surface. It is not enough to call for freedom, democracy, and human rights without a revolution of the spirit. This will allow us to link with people unlike ourselves, cultivate awareness to minimize wounding others, generate liberating insights, and create energy to make a difference in our lives and the lives of others (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 92). Having experienced *sustos* and *choques*, finding healing then becomes part of the process of *conocimiento*—gaining knowledge and understanding (Keating *Light in the Dark* 246). At the epistemological level, spiritual activism asks that we employ non-binary modes of thinking and understand metaphysics of interconnectedness to construct knowledge, build our community’s knowledge

together, and build a way of knowing and surviving from our marginalized perspectives. We are building knowledge from our perspectives of responding to the power exercised over our bodies. These experiences and understandings become our *conocimiento*, Spanish for insight. It is our source of knowledge and our pedagogies.

Coyolxauhqui Imperative. In Aztec mythology *Coyolxauhqui* is the goddess of the moon, who attempted to kill her mother while she was impregnated with her younger brother, Huitzilopochtli, the god of war (Keating XXI and 243 *Light in the Dark*). In defense of his mother, Huitzilopochtli sprang from his mother's womb, fully grown. *Coyolxauhqui* was then decapitated by her brother, who tossed her head into the sky and body down the sacred mountain, where it shattered into thousands of pieces (Keating 243 *Light in the Dark*). The Aztec people commemorated this story on a large, round, stone disk that illustrates a dismembered and decapitated *Coyolxauhqui*.

The *Coyolxauhqui Imperative* developed from the story of *Coyolxauhqui* as a theory to describe a complex healing process for all seeking knowledge. As Keating describes, it is a:

symbol for both the process of emotional psychical dismemberment, splitting body/mind/spirit/soul, and creative work of putting all the pieces together in a new form, a partially unconscious work done in the night by the light of the moon, a labor of revisioning and re-membering. (*Light in the Dark* 243)

The Aztec mythology of *Coyolxauhqui* is the source of inspiration for Anzaldúa's theorizing on development of identity as a process of coming apart and piecing together. Describing a desire to become a whole self, Anzaldúa developed this theory to help us understand how our identities are fragmented and how we pick up the pieces to create

whole selves (*Light in the Dark* 86). When having suffered a *susto* or *choque* “resulting from woundings, traumas, racism, and other acts of violation,” we fall apart, and our souls rip apart (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 1). We are split and our “energies scattered,” and this haunts us (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 1). We seek to become a whole self; we struggle to put ourselves together in order to heal ourselves (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 1).

These traumas occur for a variety of reasons, but in a globalized world we are seeing increasing hybridity, which Anzaldúa refers to as extreme hybridization (*Light in the Dark*). She attributes this hyper coming together of identities to technological shifts, which have brought a cyber age of information, new class systems, and developments of new communities (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 86). She frames the constant barrage of information and change as *remolinos*, vortexes that “shift our values, beliefs, perceptions and myths” (*Light in the Dark* 86). These vortexes are cultural; they suck us up and tear us into pieces, which create an extreme hybridization. These shocks describe a disturbance from our habitual state. She employs immigrants as an example when she states, “some immigrants are cut off from ethnic cultures. *Como cabezas decapitadas*, the search for ‘home’ where all the pieces of the fragmented body cohere and integrate like *Coyolxauhqui*” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 86). Immigrants experience this *susto*, shock, having to leave their home country and attempt to integrate in their host country as best they can. Anzaldúa describes these *sustos* as “when we experience bodily and boundary violations, border shifts, and identity confusions...” but these also provide us with new perspectives (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 86). Though painful, we may expand how we view our world (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 86).

From these shocks, we struggle to reassemble and heal ourselves from wounds that split our identities. Anzaldúa coins the term *Coyolxauhqui* Imperative to describe this struggle of reconstructing oneself through knowledge producing acts (*Light in the Dark*). Anzaldúa explicates that she is “driven by the impulse to write something down, by the desire and urgency to communicate, to make meaning, to make sense of things, to create myself through this knowledge producing act” (*Light in the Dark* 1). For Anzaldúa, she recreates herself through the process of writing (*Light in the Dark*). Writing for her is a “process of discovery that produces knowledge and *conocimiento* (insight)” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 1). Teresita Garza frames the rewriting of the legend of *Coyolxauhqui* as a reclamation process, one that gives voices to Chicanas. Garza says it is a rhetoric of consciousness as, “The legend gives voice to and empowers individual expressions or pronouncements through its character depictions” (40). Anzaldúa found this to be her process as she reclaims *Coyolxauhqui* and imagines a new story. But I argue she did not intend for writing to be the only method of producing knowledge; of constructing ourselves and *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 1). I believe she meant that we can reconstruct ourselves through a variety of methods, using anything that can help us heal our wounds. You can find healing through meditation, reading, and, I argue, through research and the production of knowledge. I believe that through performance methodologies we can find healing not only for ourselves, but also for our communities.

It is important to acknowledge holistic approaches that foster spiritual activism and new tribalism, while being attentive to *nepantla* experiences. Lastly, Chicana feminist pedagogical scholarship has yielded extensive research that can benefit institutional goals of creating more inclusive classrooms for Chicanxs.

Pedagogy of Home. Cherrie Moraga describes the turn toward *indigenismo*—an aspect of *mestizaje* that values the indigenous roots of Chicanxs (*The Last Generation* 165). She writes, “In recent years, for gay and straight Chicanos alike, our *indigenismo* has increased in importance as we witness the ultimate failure of Anglo-Americanism to bring harmony to our lives.... describes an ‘Indigenest’” (*The Last Generation* 165). Within *indigenismo* is a critique of Western culture and a political stance of prioritizing indigeneity. Moraga asserts that it “takes the rights of indigenous peoples as the highest priority,” and “draws upon the traditions...of native peoples the world over” and because of this, many Chicanxs would consider themselves Indigenists, subscribing to an *indigenismo* that is derived specifically from the traditions of the amalgamation of “mechicano indio peoples” (*The Last Generation* 165). Calderon warns that we not overlook the resiliency and agency of indigenous peoples because the same strategies used to maintain our cultures are often neglected by theories that revolve around decentering colonial dominance (82).

Chicana feminist pedagogies focus on the ways Chicanas teach, learn, and live, and this insight is the foundation for balancing and resisting systems of oppression. In other words, the Chicana community’s cultural wealth is the foundation from which they challenged patriarchy and colonialism, and continue to fight against it (Yosso 2005). They have used their writings as a form of liberation from their struggles. Chicana feminists articulate their own experiences and who they are through the process of an oppositional consciousness. This is a concept that should not be simplified or interpreted as always being in opposition; rather, by the very act of articulating their own reality, they are positioned as being in opposition to larger patriarchal colonial structures

(Cordova 381). Pedagogies of the home interrupt traditional processes that have subjugated knowledge, as power and politics are at the center of all teaching and learning (Delgado Bernal 114). The application of household knowledge to situations outside of the home becomes a creative process that interrupts the transmission of “official knowledge” and dominant ideologies (Delgado Bernal 114). In the article, “Toward the De-Subjugation of Racially Marked Knowledges in Communication,” Gust Yep argues for the de-subjugation of knowledge and Chicanas have developed scholarship with this goal in mind. Their perspective and understanding about being cultural citizens in the academy have encouraged a shift toward a decolonial imaginary.

Dolores Delgado Bernal’s views on pedagogies of the home provide an inclusive spirituality and inviting pedagogy (114). Delgado Bernal describes the *mestiza consciousness* of Chicana college students who draw from their home and cultural experiences to negotiate their college experiences (118). Students call upon their bilingualism, biculturalism, commitment to communities, and spiritualities to negotiate and survive college. Delgado Bernal offers a transformative reading of students’ experiences on college campuses that pulls from what Freytag describes as multiple intelligences. Delgado Bernal describes the term “Chicana feminist pedagogies” as referring “to culturally specific ways of organizing teaching and learning in informal sites such as the home-ways that embrace Chicana and Mexicana ways of knowing and extend beyond formal schooling” (114).

Pedagogies of the home are also connected to an anthropology of education, they are pedagogies that are related to a teaching and learning from Mexicanx/Latinx families, families who are a source or “funds of knowledge,” knowledge that is historically

developed and an accumulation of strategies that are vital to the long term survival Mexicana/o/Latinx cultures (Delgado Bernal 114). The methods we utilize must be considerate of “the intricacies of peoples’ everyday *survivance*, struggles, and *beyondness*” (Galvan 139) if they are to diminish the boundaries between the academy and marginalized communities. Pedagogies of the home not only address resilience strategies of Chicanx and Latinx youth, but are also crucial reflections of theoretical and practical contributions of parents (Jiménez 132). Community knowledge is taught to youth through a variety of methods: youth learn about their community through legends, storytelling, *corridos*, and behavior of those around them (Jiménez 132).

Knowledge of stratification, segregation, conquest, assimilation, and resistance is learned through culturally specific ways and passed on, often by mothers and other female family members. This knowledge assists youth in surviving everyday life (Jiménez 132). Chicana feminist pedagogies are partially shaped by collective experiences and community memory. It is through these ways of teaching and learning that ancestors and elders share the knowledge of conquest, segregation, labor market stratification, patriarchy, homophobia, assimilation, and resistance (Delgado Bernal 114). These paths of knowing and understanding through not only our own body but the bodies of those around us are based on a path of *conocimiento* and a journey for the pursuit of holistic knowledge. *Conocimiento* is both a personal and communal internal exploration and spiritual process resulting in praxis and social change.

Chicana feminist scholarship of pedagogical practices, similar to what is described as a pedagogy of the home, highlight the epistemological and ontological nuances that are helpful in understanding the experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students.

Chicana feminist studies incorporate and utilize decolonizing and indigenous methodologies to explore the intersectional lives of Chicanxs, a direct contrast to current strategic development models that do not account for these experiences. These differences in lived experiences and pedagogical practices, which are currently missing from scholarship on diversity and undocumented students, would benefit this specific area of scholarship that seeks to create sustainable change in the academy.

COMMUNICATION STUDIES AND THE UNDOCUMENTED CONTEXT

Studies focusing on the context of undocumented communities within Communication Studies is sparse. In 2003, Lisa Flores examined the media narratives (or frames) used to describe Mexican immigrants from the 1920s and 1930s. She explored dominant narrative framings that shaped “Mexican bodies as foreign and often distasteful, if sometimes ambivalently desirable,” which continue today (“Constructing Rhetorical” 380). Similarly, J. David Cisneros analyzed rhetoric of popular culture regarding immigration and found that migrants were often characterized through metaphors, framing them as social pollutants (572). Immigrants were frequently objectified in media and these negative representations have had a profound material effect in the lives of immigrants in the United States. In 1994, California’s Proposition 187 stripped immigrants of basic human rights by not allowing undocumented residents to receive public, social, and healthcare services (Cisneros 572). Dominant metaphors influence the dominant public imaginary, and metaphors of immigrants shape individual experiences and interactions.

Karma Chavez argues that interpreting migrant bodies as text allows for embodied translation. We can focus on how migrant bodies are being interpreted by police officers enacting dominant (and often harmful) discourses of immigration. Discourses that are applied to migrant bodies include metaphors of aliens, criminals, and parasites (Chavez 22). They are associated not only with people who may be undocumented, but any brown body who may “look Mexican” (Chavez 22). She found these interpretations of brown bodies to be dangerous because they affect how police officers interact with people in their communities (Chavez 28). Viewing bodies as a text may clarify institutional action toward brown bodies.

Megan Morrissey researched the participation of DREAMers in an open letter campaign called “Dream Now,” coordinated by the bloggers of the website *Citizen Orange*. In her research of the campaign, she found promising possibilities for online social movements. Through her application of José Esteban Muñoz’s disidentification, she found that DREAMers—by disidentifying and unifying with the LGBTQ rights movement—offer opportunities that benefit social movements (158). By building coalitions across lines of difference, DREAMers and LGBTQ rights activists can resist fixed identities and subjectivities, and imagine new possibilities for social change (Morrissey 158).

In “Learning from and Mentoring the Undocumented AB540 Student: Hearing an Unheard Voice,” Shane Moreman and Persona Non-Grata take a performance approach to studying the liminal space of being an undocumented graduate student in the academy. The article highlights this prominently in the narrative. At the end of the text, we find that the student has disappeared without a trace and that traditional notions of the

mentee/mentor relationship in the academy falls short in fostering spaces where undocumented students can be successful. Moreman and Persona Non-Grata best encapsulate the phenomena undocumented students face today. They co-authored an essay of their experiences as a documented professor and a young undocumented graduate student. In the article, Persona writes an email:

Quibo Shane? How are you? ?Como estas? I woke up one morning and later that day I dropped all of my classes for the semester. I'm "quitting" graduate school. I want to try to be happy, and I think that I won't be able to create it in academia. I feel like I owe you something and it all goes back to you being a great super teacher, a teacher who inspired, encouraged and taught in a way no one else does or dares. And I just want to say that I'm sorry and just thank you for what I may be doing in the future. And I also want to say that everything was not in vain...the applicable lies in the everyday (316).

Persona purposefully adds quotes to quitting. It is not that one wants to quit, but eventually for our happiness, joy, and survival we have to disengage. It is a struggle in the academy to daily engage/explain/*aguantar*. She states she will not be able to find happiness in the academy and chooses to leave. I must ask myself: what is it about the academy that leaves students unable to find happiness, and why are others not asking themselves this question? Additionally, Persona is unable to attend the National Communication Association (NCA) conference because she lacks identification and is cannot fly because of it (Moreman and Non-Grata 313). Students who lack documentation are limited in their academic advancement by not being able to travel. Furthermore, in this publication, the student does not identify herself and publishes this

article under the pseudonym Persona Non-Grata. This exemplifies the difficulty suffered by students without documentation when navigating the academy.

Situating Chicana feminism within Communication Studies. Communication Studies and Chicana feminist scholars, Michelle Holling and Bernadette Calafell combining Chicana feminist and performance theories and methods in their work. I examine how they attempt to explore spaces and critique the lack of understanding of Latinx peoples. Chicana feminist scholarship includes a complex perspective of diverse identities such as race, Latinx ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and class. In her essay, “Creating Discursive Space through a Rhetoric of Difference: Chicana Feminists Craft of Homeland,” Lisa Flores theorizes the rhetorical construction of home space in Chicana feminist literature using an amalgamation of Chicana feminist theory. She argues that Chicanas attempt to create intellectual space in the academy (Flores “Creating”). Flores interrogates how Chicanas living on/in the ‘border’ both literally and metaphorically construct theory from these borders (“Creating”). Chicanas fight for intellectual space in feminist scholarship on two fronts: their feminism is a source of contention within Chicana scholarship, as is their race (Flores “Creating Discursive Space” 144).

Creating spaces where Chicanas feel at home in the academy can be difficult for them to achieve (Flores “Creating Discursive Space” 144). Sarah Amira De La Garza illuminates the spiritual struggle Chicanas face in the academy—a struggle to consolidate lived experiences with prevailing epistemologies, ontologies, and methodological tools (“My Spiritual Sense”). This lack of tools to interrogate knowledge can lead to apathy toward achieving tenure (De La Garza “My Spiritual Sense” 604). In the same vein of spiritual activism, De La Garza’s scholarship is influenced not by individual success, but

by what her accomplishments provide those “whose love was integral to my life” (“My Spiritual Sense” 604). Fighting for space in the academy is a struggle for theories to gain epistemological legitimacy, as well as a material struggle to be included in academic spaces on campuses. Bernadette Calafell captures this difficulty for Chicanas (“Monstrous Femininity”). There are always landmines for scholars of color, feminist scholars, and queer scholars in undergraduate and graduate education, and all throughout their careers—from the first day of being hired, until retirement. For those resilient few that become tenured professors, these struggles persist. I do not intend to paint a bleak picture; my intention is to illuminate that these social struggles do not simply disappear. We will always face harm for addressing social inequality. There will be *sustos* and *choques* when addressing racial, heterosexual, and patriarchal violations. As Calafell experienced with her mentor and colleagues, she has been disciplined for the way in which she has addressed these moments (“Monstrous Femininity” 124). We have been told there are more effective ‘civil’ ways for addressing issues, yet when I have addressed these moments the best I could to value relationships and adhere to civility, I have experienced poor outcomes.

Michelle Holling and Amardo Rodriguez discuss the need to change the tenure process to be more diverse and inclusive of different tasks to count toward tenure and benefit scholars from addressing marginalized communities and identities. Similarly, Holling and Calafell state:

examinations that underscore the moments of contentiousness, instances of dissent or ‘social discord’ that manifest within and amongst Latino vernaculars. Doing so lays bare the struggles over culture and power that contains the possibility of telling us more about how marginalized communities organize, unite, and respond in the

faces of dominant efforts to exploit, oppress, contain, or repress marginalized individuals (27)

Like Chicanas, undocumented students are fighting for space—fighting to be included in an institution that continuously, systematically excludes their participation. This study extends the ongoing conversation of Chicana Communication scholars who interrogate their experiences and push ontological and epistemological boundaries to create fuller and thicker descriptions of marginalized experiences.

INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES IMPACTING UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

In this section, I review literature that focuses on research interrogating institutional practices that impact undocumented students. For example, the invisibility of students with undocumented status is highlighted by Perez-Huber and Malagnon, Kim and Chambers, Ortiz and Hinojosa, and Hallet. In their article, “Tenuous Options: The Career Development Process for Undocumented Students,” Ortiz and Hinojosa offer suggestions about how to best assist undocumented students with career services (61). Overall, undocumented students lack financial support; they are often unable to qualify for national summer internships, scholarship programs, and study abroad programs (Ortiz and Hinojosa 57). Ortiz and Hinojosa illuminate a gap in the practices of providing career counseling to students without documentation, as they bring attention to the lack of internships open to undocumented students since many require they be eligible for employment (55). Students are also unable to acquire teaching and research assistantships in their programs because these positions are considered university employment and therefore, subject to documentation requirements (Ortiz and Hinojosa 58).

Undocumented students are aware many on-campus services and benefits are not available to them.

In a study by Wicks-Asbun, a student said, “Nobody gives scholarships to undocumented students,” and the student also noted that friends who were awarded scholarships had them revoked (199). Gildersleeve and Ranero found that student affairs professionals are often inconsiderate of how their practices could be shaped by considering how race, gender, class, learning ability, and restricted labor contexts can impact undocumented student’s experience and participation in higher education (27). Administrative support and other support services are lacking and add to the difficulty of navigating college campuses for undocumented students. Two studies, one authored by Drachman and another by Kim and Chambers, highlight issues found within higher education for students with an undocumented status. A variety of studies support findings that administrative leadership is vital for the success of undocumented students (Barnhardt et al., 22; Hallet 106; Ortiz and Hinojosa 58; Perez-Huber and Malagnon 852; Perez-Huber et al. 8; Tierney and Venegas 363; Torres and Wicks-Asbun 200). Students are impacted by what the authors identify as institutional neglect. Neglect which contributes to a negative campus climate, which then affects not only students’ persistence and desire to graduate, discourages students from continuing to graduate school or pursuing a professional degree (Perez-Huber and Malagnon “Silenced Struggles” 845). Overall, the lack of support and understanding of undocumented students’ experiences continues.

Katharine Gin addresses the minimal support in academic counseling services, suggesting counselors make information and resources intended for students who lack

documentation available to all students (20). Gin offers college counselors ten tips for helping students with an undocumented status (20) so that students are not in danger of having to self-identify. Counselors are asked to not make assumptions about which students are undocumented because they are not all Latinx. Additionally, counselors are asked to be knowledgeable about DACA and other scholarships these students are eligible to receive.

Social Networks Impact Access, College Choice. Laura Enriquez found that social capital is vital to the success of undocumented students, as undocumented Latinx youth rely on emotional, financial, and informational resources to patchwork social capital. Students tend to frame their social networks as family based upon the amount of trust they place in these relationships. Ron Hallett also found that undocumented students primarily rely on social networks to facilitate their success (111). They lean on their social networks for resources and support. Perez-Huber et al. investigated the impact of DACA on Latinx students. Students identified familial, school, and peer networks as playing important roles in college choice. A study by Perez-Huber and Malagnon included the experiences of six undocumented students in California and found that their success was deeply impacted by their social networks, which helped them navigate institutional processes (850). Students with older siblings would turn to them for their experiences with financial aid and support services. Siblings also were an important factor in college choice, and students tended to follow older friends who were already attending college or peers on the path to college (Perez 24). Lastly, students may not attend schools if it was not explicitly communicated that undocumented students can attend (Perez 24).

Financial Support. Patricia Perez conducted a study with students who qualified for AB 540 status and found that affordability, social networks, and the option to attend were the most salient barriers for students attending college (23). Perez sought to better understand how undocumented students who qualified for AB540 benefits experienced the college choice process. Students identified cost of attendance as the single most important factor in school choice; costs included not only attendance itself, but also travel and housing. They noted that “closer, cheaper, and convenient” were the optimal choices (Perez 23). Because of the stringent restrictions on financial aid, undocumented students’ ability to attend college is deeply impacted by their ability to secure financial support, and students must seek alternative funding to attend college (Garcia and Tierney 2143; Perez-Huber and Malagnon “Silenced Struggles” 852).

Due to cost, students often choose to attend community colleges near them with the hope of transferring to a four-year university (Perez 23). Community colleges often cost less per unit than four-year schools and they tend to be viewed as providing the best access to a postsecondary education. With the rise in enrollment of students without documentation due to DACA, community colleges are crucial in supporting student access to higher education (Kim and Chambers 57). Unfortunately, Kim and Chambers point to the lack of support by community colleges in accommodating students who have picked them as their college of choice (57). The article provided insight and critique of the institutions and their inability to serve students with an undocumented status.

Inclusion and Exclusion. Each of the following studies provides valuable insight into the experiences of undocumented students and illuminates how they resist, challenge, and survive a lack of institutional support services. A study by Perez-Huber and Malagnon

sought to illuminate the experiences of students and how “immigration status affects the educational experiences of Latinx undocumented students in college” (849). In this study, six undocumented students were interviewed—three from a community college and three from a university. The guiding questions of the study were about the critical transition factors necessary for moving more undocumented Latinx students through the higher education pipeline and how institutions can support their undocumented Latinx student populations (Huber Perez and Malagnon 849). King and Puntí interviewed and observed eighteen undocumented Latinx youth, and their goal was to shed light on the everyday ordinary experiences of residents without documentation through their narratives (235). They found that racialized experiences are impacted by legal status and undocumented residents are impacted by narratives of race, ethnicity, and legal status (246). A study by Gleeson and Gonzalez surveys and interviews both workers and students without documentation to better understand the differential experiences of academic spaces and work spaces. They found that undocumented workers, unlike students, “come to terms” and endure living life in the shadows. Undocumented workers are in a vulnerable position as the subject of discriminatory behaviors, while students are expecting a future in the United States with opportunities equal to that of their peers (Gleeson and Gonzalez 7).

Aurora Chang’s personal essay describes her experience of hyper-documentation and discrimination despite being hyper-documented. She captures moments when people avowed meaning to her and her accomplishments because she was “undocumented.” She found that security and self-preservation are not as straightforward as having paperwork to legitimize her accomplishments as a scholar. Survival for her is much more than acquiring “text on paper,” meaning that, despite her achievements, people still would

attempt to minimize her by directly and indirectly challenging her worthiness. Being in the academy, she had to develop methods to validate her worthiness for herself.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I paid close attention to research examining the context of undocumented students. While there is literature focused on the context of undocumented students, it lacks an examination of the communicative practices impacting undocumented students. Although the literature clearly shows a difficult public climate for undocumented residents, with mixed support throughout the nation and a lack of institutional support, the literature is moving toward creating a supportive academic environment, addressing best practices for serving undocumented students. Still, there is a lack of scholarship examining every day, cultural practices that contribute to the difficult climate faced by undocumented students. I have found that the field of communication research on undocumented students is scant, with few scholars engaging the context of undocumented communities and much less scholarship investigating undocumented student experiences from performance perspectives.

Scholarship focusing on undocumented students at times captures glimpses of the struggles they face, but tends to be limited to rhetorical studies. Literature within the communication discipline in performance studies has a limited body of research on the experiences of undocumented students, and it does not address research on undocumented students and diversity policies. In the following chapter, I address this need for research by proposing a bridging of Chicana feminist scholarship and dialogical

performance as an activist ethnography that assists in reshaping spaces to create more inclusion within the academy.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I address my conceptual framework by further drawing on Chicana feminism. Additionally, I will unpack Conquergood's dialogic performative and describe performance ethnography based on his interventions ("Rethinking Ethnography"). Following this, I will describe how I utilize qualitative interviews through a lens of dialogic performance as a method, and provide an argument for the blending of Chicana Feminism with dialogic performance. This section is then followed with restating my research questions, and lastly, I will discuss my research design.

In this study, I employ Chicana feminism and dialogic performance which, according to Madison ("Dialogical Performative"), Conquergood later theorized as co-performative witnessing—a hybrid conceptual framework. I discuss why I chose Chicana feminism then go on to explain dialogic performance. Finally, I bring the two together to illustrate how I will use certain aspects of both within my work. In this section, I explain central tenets of dialogic performance and Chicana feminist theories, and argue for the blending of these theories to interrogate the experiences of undocumented students, but also to better understand how Chicana feminist theories can contribute to the development of dialogical performance.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Chicana feminist scholars have increasingly critiqued traditional research methodologies that are steeped in dominant ideologies (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 7; Calderon 82; Knight et al 43; Moraga *A Xicana Codex* 26; Rodriguez 491). Scholar Saavedra and Perez dedicate a special issue in the *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies*, titled, “An Introduction: (Re)envisioning Chicana/Latina Feminist Methodologies” toward the development of methodologies that are better suited to encapsulate the lived experiences of Chicanas. These are methodologies that strive to decolonize research by moving away from an apolitical position with neutral tools for gathering information; instead, these methodologies aim to develop tools that recognize the richness of holistic ways of being in and understanding the world (Saavedra and Perez 78). They are tools that resist notions of neutrality and objectivity, as these ideologies are aligned with conventional views of validity and reliability, ultimately subordinating marginalized voices (Hylton 26). They resist mainstream methodologies that serve to reinforce racialized inequalities by only legitimizing certain forms of knowledge (Hylton 26).

Chicana Feminism and Methodology. I chose Chicana feminism as a lens to approach my study because of its foundation in coalition building, anti-colonialism, emancipatory knowledge, and goals for social justice (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 4; Castillo 226; Cervantes-Soon 98; Cruz 68; Moraga *A Xicana Codex* 26 Nieto Gomez 86; Sandoval 358). It is a ‘third-world feminism’ that is coalitional and consciousness building, describing the struggles of women of color, and specifically the struggles of Chicanas who have fought for space in a system of interlocking oppressions.

It is a “combined insistence upon a structured theory and method of consciousness in opposition to U.S. social hierarchy...” (Sandoval 358). Chicanas fight for a philosophical space while rejecting colonial structures. Aware of the historical legacy of colonization that has pushed Chicana scholarship to the fringes, Chicanas seek to “accomplish social justice by building successful coalitions” (Hurtado 21). Chicana feminism is an embodied theory and method, and it is a communal practice.

Norma Alarcón posits the need to conduct scholarship in community with other scholars: “Thus, the feminist Chicana, activist, writer, scholar, and intellectual has to on the one hand, locate the point of theoretical and practical consensus with other feminists...” (380). Chicana feminism is the pursuit of a collective liberation against all forms of oppression, recognizing the multitude of identities impacted by interlocking systems of oppression. Dolores Calderon emphasizes to scholars the need to address colonialism to better understand how it shapes our lives and how certain aspects of it become normalized within our institutions.

Chicana feminist theory is a theoretical and methodological development by Chicanas to make sense of their lived experiences: “Xicanisma is an ever-present consciousness of our interdependency specifically rooted in our culture and history” (Castillo 226). Chela Sandoval posits that a “differential consciousness” can help in understanding the colonial context we find ourselves operating within (140). It is a consciousness developed from lived experiences of being positioned in opposition to dominant structures. Calderon frames a differential consciousness to resist colonial-blind discourses that “normalize western knowledge organization and assumptions, promote

western notions of being (metaphysics), and promote westernization of knowledge and institutionalization through means perceived as neutral” (85).

Calderon proposes that scholars engage anti-colonial methodologies that resist these Western ideologies when she describes how Chicana feminist methodologies

[are] an interdisciplinary framework used to examine the way multiple colonialisms (post, settler, internal, etc.) operate insidiously in educational contexts...) to conduct research that centers active and proactive resistance to colonization. Anticolonial methods resist both old and new forms of colonialism. (82)

Anticolonial methods resist both old and new forms of colonialism, Calderon suggests addressing coloniality, a key part of Chicana/o identities, to understand how it shapes our lives and how certain aspects of it become normalized (82). Calderon posited that a “differential consciousness” can help in understanding the colonial context we find ourselves operating within (82). Calderon frames a differential consciousness as a way to resist colonial blind discourses. They are like color blind ideologies but these discourses “normalize western knowledge organization and assumptions, promote western notions of being (metaphysics), and promote westernization of knowledge and institutionalization through means perceived as neutral” (Calderon 85). Resisting western ideologies and practicing a Chicana political activism and reflexive praxis that Chicana and decolonial feminists have suggested be integrated within our research (Galvan 139).

Anzaldúa seeks to build new epistemological frameworks that are liberating in the face of colonial ideology (*Borderlands; Light in the Dark*). She does so by utilizing a multidisciplinary approach and a storytelling format that developed an “epistemology of the imagination, a psychology of the image, I construct my own symbolic system”

(Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 2). She argues she “cannot use old critical language to describe, address, or contain new subjectivities,” new ways of being in the world (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 4). Imagining new epistemologies through her writing, she aims to “establish hidden, unknown connections between lived experiences and theory” providing a thick description of the complex lives of Chicanx and Latinx people construct ourselves, our identity, through language and performance in the face of oppressive structures (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 5).

Methodologies are more than tools for Chicana/Latinx researchers; they are extensions of ways of knowing and enacting in this world. Methodologies are central to how we embody and perform research (Saavedra and Perez 78). Knight, Dixon, Norton and Bentley discuss a research design that sustains a multicultural feminist critical ethnography drawing on

multicultural critical feminist framework employing a differential coalitional consciousness and dialectical activism to highlight the inequitable macro level and micro level college-going structures operating in school and research methodologies...Oppressive structures in school and research exist at both macro levels and micro levels. (43)

Chicana feminism is also a commitment to social justice to create an equitable world for Chicanas, women of color, and any people suffering injustice in opposition to societal structures (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 4; Castillo 226; Cervantes-Soon 98; Cruz 68; Nieto Gomez 86; Sandoval 358).

I seek to employ a collective reflexive approach to achieve social justice—an approach that acknowledges underlying social dynamics impacting the relationship between researchers and participants. These social dynamics are accounting for positionality, which Sorrells defines as “one’s social location or position within an

intersecting web of socially constructed hierarchical categories” (19). Hierarchies of social constructs of race, gender, sexuality, and such all have political, power, and relational implications. As researchers, our positionality changes in relation to others within our social system. We vacillate in our social position between being researchers and community members to interacting with Latinx students, families, and communities “to promote social justice, and equitable practices in research and schools” with the goal of being able to “decolonize conventions that render the epistemologies, pedagogies, and methodologies of Latinx youth and their families invisible” (Knight et al. 43).

Anzaldúa furthers a collective reflexive approach to research as she applies the *Coyolxauhqui* Imperative to her process of writing (*Light in the Dark*). This approach can also apply to the process of conducting research, which Anzaldúa describes as a process and a knowledge-producing-act in response to being hurt (*Light in the Dark*). It is a desire to make oneself whole through knowledge producing practices, including the research process. Through the process of research, we can reconstruct and heal ourselves. We struggle through our cultural production as scholars and grapple with our (des)conocimientos, with what we know and what we think we know (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 2). Like Anzaldúa, who forges new epistemological underpinnings, I strive to imagine methodologies that reflect ethical values to generate more inclusive academic spaces (*Light in the Dark* 4). This requires a political activism and a reflexive praxis, which Chicana and decolonial feminists have maintained as paramount within critical research (Galvan 139).

Within the conceptual framework of Chicana feminism, I bridge the scholarly conversation regarding experiences within the U.S. education system with the

performance paradigm. The bridging of Chicana feminist theories with dialogic performance is important because they have similar goals of understanding identity, cultural performances, and power, as well as developing anti-colonial educational systems. Chicana feminists and performance scholars have explored the context of education as a site of exclusion.

Dialogical Performance. The performance paradigm privileges embodiment and context in theorizing, “particular, participatory, dynamic, intimate, precarious, embodied experience grounded in historical process, contingency, and ideology” (Conquergood “Rethinking Ethnography” 92). The performance paradigm insists on face-to-face encounters instead of abstractions and reductions and asks researchers to learn through the body in ethnography through the act of performance. Privileging embodiment is an approach that is performance centered; therefore, it must account for “both its subject matter and method experiencing body situated in time, place, and history” (Conquergood “Rethinking Ethnography” 92). Theoretically, Joni Jones states that performance ethnography is “how culture is done in the body” (7). Conquergood brought a performance perspective to the practice of ethnography by conceptualizing ethnography through the lens of performance, and conceptualizing the research process itself as a cultural interaction and part of a larger social structure (“Rethinking Ethnography” 92). The language of culture as a performance provides an avenue to capture “struggle, passion, and praxis of village life” and to conceptualize humankind as alive—the lives of people are “creative, playful, provisional, imaginative...” with their expressions grounded in the struggle of making their life (Conquergood “Rethinking Ethnography”

92). This view of performance ethnography understands that our reality, which consists of our notions of identity, culture, and lived experience, is consciously and unconsciously created in everyday interactions (41).

Performance, in relation to cultural practice, is defined as strategic engagement of material bodies; it is a “displayed enactment of ideology and enflashed knowledge-influenced and motivated by politics of race, gender, power, and class” (Alexander et al. “Introduction” 2). Our daily interactions are limited and negotiated by the culture and systemic structures we experience and learn from in our everyday (Esquibel and Mejia 41). Performance ethnography provides the methodological tools to investigate our expressions of culture, with a focus on bodies as a component of cultural systems. By reorienting our positions as researchers from distanced observer to a co-constructor, we are then able to examine our role in the scholarly engagement in and construction of research (Hamera from Madison 165).

Performance ethnography: offers the researcher a vocabulary for exploring the expressive elements of culture, a focus on embodiment as a crucial component of cultural analysis and a tool for representing scholarly engagement, and a critical, interventionist commitment to theory in/as practice. (Hamera “Performance Ethnography”)

Ethnographers should not rely solely on understanding through sight, but aspire, at a minimum, for a deeper engagement with people by listening. Ethnographers must move away from a distanced gaze to a co-performance stance and “live in the embodied engagement of radical empiricism, to honor the aural/oral sounds that *incorporate* rather than *gaze over*” (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 186). Deep engagement with the participants requires being in dialogue with them.

Dialogical performance is a term coined by Conquergood, describing the emphasis of dialogue in ethnographic studies; like Chicana feminism, it is a coalition building project aiming to “bring together different voices, world views, value systems, and beliefs so that they can have a conversation with one another” (“Performing as a Moral” 75). It is a path of genuine understanding on an interpersonal level, and its aim is to bridge self and other by stimulating questions, debate, and challenges (Conquergood “Performing as a Moral” 75). Conversations are with one another and not about one another (Conquergood “Performing as a Moral” 77).

Conquergood offered the dialogic performative, building upon Victor Turner’s concept of homo performans constructs humans as not just tool wielding creatures, but also as performers, inventors of culture, and social-performers who are self-made with the ability to transform (Conquergood “Rethinking Ethnography” 92). Embodied knowledge is established discursively but performativity may also be viewed as an “internalized repetition of subversive acts inherited by contested identities” (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 181). Performativity, as theorized by Judith Butler “is an internalized repetition of hegemonic stylized acts inherited from the status quo” (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 181). Performativity can be considered as repetitive action that creates turmoil within hegemonic structures. It identifies these actions within a culture, locating and describing them within a framework of power relationships and social norms (Alexander et al. “Introduction” 2). Hamera writes, “A performative is both an agent of and a product of the social and political surround in which it circulates. Its effects are reinforced through repetition” (“Introduction” 6).

As an institution, education can be viewed as a performative process—a repetitive process of molding students. Through symbolic meanings and practices, everyday experiences on college campuses reinforce and reproduce the political and economic dominance of one group over others. It is through performative rites and rituals on university and college campuses that spaces are created where only certain bodies are welcomed while others are denied. Thus, the academy—like border crossings—is a political zone: a space where we can monitor the mobility, flow, and migrations of people. It is a space where we can examine communicative practices to gain insight of power and political economics, circulations of meaning, and stratification of resources (Pineau 32). The process of constructing knowledge may be viewed as an apolitical project, but there are people whose bodies can access these spaces easily and those who are questioned, detained, interrogated, and strip-searched before being able to enter the same spaces (Conquergood “Performance Studies” 32). Research is a generative process that creates textual knowledge, but it also creates an embodied knowledge.

In the article, “SomeBodies in School: Introduction,” communication and performance scholars, Leda Cooks and John T. Warren, highlight the importance of understanding bodies in the process of schooling (211). They summarize scholarship on critical educational structures and articulate how schooling is an embodied practice. Cooks and Warren write, “Institutional structures and biases that shape our understanding of performance in schools, with the performative gestures/actions of everyday teaching and student-ing...” (212).

Cooks and Warren ask which bodies occupy educational spaces and frame these spaces as political stating, “Bodies demand space, and space in schools is never

apolitical” (212). I argue that it is actions in everyday performances that create turmoil within hegemonic structures. Scholars like Conquergood and Warren pull us toward an acknowledgement of the power dynamics at play in everyday moments (“Performance Studies”). Conquergood understands the local contexts of higher education (like institutions) as encompassing “historical, dynamic, often traumatic, movements of people, ideas images, commodities, and capital” (“Performance Studies” 32). In everyday moments within these intuitions, choices are made—choices deciding which programs deserve funding, or who implements the programs and continues with their daily management. His analysis concentrates on the production of power through performance; it questions how “performance can reproduce, enable, sustain, challenge, subvert, critique, and naturalize ideology” (Conquergood “Rethinking Ethnography” 97). We can learn not only how performances normalize ideologies, but we can also question how performances simultaneously reproduce and resist inequitable power practices, as well whether specific performances accommodate or resist dominant ideologies (Conquergood “Rethinking Ethnography” 97). What we have considered local is now a “leaky” construction where global forces are contested in the local sites of the everyday (Conquergood “Performance Studies” 32). The social dynamics, which construct the programs and the spaces that house academic programs, may be considered performances that we take part in daily.

Reflexivity and Positionality. Dialogical Performance is an ethical imperative that both embraces and complicates diversity, difference, and pluralism (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 186). Madison calls upon us, as researchers, to participate in a dialogical performative and not perpetuate ideologies of Otherness as we take part in this process

(“The Dialogic Performative” 320). It is through a dialogue that we learn, but we also create as we learn. Madison states that the “dialogic performative is charged by a desire for a generative and embodied reciprocity, sometimes with pleasure and sometimes with pain” (“The Dialogic Performative” 320). Dialogic performance engages participants with an approach that emphasizes ethics, asking ethnographers to be reflexive of how their choices impact the world around them, and to consider various ethical implications of their choices, which are connected to power. It is a way of “finding the moral center as much as it is an indicator that one is ethically grounded” (Conquergood “Performing as a Moral” 77). His work pushed scholars to be reflexive and account for a variety of ethical implications in their field work, from their positionality as they enter their context of study, to the political, material results of their scholarship on the communities they focus on (Donkor 821).

Conquergood asks researchers to move away from seeking knowledge from communities and position themselves in a place of more profound and deep listening—to not be a spectator and gaze out toward another, but risk for a more equitable meeting. The importance of reverence that Conquergood demands in this situation morphs the dialogic performative to co-performative witnessing, which gets at power and researcher responsibility (Madison “The Dialogical Performative” 322).

Conquergood notes that “not only are metaphysical pretensions of scientific objectivity epistemologically suspect in a fieldwork setting, they are ethically shaky as well” (“Performing Cultures” 21). Conquergood calls into question behavioral assumptions that are performed or enacted between the ethnographer and those who they engage with for research (“Performing as a Moral”).

Conquergood further states:

“The relationship between ethnographer and native is not a natural one; it is constructed and contingent upon a willing suspension of disbelief by both parties, questioning the implied belief that both parties agree they come from differing and disconnected worlds” (“Performing Cultures” 21)

He challenges the positioning of an ethnographic researcher and what is being done with the research itself. D. Soyini Madison further explores the relationship between a researcher and their subjects through critical ethnographic methods. Arguing that these methods are no longer conventional in their approach as researchers are not removed observers devoid of power (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 1).

Conquergood posits that “the concept of culture an ethnographer takes into the field will determine his or her ‘positionality’ within the field, thus shaping how the data are collected, or construed, and represented” (“Performing Cultures” 16). How one positions themselves has an impact on the process of gathering research. Dialogic performance places an emphasis on the means of intercultural understanding, and how we get to that understanding as a scholar matters (Conquergood “Performing as a Moral” 77). Thus, in this project, I bring the philosophy and ethics of the dialogic performative/co-performative witnessing to my work as a critical, qualitative researcher.

Dialogic performance is useful in a meta-examination of the communication phenomena occurring while in the process of conducting research. Conquergood aims to combine the disparate ethnographer and community of study so that they may challenge, question, and debate one another (“Performing as a Moral” 75). Being able to reposition ourselves and our interlocutors would allow for researchers of diversity scholarship to be in dialogue with people experiencing life on college campuses. This approach to

performance resists conclusions, as it is committed to keeping dialogue between researcher and their interlocutors open and ongoing (Conquergood “Performance as a Moral Act”). For this to happen, ethnographers must work to create intimate conversation and suspend either/or thinking to instead, work from a both/and, yes/but framework where they make vulnerable their preconceived assumptions of another’s culture.

Creating Space. Being able to further explore the academic research process requires the development of diverse methodologies. The lack of methodological diversity found in research today is characterized by Conquergood as an “epistemic violence” and this violence impacts communities of color disproportionately (“Performance Studies” 34). Epistemic violence occurs from an overreliance on dominant epistemologies because they “place an austere value of seeing with knowledge and in turn devalue knowledge that is indirect, hidden, camouflaged, and embedded within context” (Conquergood “Performance Studies” 34). Because of the lack of epistemological diversity, Conquergood asks that we make space for performance studies as it can transgress forces of normative traditions—traditions that need to be problematized (“Beyond the Text” 59).

Madison situates performance ethnography as a form of critical ethnography. She characterizes critical ethnographies as beginning “with an ethical responsibility to address the processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular domain” (*Critical Ethnography* 5). This concept of ethnography is central to the orientation of my theoretical construction of performance. One element implicated within this characterization of critical ethnography is that the ethnographer must take on an ethical responsibility, and this can be understood as what Madison describes as a “sense of duty and commitment” to equality, and empathy to the suffering of living beings and our natural surroundings

(*Critical Ethnography* 5). Scholarship has a political purpose and requires ethical responsibilities. Thus, a question of positionality arises: “Critical ethnography must further its goals from simply politics to the politics of positionality. The question becomes, ‘How do we begin to discuss positionality as ethnographers and as those who represent Others?’” (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 7).

D. Soyini Madison brings attention to how scholars resist falling into conventional research positionalities:

What does it mean for the critical ethnographer to ‘resist domestication’? It means that she will use the resources, skills, and privileges available to her to make accessible-to penetrate the borders and break through the confines in defense of-the voices and experiences of subjects whose stories are otherwise restrained and out of reach. This means the critical ethnographer contributes to emancipatory knowledge and discourses of social justice. (*Critical Ethnography* 6)

Here, Madison also characterizes critical ethnographic researchers by what they do, encouraging ethnographers to play a role in changing conditions toward a greater freedom and equity (*Critical Ethnography* 5). A critical ethnographer disrupts the status quo, and unsettles neutrality and taken for granted assumptions, bringing to light underlying operations of power and control. A critical ethnography is a creator, resisting domestication by focusing on what could be.

Dialogic performance is committed to social justice and Chicana feminist scholars have embodied these imperatives. Chicana feminist theory has invested in the development of anti-colonial theory and methods that create space for marginalized voices. Chicana feminist theories complement dialogic performance in several ways. First, in terms of researcher praxis, both perspectives heavily weigh the role of the researcher/scholar in the construction of research and education. Performance privileges

embodied experience by framing the practice of fieldwork in research as a performance itself, taking this stance positions the knowledge creation process of research in the field as a contested site that we can interrogate. We can interrogate the performances of identity of all involved in the process in relation to power structures (Johnson “Introduction” 7). Second, both Chicana feminist theories and dialogic performance acknowledge education as a political space impacted by structural pressures. Lastly, they work toward the development of theoretical and methodological tools to bring about new educational practices that create space for marginalized voices.

BRIDGING CHICANA FEMINIST THEORY AND DIALOGICAL PERFORMANCE

I have chosen to investigate the experiences of undocumented students attending three institutions to illuminate student experiences in contrast to institutional practices and policies that seek to intervene in making inclusive spaces for students who have been historically excluded from colleges and universities. This lack of institutional response continues to remain unquestioned. While institutions have specifically adopted diversity policies to address the lack of diversity on academic campuses, there remains a need to understand not only why people are excluded, but also how people are excluded from participating in higher education.

In this study, I have conducted interviews paralleling the work of Dalia Rodriguez who, in her article, “Storytelling in the Field: Race, Method, and the Empowerment of Latina College Students proposes Critical Race Theory (CRT),” employs interviews through a lens of Critical Race Theory as method. This method centers on building relationships and anti-colonial scholarship, disrupting racist messages through the use of storytelling, and creating space for both the participant and researcher to resist dominant

structures. Rodriguez argues CRT interviews are disruptive of traditional research, stating that traditional research methods are insufficient for studying “racial and ethnic” populations, partly because of their vested interests in white hegemonic ideals (491).

As a method, storytelling is central to Rodriguez, who develops anti-colonial scholarship by documenting the voices of marginalized people and centering social transformation. Rodriguez is critical of traditional research methods because they have little depth in describing issues surrounding race and racism, stating, “Absent from texts is a critical discussion about race and racism, and analysis of how race mediates the research process” (491). She focuses on the narratives of marginalized people because she understands how traditional ways of research serve to limit educational opportunities for people of color. She believes that “Stories provide new insights into analyzing the role of school for those that have been marginalized, silenced, and disempowered” (Rodriguez 494).

Stories challenge dominant ideology, and they can teach people about how we construct both story and reality (Rodriguez 494). They are a powerful tool to illuminate the obscured racist ideologies operating in our world today; they also highlight how people of color challenge and resist dominant narratives and practices. For Rodriguez, storytelling creates collective transformational spaces, constructs knowledge about self, and deepens understandings of how race functions in the field. Stories have the ability to build a sense of community between those at the margins of society by providing a space to share their experiences. Stories are important in understanding the experiences of undocumented students because it is through narratives that we come to understand ourselves and make sense of our world (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 6). We formulate our

self unconsciously through our social narratives. Stories are a medium through which we come to understand not only ourselves, but also our culture and our nation. They afford us a social perspective and ethical guidelines, telling us what we ‘need’ to know and what we do not need to know (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 7).

Reflexive Methodology. Through her approach with CRT interviews, Rodriguez seeks to construct a reflexive methodology: one that is reflexive in practice, concerned with issues of power (492). Rodriguez states: “A reflexive methodology can be a transformative process for researchers, participants, and the larger community of knowledge builder” (493). Rodriguez argues a reflexive methodology should help raise questions of systemic issues. Conducting research with a reflexive methodology is a holistic process, beginning with the formation of the research process and continuing through the interpretation of the data and its documentation.

A reflexive method is concerned with issues of power, active listening, narrative, discourse, and ethics in the field—including interviewing ethics. It asks the researcher in the field to be reflexive of their social position throughout the research process (Rodriguez 492). The purpose is to create a holistic process that accounts for the position of the researcher, therefore giving the researcher the opportunity to be attentive of the hierarchical, structural, political, and cultural environments shaping the research experience (Rodriguez 493).

Conducting interviews through a CRT lens is a reflexive methodology because it acknowledges the hierarchical dynamics affecting both the researcher and their subject. Conducting interviews as conversations subverts traditional processes and allows the researcher and participant to be more equal rather than hierarchical. The researcher is

positioned as a co-creator of knowledge, but the researcher and participant can reduce the hierarchy between them by being able to share their experiences. This is in contrast to traditional research methods that view the self as a contaminant, asking researchers in the field to remove themselves from the interview to remain objective. They ask fieldworkers to resist informing their participants of their beliefs and values so as to not ‘taint’ the data, and reinforce the social hierarchy operating in this context of researcher and participant (Rodriguez 493).

Reflexivity is critical to helping researchers explore our theoretical positions and biographies, as our social positions “shape what we study and how we study it” (Rodriguez 494). Reflexivity is also a communal process attentive of structural, political, and cultural environments. CRT scholars work to resist racialized inequality. Rodriguez believes storytelling facilitates reflexivity; it is beneficial in researching the narratives of Latina students because it allows her to share her experiences as a researcher to students, and it allows students to share their perspective. She states: “As people of color our stories are often untold. The assertion of our subjectivity as creators and interpreters of text is a political act” (Rodriguez 491). Rodriguez also asserts, “An integral part of CRT is the commitment for social change and action. Educators must engage in social activism beyond the boundaries of school,” as scholars in the field, we are asked to be agents of change (494). Like Rodriguez, I hope to continue to be a stimulus for social change within the academy by invoking non-traditional theories and methods that give space to suppressed voices.

I hope that, by conducting interviews rooted in dialogic performative and Chicana feminism, I give space to undocumented students to voice their experiences on university

campuses. This dissertation bridges Chicana feminist theories with dialogical performance methodologies to investigate the experiences of undocumented students at three universities in the Rocky Mountain region. By employing Conquergood's dialogical performance, I can explore the experiences of students with undocumented status in contrast to larger institutional practices ("Performing as a Moral" 75). By utilizing performance and Chicana feminist theories I have the ontological and epistemological ability to examine power, power that is operating before, during, and after my engagement with students. My goal was to capture the phenomenon in the everyday that constructs and maintains these stratifying cultural structures. These theories provide us with an opportunity to deconstruct dominant ways of knowing (Conquergood "Performance Studies" 33; Galvan 136).

Power can be traced and tracked through communicative practices. Systems of power are the most evident to those who are the most vulnerable. Through performance theories we can examine how bodies experience institutional policies and practices. For example, studies found that Latinx students must be able to cope with ethnic stereotypes and prejudice in the workplace and on college campuses because it is a critical developmental task in addition to career knowledge and experience (Ortiz and Hinojosa 55). This phenomenon of survival for undocumented students is alluded to, but is not the focus of any investigation. As such, there are lost opportunities to find deeper understandings of these everyday practices. Being able to reposition ourselves as co-performers in a dialogical performance of research projects may provide the methodological tools needed to illuminate the knowledge we seek. What remains to be understood from the experience

of undocumented students is how power is impacting their experiences on higher education campuses.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The focus of my study is to examine the experiences of undocumented students on campuses in the Rocky Mountain region. One research question guided this project, focusing on the experiences of undocumented students:

RQ1: What are the experiences of undocumented students on three universities through a lens of Chicana feminist theories and dialogical performance.

The goal was to better understand the experiences of undocumented students and how they navigate university campuses. This study also examines the research process itself. By blending Chicana feminist studies and indigenous theories and methods with performance ethnography, I developed a more self-reflexive activist methodology.

Research Setting. The setting for the project took place at three universities in the Rocky Mountain region. Each is given a pseudonym to protect the identities of the students and institutions. All three universities are four-year institutions located in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. The first is the Private University of the Rockies is one of the oldest independent private universities in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. Its enrollment is over eleven thousand students. Approximately half of its student body is comprised of undergraduate students, with the other half being graduate students. The demographics of its student body is approximately sixty-nine percent white, ten percent Latinx, eight percent International, four percent Asian, two percent Black, and four percent of two or more races (Ucan). The school began as a Seminary College but

now offers over two hundred undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs of study.

Mountain State College is a public urban grant school and has the lowest cost of enrollment of the three schools while it maintains the highest percentage of students of color. It has an enrollment of over nineteen thousand students. The demographic makeup of the school is approximately 60.5% white, twenty-four percent Latinx, 6.4% Black, 4.3% multiracial, 3.9% Asian, 0.5% American Indian or Alaskan, and 0.3% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. MSC has a large population of first generation students with approximately 31.6% of its students being first generation.

Public University of the Rockies is a public university that is part of a larger state university system. Its total enrollment in the fall of 2015 was 4,296 students. Its demographic makeup is seventy-one percent white, 8.5% Latinx, 3.7% Asian, 2.5% Black, .04% American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and ten percent International.

The project was primarily set at a private mid-sized institution in the Rocky Mountain region that has undocumented students enrolled on their campus. The project mostly took place at the aforementioned university because a staff member from the university focused on the development of services and programming for undocumented students. Students were identified by a staff member who had previous knowledge of undocumented students in the area from hosting a conference for undocumented students in fall of 2015. This project also involved students from two nearby universities to develop policy suggestions at their respective institutions.

Sampling Selection and Recruitment. A network or ‘snowball’ sample method was utilized to recruit participants. A network sample is a nonprobability method relying on members of a specific target population to introduce to other members of the same community (Treadwell 110; Baxter and Babbie 135). Because of the specificity of the criteria and difficulty to locate members of the undocumented community, a snowball sample method was the most efficient based on the needed criteria (Baxter and Babbie 135). Participants were chosen based current university students and undocumented status. I relied on staff members from my university to connect me to their network of students who met these criteria. A total of eight participants were interviewed on three different campuses. Some students had Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status, while others who did not were eligible for the state benefits bill.

Interviews were facilitated over a two-month period beginning in June of 2016. The population of study is undocumented students attending PUR, MSC, and PSU. As mentioned previously, the project was partially supported by a Private University of the Rockies staff member who identified potential participants. This staff member was tasked with creating support services and policy for undocumented students. We met and decided to collaborate on a project to create policy recommendations to the university. The staff member was supporting a project at the Private University of the Rockies and sought help with a project intended to understand how undocumented students experienced campus climates in the local area. The project began by interviewing students to understand their perspectives. It was then followed by a second phase, which was to develop policy recommendations that would benefit students with undocumented status at local universities. I believe it is a mutually beneficial site for a dialogical

performance methodology because I could develop a reciprocal relationship with staff from a university program focused on multicultural diversity efforts and programming for undocumented status.

This dissertation project is the first of two parts that begins with gathering qualitative data about the experiences of undocumented students. The second portion of this project, occurring immediately after completion of the project, is a collaboration with interviewed participants from these three schools to co-develop policy for improvement of policies and practices aimed toward students with undocumented status. Considering the ethical foundations of the dialogic performative to create scholarship that is mutually beneficial to the researcher and community of study, this project includes a co-collaborative effort with students, staff, and myself to develop a report of campus climate about undocumented students that includes policy, practices, and programming suggestions. With students, we will work to have the report presented to university leadership.

Following approval from Institutional Review Board (IRB), I collaborated with a staff member involved with diversity programming to be able to reach a wider network of undocumented students attending universities in the Rocky Mountain region. The staff member provided support to undocumented students who had participated in a conference hosted by the university. The staff member identified contacts at local universities who could assist in reaching undocumented students and staff in the area. The staff member contacted identified students for participation; they emailed students and staff with IRB approved emails, and emails were sent to staff selected from various campuses in the Rocky Mountain region. Staff at the respective universities then

forwarded the email to their network of students who had participated in previous events regarding undocumented student education. This email contained information about the study and my contact information. Interested students contacted me via email expressing their interest in becoming participants. Through email, I coordinated the meeting dates, times, and locations with interested students. Due to the vulnerability of the population, precautions were taken to maintain confidentiality of the data. Names and phone numbers were collected to arrange for the interviews. These identifiers are never linked to any interview data. After the interview was completed, the identifiers were destroyed immediately, but no later than at the close of the study.

Interviews were recorded on a password protected digital recorder and memory device. Soon after, the data was transferred onto a password protected personal computer. Once transferred to the personal computer, each interview was deleted from the digital recorder and memory device. To protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms have been given to each of them, with the pseudonyms also applied to all documenting materials. I completed transcriptions, and all research documentation utilized their pseudonyms. In addition, transcription data was stored on a password protected computer. Encrypted digital-audio data were stored in a password protected computer. Once transcripts were completed, the digital recordings were destroyed within two months of the final transcription.

Informed consent hard copy papers with each of the participants' pseudonyms were kept locked in a drawer separate from the memory device with the recorded interviews. Informed consent paperwork did not have any identifying information and will be shredded after the project has been completed and a calendar year has passed. To

further protect confidentiality, all participants were asked not to share what people talked about or who attended the group. Everyone involved in the study, including interviewers and research staff, took an oath of confidentiality and was required to keep information about others private and confidential. Participation was voluntary and participants were told they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants could also request a transcript of interviews and could delete or change any portion of the interview prior to final analyses.

After receiving approval by IRB, I interviewed eight students: five females and three males. The interview times for the participants ranged between fifty and ninety minutes. I digitally recorded and transcribed each interview. All identifiable information was removed and participants were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Afterward, I listened to audio transcriptions to gain a better understanding of their voices. These audio recordings were destroyed when the study concluded.

Data Sources. Using a dialogical performance approach in my interviews, adapted from performance ethnography, I collaborated with students on this project to better understand how they make sense of their experiences attending three institutions in the Rocky Mountain region. This project utilized semi-structured, qualitative interviews with participants as its data source. The interview was guided by an interview protocol with a list of predetermined questions, but participants were also allowed the space to tell their story in their own words (Treadwell 216). While I developed the interview protocol with the goal of understanding the individual experiences of undocumented students, I also allowed myself space to ask impromptu follow up and probing questions, and to express my own insights and views (Baxter and Babbie 329). The guiding interview questions

centered on students' migration experiences, barriers due to undocumented status, and support received while in school (See Appendix for interview protocol).

Interview techniques were highly influenced by Dalia Rodriguez's approach of Critical Race Theory Interviews—a purposeful, political, and positional choice to develop a bridge and identify with students. In the beginning of each interview, I would dialogue with students and continue to do so throughout the interview process. In the beginning of interviews, I would purposely disclose my background and motivation for conducting this study. As someone with a similar ethnic background to the students, it was easy to talk about our experiences with family. Information I purposely disclosed to students included my experience with close family members who are undocumented, as it primarily motivated me to conduct this research. I would talk about how I had to translate for close family members as I child because my family members were not comfortable speaking English. My goal through this dialogue was to create a comfortable space and establish a common bond. In addition to commonality, I hoped to decrease the power distance between myself, as the researcher, and my participants.

Data Analysis. I answer calls by scholars in both fields of Communication Studies and Chicana/o Studies for the development of coalition building, as well as anti-colonial, emancipatory, and social justice-oriented research. The qualitative data collected in my research and through these eight interviews was examined through a dialogical performance and Chicana feminist lens. I draw on Chicana feminist scholarship of storytelling and bridging with scholarship on performance ethnography to collect and situate undocumented students' stories of their university experiences, as well as my own experiences. I use a dialogical performance perspective in conjunction with a Chicana

feminist lens to collect, analyze, and present the themes found within the personal stories of undocumented students. The goal of my analysis was to utilize a Chicana feminist lens to expose the power structures and dynamics operating in a university setting. By focusing on the experiences of students, as well as my own experiences, I am able to give space to voices that have been historically been suppressed within traditional research. As a researcher, I must utilize a reflexive methodology in making sense of the data I was capturing and simultaneously creating.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT EXPERIENCES

In the following chapter, I unpack the interviewees perspectives as they relate to my research questions. The first section of this chapter introduces interview participants, providing background information. My aim is to provide a fuller picture of who they are and why they are interested in this research. In the subsequent three sections I present themes as they relate to my research question. In the second section I present the experiences of undocumented students at their respective institutions. Following the presentation of the experiences of undocumented students, I present section three which addresses how Chicana feminist theories help make meaning of the experiences of undocumented students. Finally, I address the bridging of Chicana feminist theories and dialogical performance and the impact the of co-construction of research with undocumented students.

PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS

Bernardo. Bernardo, age 20, was entering his Junior year and was determined to reach graduate school. He is of Dominican descent, having come from the Dominican Republic to Miami, Florida in October of 2001. He was in the fourth grade when he migrated with his mother and two sisters, with his father coming later. First his older sister made the trip on her own, then he, his mother, and second older sister. His father came later. They moved to the area and have been here ever since then. He suffered a lot

when he first moved to the U.S. He struggled, even though he had attended bilingual schools, he retreated into a shell. Those first six months of living in the U.S. was extremely difficult. He was sad and cried a lot, not able to speak English. Now at the university Bernardo is finding his way despite the barriers and micro-aggressions he has faced. He continues toward his goal of becoming a Ph.D. and a scholar-administrator. He would like to work with students like himself to help guide them past the barriers. Bernardo had just completed his sophomore year. Bernardo is active on campus. He has gone from fearing school at an early age to finding sanctuary in schools, as he says they are sanctuaries for people with difficulties. School feels safe to him because he feels it is a reprieve from the issues at home. As a high school student, he would attend school from 7 am to 10 pm at night, staying on school grounds as often, and as long, as possible. He finds himself participating in any and all student activities. The high school campus provided shelter for him, but it also has helped mold him into the student he is today. Thus, his success is not accidental.

Bernardo was the first participant I interviewed, he responded via email and reached out to schedule an interview with me after I initially sent out an email to a list of students who have attended school workshops for undocumented students. Coordinating via email we set to meet on the campus on Private University of the Rockies (PUR). We had previously been introduced at community functions, though I was not aware he was an undocumented student. A staff member on campus facilitated a meeting between us by email and from there we coordinated our meeting for the interview via email. He had told

me he had become extremely interested in the research and the project. His words stuck with me.

Meeting with him I was filled with hope. Although I was emotionally exhausted after our interview, I was still spiritually filled and had a sense of hope. I felt very comfortable with him. He was the first of the eight people I would interview. I wondered if I was possibly too comfortable with him. It was as if he was a friend and we had known one another for a long time. During the interview I was impressed by Bernardo. He identifies a gay Latinx man. As a student leader on his campus, his determination is evident. Yet like each of the people I interviewed, I sensed both certainty and uncertainty.

Daniela. Daniela, age 20, migrated to the U.S. when she was a year old. She does not remember how exactly she came to the U.S. She is a senior, and hopes to continue her education in post-graduate school. Daniela is also a leader on campus through activism and participation in social groups and activities. She is regularly involved with student led activities for undocumented students. Daniela received a prestigious scholarship assisting her with much of the costs of attending the university. This has allowed her to focus primarily on her classes, still, despite having much on her plate Daniela has chosen to volunteer as a coordinator of the undocumented student summit and as a mentor to high school youth.

Daniela has worked extremely hard to reach the university and has lived without her parents since high school. During her junior year of high school her father was detained and deported. Unfortunately for her, she did not get to speak to her father before

he was deported to Mexico. Soon thereafter one of her brothers visited their father in Mexico and decided to stay permanently. Her mother missed her father and brother, and decided to move back to Mexico after giving birth to the youngest of four siblings. All of Daniela's brothers were born in the U.S. When her family returned to Mexico she was left with no one from her immediate family. Thus, she lived with her aunt until graduating high school. After high school Daniela moved in with a friend from the university. While she has been successful, Daniela has not had the same support system as other students who have their family nearby. She says that she hardly speaks with her parents now that they are in Mexico because she does not have time to think about what happened. She cannot afford to spend time worrying, she must work and go to school. She has been focused on graduating and has fought to create space for herself and other undocumented students on her campus. Fortunately for her, she qualified for DACA and received a scholarship that assisted with paying for her tuition. Still, she must work to pay for the rest of her expenses. Thus, her grades have suffered for it.

I met Daniela prior to interviewing her. We had spoken about my project before and she was helpful in connecting me to other participants. We met at a university library. She was very upbeat and hopeful as she felt empowered by all she could accomplish. What stood out to me most was an underlying anger. It might have just been me, but after each interview I felt anger growing inside me. This interview also felt draining, emotionally. Here is an exceptional student and campus activist, and she must struggle to get through her undergraduate degree while having a prestigious scholarship

assisting with much of her costs to pay for attending college, she is still unable to find employment and has a difficult time with transportation.

Luis. Luis, age 18, was a senior, working part-time at a local automotive retail outlet. Born in Chihuahua, Mexico he migrated to the U.S. with his family at age two. He remembers when he and his mother made the trek from Mexico to the U.S. His father had left two years prior and had secured a home for them to live before he and his mother made the move.

He expresses gratitude for the sacrifices his parents have made because now they can have their own business. Thankfully, they can help him financially and emotionally. They help with finances because he is not eligible for many scholarships. When his family first moved to the U.S. his father worked for a manufacturer of artwork and his mother began earning money by babysitting children and cleaning homes. After a few years, they decided to go into business for themselves and started their own residential cleaning business. Their success has given their family financial stability, and in turn, the ability to help Luis pay for school. He is very grateful because he is in a difficult position of being unable to secure financial aid. His inability to secure a scholarship has left him feeling frustrated. Not only did I sense his frustration, but also his vulnerability.

I met Luis through a colleague in another college on my campus who had worked with him at a high school campus during her practicum for social work. I contacted him via email to ask where he would prefer to meet, and he was very open to meeting at the place of my choice. I mention this because what stood out about him is how

accommodating he was to me. We met on my campus rather than somewhere closer to him. Luis made himself very vulnerable during our conversation, revealing how, at times, that he felt depressed. His first two years of college were difficult for a variety of reasons, but mostly because of the poor interactions he experienced with financial aid and career counselors. He felt like giving up. He felt what I would describe as a deep disrespect, feeling that staff had talked down to him like he was nothing. All this has stayed with him. Not being helped by the very people who are supposed to provide support and instead feeling contempt, hurt his confidence. He contemplated quitting because staff members neglected his requests, and he lost hope. However, his family and friends would not let him quit. They knew how much college meant to him. He has gone through a lot and then I learned there's more.

As he told me that he had been molested, I had no idea how to respond. I almost glossed over that disclosure of information. What I found amazing is how he has turned that traumatic experience into a source of resiliency. He offers, "If I was able to get through that I can get through anything." It makes sense to me now why he wants to be a psychology major and social work counselor. He wants to help other people and strives to be positive. Although I feel his pain and it weighs on me, I did not sense anger from him. I sensed warmth and caring. He cares about other students and wants to work to support students like himself. His warmth and caring wash over me like the morning sun during a cold winter; it flows over me like a blanket. But I still feel anger. Luis did not see counselors on campus as services at the time were not available to him. I left that meeting in pieces; part of me impressed by his resilience, and another part of me disappointed

with the lack of empathy by an academic structure that does not give him space for support.

Nancy. Nancy, age 18, was a senior and was expecting to graduate in the fall of 2016. Born in Jalisco she had migrated to the U.S. at age 5. Her father had made the trip before the rest of the family. He first landed in California and moved around the country for a bit until finding stable employment in Aurora, Colorado. She can recall bits and pieces of when she migrated, saying it was very tough. She recalls walking through grass until she was exhausted. Then her mother carrying her while her older brother and sister walked. She recalls how at times they would hide under trees and bushes to avoid being spotted by Border Patrol helicopters.

She remembers the home they first lived in. They had to share it with another family and all five slept in the living room for the first year. She recalls being relieved when they moved into a one bedroom that she enjoyed because it was their own space. Since those humble beginnings, she has found success as a leader at the community college, and now she is a staff member at a local organization near her home. Nancy has received three associates degrees and was valedictorian of her high school class. She felt a lot of pressure because financially she did not want to burden her family so she chose a community college nearby. She was able to enter a nursing program with a guaranteed transfer to a prestigious university health program. She was on track to transfer when she became ill and was hospitalized. She received the difficult news that she was diagnosed with an auto-immune disease that has made it difficult her to be on her feet for hours at a time. She did not believe she would be able to be effective as she doubted her ability to

work twelve-hour shifts. She then decided to apply to a university in the Rocky Mountain region where she received a full academic scholarship. Disappointed and disillusioned she continued forward, deciding to pursue a different degree at a university in the Rocky Mountain region. She became a student leader and through this role she has become familiar with the support services on campus that help her be a successful student, like the immigration services her university offers and she is a part of an undocumented student organization.

Nancy and I were connected through a staff member from a local community college who had receive my flyer by email. This staff member was recognized by the undocumented student community as supportive and safe. The community college staff member connected us via email and I coordinated a meeting with Nancy at a community college near her. We met in the evening and the campus was quiet and lonely, which was normal for the summer session. Healthcare is a primary concern for Nancy. Her diagnosis changed the trajectory of her academic career. At the time, she had limited access to healthcare and she decided to pursue a degree at a university where she would be less burdened by the costs of education. Not one to give up, Nancy did not focus on what she did not have, but instead on what was available to her, and she took advantage of the opportunities she had. I tell myself that I have much to learn from students like her, singularly focused with the ability to balance difficult situations without those situations defining who they are.

Olivia. Olivia, age 19, is a sophomore and a student leader. She was born in Chihuahua. She remembers very little about when she migrated, having been brought to

the U.S. only a couple months after birth. Olivia did not know she was undocumented until age fifteen when tried to obtain a driver's license. Like many other teenagers she wanted to drive, she was aware of her undocumented status, her parents had told her "*no tenemos papeles*" but was not sure exactly what it meant for her and how it would impact her life. When she was fifteen she attempted to apply for a driver's license but was denied because she did not have a social security number. She spoke about the possibility of having to leave the U.S. to study in Mexico, but she dreams of working at Google, visiting Silicon Valley, and studying Law and Technology. She wants to be a role model to her younger sister, to Hispanic women, and women who want to be computer science majors.

Olivia attended a school of science and technology and prepped for college by volunteering at a regional hospital nearby. She did not qualify for vital in-state, national, and STEM scholarships. This hurt her a great deal and she questioned her decision, thinking that her effort was fruitless, it was not worth it to try so hard if she was not going to receive in-state tuition. Initially, her father did not want her to go to college, so she took both her parents to a couple college visits. Her university provided an orientation in Spanish that her parents understood, and as a result, they supported her decision to pursue college. Olivia had been part of a local scholarship foundation. During the application process to the college she did not receive any institutional assistance. She reached out to a cousin, a college graduate, who walked her through the application process. However, Olivia had a lot of trouble with her financial aid. Fortunately, she qualified for a state-run program helping marginalized students with support navigating college. The program

does not provide financial assistance but provides a variety of services for first generation college students, they help by connecting her work with academic counselors and mentors to assist her with struggles of attending college.

Olivia also worries about DACA. Having reapplied for it recently, she is waiting for a response, riddled with anxiety. Losing her DACA status would mean she would lose her driver's license and employment. She feels her life is at the mercy of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Not being certain whether she will be able to provide for her family weighs on her. She fears losing the comfort of not having to worry about CBP and not having to worry about her future.

Karina. My interview with Karina, a junior at a local university, was the only one conducted mostly in Spanish. We met in a study room at the library of her university. Karina clearly remembers the day when she and her parents migrated from Mexico to the local area, she was age 19, and was about twelve years old when she migrated with her family. Born in Chihuahua, Karina is the oldest of four children. Her three younger brothers were born in the U.S.; therefore, all are citizens. She has some anger about being undocumented. However, she felt she was not missing anything in Mexico. She plays the violin, competes in Judo, and was even invited to join Mexico's Olympic team.

She has had to struggle mightily because she did not qualify for DACA. She had trouble finding a hospital to volunteer with as they would not accept her because she lacked a social security number (SSN). She had to fight for the opportunity to be a volunteer at a local organization because most want a social security number. She is even

taking classes in the summer to graduate sooner. She dreams of becoming a doctor, so she finds any information and workshops on MCAT preparation. At times, she seriously questions her participation in school, asking herself if she's just wasting her money.

Karina constantly thinks of returning to Mexico.

Karina's interview impacted me emotionally. Her revelation of not being able to qualify for DACA was revealing. I had not thought about how a divide may be growing between undocumented residents who qualify for DACA and those that do not. Karina felt that she was further marginalized by DACA, she believed that those that do not qualify for DACA are in a difficult place because she believed programming for undocumented students was centered on students who qualified for DACA. Karina believed students that do not qualify for DACA are left without access to financial aid, and more, she also believes that students who have received DACA have politically lost some support from those that can receive DACA.

Osbelia. Osbelia is 21. We were connected via a staff member at the University of the Rockies who had forwarded my email message and flyer to a listserv that gave information to undocumented students. She was eager to talk about her situation because she had struggled as a college student. She struggled to the point of being placed on academic probation, and it had escalated to her having to serve a suspension for an academic year. Osbelia is unable to take courses.

She works two jobs; one at her university and another in retail. Born in Mexico, at age six her family brought her to the U.S. She remembers little about the event, but she

does recalls that her father had gone ahead of the family before coming back to pick her family up. Having just transferred to her university she was working 45 hours a week at her off campus job while attempting to pay for tuition. Midway through her first semester she still owed $\frac{1}{2}$ the tuition bill, which caused her a tremendous amount of pressure. Needing help, she visited the scholarship office on campus. They were unable to help her and in fact made her feel worse about her situation. They did not know anything about either DACA or the state benefits legislation.

Osbelia signed up for courses in Chemistry, Biology, and Physics. She failed all three classes and unfortunately for her, her G.P.A. dipped below a 2.0, which resulted in her being suspended for the following academic year. With little support, she did not know how to navigate the university system. Still, she did much better when she met Luisa, the administrator, who connected us. Luisa took Osbelia under her wing, guiding her and helping her get a position on campus. Osbelia has a track record of success at the community college and she was accepted into a competitive program. She feels as though it was a mistake to attend this university because of a lack of support for students like her. She has had extreme difficulty to successfully navigate her experience at her campus. As an institution the campus has lacked in supporting her and this has impacted her not only academically, but also mentally and emotionally.

After my interview with Osbelia I questioned how I would be able to help her. I remember being extremely exhausted, I felt her exhaustion not only physically but exhausted with the system. This was one of the moments I felt like giving up, I felt the frustration and asked myself “what’s the point if nothing is going to change?.” I was

unsure of how I could be of help, she is in a very difficult situation having been suspended and financially the barrier might be too much. Her future at her university is uncertain and for undocumented students a setback like this is extremely detrimental to her academic career. After this interview I felt an extreme low that I was not sure I was going be able to move past from.

Cesar. Cesar, age 27, speaks three languages; Mixteco, Spanish, and English. I was surprised to learn that Spanish is his second language and that English is his third. Most of his education has been conducted in English. Born in Mexico, he came to the U.S. at age seven. His father traveled first, then went back to move his two older siblings. Finally, his father made a third trip to transport Cesar and his mother. He had trouble when he attended elementary school because he did not know Spanish very well. Educators believed he might have a learning disability. It was not until someone intervened and informed the school that his first language was Mixteco that Cesar was able to receive the assistance he needed to attend school. He struggled to learn Spanish in elementary and struggled more to learn English. In high school, he decided to learn English better. At times, he felt discouraged because his high school counselors were not helpful in his commitment to improve his English.

I have known Cesar for a long time; he is a student in a graduate program in the field of social services. We have known each other for over a year now, we first met at a training for volunteers at a local non-profit. It was within the first couple weeks of arriving here and he had only recently moved to the area himself. He attended school in the Pacific Northwest. We had spoken about some of the experiences he faced as an

undergraduate student and now as a graduate student. He was a graduate assistant in his graduate program and working specifically on the topic of undocumented students. He is trying to develop policy and services recommendations for undocumented students at his university. Cesar is a great student, but he was not too involved with student leadership in his undergraduate program because the campus is near the U.S.-Canadian border and the Customs and Border Patrol (BP) has a strong presence on the campus. He was extremely fearful of CBP learning of his citizenship status because both his brother and father have been deported, and at the time he did not have any legal protections like DACA. Now he is a part of the DACA program, and because of that, he can receive more help as a student. He was able to receive an assistantship on campus that paid for his tuition and provided a stipend.

In the following section I will introduce and discuss themes found in my interviews, I will begin by discussing the barriers to education, followed by the theme of a lack of mobility, then by the third theme, pressure, guilt, mental anguish, and depression. Within these sections I discuss findings of barriers to education like a lack of support for undocumented students in applying to university campuses, a lack of financial aid opportunities for undocumented students. Students also experience a lack of mobility, they are limited in their ability to take part in study abroad programs, a lack of ability to move within their respective communities due to a difficulty in receiving driver's licenses. I also discuss how the lack of ability leads to families being torn apart. This section of families being torn apart then leads to the discussion of mental health. The

stressors students face lead to students feeling a tremendous amount of pressure, guilt, mental anguish, and depression.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

The students I interviewed face difficulties before they even step foot on a college campus. These difficulties in accessing higher education are largely due to the highly-politicized environment for immigrants in the U.S. as college access and choice has been restricted for undocumented students. The contextual landscape of access, like state bills that open the doors to college, is ever changing. Because of this instability there are additional institutional barriers like the lack of access to college counseling for high school students, academic counseling, and mental health counseling. For example, high-school students face environments in which their high school college counselors believe college is not an option for undocumented students and possibly ignore their needs of throughout this process (Muñoz 40).

Applying to College. I remember the first time I applied to a university, it was a moment of joy and moment I felt great hope for my future. Though I did receive much assistance from a transfer center at the community college I was attending. The process was a learning experience in the bureaucracy of the academy. Still, for undocumented students the application process is much different, it is an experience with much uncertainty because of undefined policies impacting their ability to be officially accepted. This process was difficult for me, even as someone who had received assistance in the process. For undocumented students, the process is made more difficult because many

administrators who are supposed to help them are not knowledgeable in helping them. Undocumented Students report receiving little to no assistance by educational advisers who are responsible for aiding in and reaching secondary education (Muñoz 40). Nancy, a successful high school student, shared her trouble in gathering information for college and scholarships:

And then like in high school, I guess my friends were like getting these Fulbright scholarships at school and getting a bunch of scholarships, being able to go to like college or like a big university. And then I graduated valedictorian in my high school, so I feel like they were expecting a lot from me and then I saw that in current moment as a great opportunity just because I didn't have a lot of access to other things. And my siblings didn't go to college, because there is no money and they had to pay three times more and there wasn't that much help back then and so my brother and sister didn't go, they just graduated high school. My brother was also valedictorian and my sister graduated in the top six. So like my mom expected or like she wanted a lot for us and like we worked hard to get good grades and get involved. But then it was like all went down, I don't know like it wasn't easy for them.

Although Nancy was the Valedictorian of her class, she was not given an opportunity to apply for scholarships. She was locked out of receiving scholarships because at the time institutional and regional scholarships in her area required recipients be legal residents. She informed me that her older siblings were also not offered financial support and missed the opportunity to attend college. Nancy and her siblings were high achieving

high-school students, but they were not considered college bound. She had to find her own way to fund college while her brother and sister were completely denied an opportunity to attend college. These experiences are not isolated incidents caused by a single act of discrimination, but epitomize structural inequality that is founded by institutional neglect in combination with racist attitudes toward migrants. Students like Nancy are not offered support and the complexity of their citizenship status can make it extremely difficult to ask for help.

These students must weigh their options carefully as to whether or not disclose their status. For example, Nancy shared, “And it was hard to explain everything, like having to go through that to my teachers like, oh you see, I don’t have lot of options or I don’t have a lot of help.” Students face injustice throughout their academic career and these situations begin early; thus, students report a lack of support. They must weigh whether a school and its administrators are ‘undocufriendly’ or supportive of undocumented students having college access. These students must be careful because they do not know whether staff lack the knowledge to help them, or much worse, they may encounter someone that would report them to federal authorities. They must carefully manage who to disclose to. Students weigh these options related to support. In some cases, they choose to disclose only to run into uniformed or unwilling school administrators, and are unable to receive support.

Daniela does not remember the application process clearly, but reports having little help during it:

So it's kind of like, you take it, so you take what you can get and so yeah, and I just remember, I don't, it's been just a long time, I don't really remember the application, you know, but, yeah and I usually remember people coming from, like, [university name] to help students, LinkedIn Fellow, they are like applications on it, but they come also to help the CSS profiling and pass them and I do remember like, I don't have to do any of that so what do I do? And it became a kind of like, Oh, I don't know, and you have to do it on your own. So it was a lot of me figuring out what to apply for, what I couldn't apply for and things like that. So it was just, it was a lonely road, like it was just me on my own and trying to figure it out.

Daniela had a lonely road applying because when she did attempt to receive help, she was left to find information on her own. She explains that she was given brief help with little depth. She would have preferred someone guiding her through the process because as a first generation student she does not have people close to her to help with the process. She was provided with a folder with information about scholarships, but without introduction or guidance of the application process, students must be self-motivated and persistent to navigate their way from high school to college.

Bernardo is a student who did not receive any help in applying to a his university, he had to figure out on his own the process for applying to the university as an international student. The campus does not have an official process for undocumented students; thus, the experience was difficult for him. Bernardo shared his experience:

Horrible, I remember I would take so many breaks. I would like start and take so many breaks because I would just feel completely overwhelmed. I have no idea where to even start researching for a school and how to apply for school. I was like I don't have a social security number so what do I do now and then no one in my family really knew how to help. I at the time when I was first starting to apply felt very ashamed because I was ashamed to ask for help and cause I still hadn't told people that I wasn't documented and once I did apply it was then figuring out how do I even get there, how do I – it was just very scary, the whole thing that I had. There was no like I would type it in, so many times I Google like undocumented students college and there was like nothing you could find or [University name] undocumented students or anything like that, any combination of those words, I tried typing in, I had no idea who to reach out to, I was like what do I even do, who do I talk to and it was scary because I felt like there was no one I could talk to, and I felt like very blind, I was like am I doing the right thing, I have no idea what I'm doing, so it was just a very scary process. I am like the type of person that I like being very prepared and in control of what I am doing so this was very scary for me because no matter how much like I tried reading about it, there was nothing I could do or nothing I could find so it was just a weird feeling to feel like I didn't have the power to control where I was going.

Bernardo struggled to apply to the university and found it difficult to ask for help due to his status. Without support, there are many students that do not have the option to persevere. Bernardo did not give up on the process, yet I imagine for many this is a

barrier that stops students from advancing and reaching a college or university. It is not a straightforward process having to apply as an international student though he grew up near the university. Some students have trepidation about the process that requires them to out themselves and disclose their status. It is confusing for undocumented students who have lived their lives in the area surrounding these universities, because for them to be accepted to the university they must go through an application process that suddenly positions them as an international student, an identity that they do not ascribe to. Students must discover the unspoken process the school has for undocumented students of having them apply as international students. It is an unwritten policy that is not advertised nor made widely known that leaves students like Bernardo without any support in applying.

Luis remembered how difficult the process applying to his university was for him. He was unable to find support from university staff and had to figure out the process of applying as an out of state student without a social security number. During his application, period the benefits from a state bill were still not available to him. It was not easy for him to bounce from office to office to find the help he needed.

The application process was actually pretty easy. There were several. Actually, I take that back. Areas where I had to fill social security and all that stuff became difficult. Because they did not have an option to say you do not have a social security; this is what you should do. It just said we need the social security [referring to application form]. So, I would have to go in the office explain to them I do not have a social security I just do not and then going to the program that the inclusive excellence and explain that to them because I guess they do not

know. Sometimes they would delay that and I would feel frustrating because there was due dates and I will be like okay I need to do that but you have not fixed this. It is your part now that they have not finished and it just felt frustrating. I would have to call and [ask] hey what is going on and is this supposed to happen and that application process was frustrating.

Lack of support in the process of applying to college is a beginning for most of the students interviewed and it is an experience that signals what is to come for them.

Career Services. Bernardo negotiated the disclosure of his status when accessing services. He described the first year of his undergraduate career as terrifying; being a new student on campus and additionally having to negotiate whether to reveal his status. In his first year he did not feel comfortable enough to access services, and it was not until his junior year that he overcame this fear out of necessity. He describes his experiences with career services:

Career Services, so like there like until I had to work. I feel uncomfortable going like, definitely before like I definitely knew I was like I'm not going to go there to ask them how I can become, and how I can work for the university, I knew I was like this is not the place to go, at least that is the fear I had in my head, even if that wasn't the reality, it was the fear I had in my head. So that's definitely where I talked to my first and then definitely just like socialization aspect of it, like when you come into your first year of college, you are terrified you are just trying to fit

in, so it definitely something I used to think about a lot in my first year of college, I still think about it a lot now, but it is something that I'm just like it is whatever.

Undocumented students do not feel welcomed. Students weigh revealing their status to strangers, risking their safety in doing so. Students question whether the staff member they are speaking with is supportive of them accessing college. It is also possible the staff member is supportive, yet may not have the understanding it takes to help an undocumented student through the schools' application process, accessing financial aid, or having the social ability to relate to a student facing this struggle.

Luis struggled with receiving support from staff who were not helpful in receiving academic counseling:

I think alright let us do it and I did more research on [University name] and it was hard because I used to be very, very shy and I still kind of I am so when I visit [University name] I did not know what questions to ask them; so, it was just kind of awkward and some other advisors there I would not say they are the best. They just make you feel uncomfortable and talking with them about the situation and I don't feel comfortable sharing this with you because it seems like you are already judging me even though I have not even said anything. I would feel like they would always give up on me. I would ask them what classes do I need to take and I want to go through this career and they would go, why? I am like what you [do] mean, why? I am trying to get an education. So, they are like okay this is what you have to take. But, they would tell me like in a very plain voice like they did

not care like he is just this person it does not matter what we tell. They didn't feel welcoming or like they understood they just say wanted to do their job and get me out of the office.

Luis attempted to gain support at the university and had difficulties with administrative staff who did not make him feel welcomed. It is possible the staff member was intimidated by having to help an undocumented student. In some cases, the student has taken the initiative or burden to assist the staff member to be able to have access to certain services like career services.

Bernardo did not benefit from career services, fearing that utilizing the services due to his status was too much to overcome. It took him time to become comfortable with the campus before seeking out services that were to his benefit. Programs and services lack the messaging to overcome these barriers. Asking students to visit a support program on university or college campus is based on an assumption that everyone on the campus has the best interest in mind of all students. Unfortunately, this is not the case for all students, asking undocumented students to visit any support services on campus without considering or understanding their precarious position may be detrimental to them, due to their precarious position and further they do not know if the staff they are seeking services are knowledgeable enough to help them. Bernardo explained,

Yeah so like the hospitality school, they have like an academic advisor for you there and they are also kind of involved with financial aid. So I remember with that like I had to kind of explain what being undocumented was, like I am this and

this is why I cannot leave the country and this means I can't apply for federal aid, well it would be different for example if I talked to like a financial counselor and if I told her that for a moment I said that I don't know what to do. It just makes a big difference and obviously people can't be trained about everything, there will always be a lot of things you don't know but just some basic training of what that is and what that means can help.

Bernardo was unable to receive counseling that was helpful from a departmental counselor. Although as he mentioned that administrative staff cannot be trained on every subject there can be some level of familiarity with students who have undocumented status.

Students fear facing situations like the one Karina faces. Visiting career services she had a difficult experience.

Mi situación legal, por ejemplo, cuando busqué trabajo, el primer lugar que busqué fue aquí, porque yo fui a las oficinas de careers y ahí te dicen. Es algo muy chistoso lo que me pasó, yo fui con mi amiga y me dijeron: "oh si aquí hay muchos work studies que puedes aplicar y te dan el trabajo"; dije: "ok, y ¿te piden seguro social?" y dice: "no, no te piden seguro social"; perfecto. Entonces yo fui a aplicar aquí a la guardería, me hicieron la entrevista, aplique y me llamaron al siguiente día diciéndome que estaba contratada y yo estaba súper feliz y todo. Entonces me dijeron: "pero necesitamos tu seguro" y le dije: "uhm, ok"; yo no tengo seguro, y me dijeron: "tienes que ir a tales oficinas a que te den uno"; pero

ellos no sabían mi situación realmente y les dije: “ok, cuando tenga mi seguro yo les devuelvo la llamada”; pues nunca fui. Entonces le hablé a esta chava que se llama Andrea y le dije: “Andrea me pidieron mi seguro social y yo recuerdo que tú me dijiste que no necesitaba seguro” y me dijo: “es que no necesitas seguro para aplicar, pero lo necesitas para trabajar”; es lo mismo, para que voy a aplicar si no voy a poder trabajar. Me dio esa respuesta tan tonta y yo así como que, osea, si necesito aplicar necesito el seguro y le dije: “uhm, ok gracias”; osea, no necesitas seguro para aplicar, pero si para trabajar. Entonces, eso sí como que me desanimó y así como que pues ya ni modo. Pero esa es la única manera en que me he sentido así excluida, pero, realmente no es por parte de la escuela, sino pues...

My legal situation, for example, when I looked for work, the first place I looked for was here [career services], because I went to the careers offices and there they tell you. It's a very funny thing that happened to me, I went with my friend and they said: "oh yes there are many work studies that you can apply and they give you the job"; I said, "Okay, and you ask for social security number?" And she says "no, they do not ask for social security"; perfect. Then I went to apply here to the nursery, I was interviewed, applied and they called me the next day telling me that I was contracted and I was super happy and everything. Then they said: "But we need your social security number" and I said "uhm, ok"; I do not have a social, and they told me: "you have to go to such offices to get one"; But they did not really know my situation and I said, "Okay, when I have my social I'll call you back"; But I never went back. Then I talked to this girl called Andrea and I told

her, "Andrea, they asked me for my social security number and I remember that you told me that I did not need a social" and she said: "you do not need a social to apply, but you need it to work"; there's no difference, so I will apply but I will not be able to work. She gave me that silly answer and I was like, hey [repeating Andrea's words], I don't need it to apply but I need it to work and I said "uhm, ok thanks." Then, that like discouraged me and well, what's done is done. But that's the only tie I've felt excluded, but it's really not on the school, but rather..."

Karina had felt excluded and unfortunately had to go through this ordeal. This situation affected her enough to discourage her from accessing career services. Though she brushed off the suggested help as silly and not a big deal, it is not a situation she has forgotten. From listening to her tell the story it is an ordeal that will stay with her for a long time. The situation affected her enough that she can recall it vividly, but she does not have the luxury to dwell on the situation. She must move forward without hesitation. Unfortunately, this is the case for undocumented students. It is a survival mechanism, though it hurts and the pain remains, they do not have the luxury to dwell. Moments that may be traumatic for other students must be brushed off and saved for another day. She moves forward and though Karina had felt excluded by the misinformation of the school staff member she still did not hold it against the school.

Financial Assistance. Despite having an opportunity to apply for financial assistance provided by state legislation, students still struggled to receive funds. Fortunately, for undocumented students in the region they have been provided an opportunity to receive state and institutional aid. Students may receive in-state tuition if they qualify for the

program and in addition they can receive state aid in the form of grants and scholarships, they may also receive institutional and private aid. Still for undocumented students funding is paramount to their success in the academy. Most come from low-income families and finances are a barrier to completing their degree (Perez-Huber and Malagnon 846). Cesar attended an undergraduate program in another state and during his time there he did not have access to state funds. Undocumented students throughout the United States must complete their degrees without the benefit of federal aid.

I just applied and I was just – as soon as I notice that I can you know apply for – because I was applying for this 1079 state law and I was just taking events at everything and whatever he gave that’s one barrier that I was facing. The other one was financially because you know undocumented students don’t get really like any funds, state, fed especially, that’s hard and you can even submit it, because you don’t have a social and state I mean there wasn’t anything back then where it says you know we’ll get some funding to support undocumented students, and so it was language, status, financial support, academic support, ...

Cesar could reach graduate school despite the barriers he had faced economically. Still, it is difficult for undocumented students to navigate the protocols of financial aid departments. Each school has a different process and students must be careful to not incorrectly fill out these forms because in some cases an affidavit is needed to receive in-state tuition, and a mistake can prove costly. Students again must be more careful than other students, a mistake on that form can be considered falsifying a legal document and a crime. There are further implications because being charged with a crime also

implicates their migration status. They may lose any opportunity to apply for residency, they may also face the scrutiny of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Again, students must disclose their status to receive assistance and for many disclosure of their status is scary act, for a variety of reasons. One possible reason is that disclosure of their status for DACA means being in the purview of government agencies (Galindo 377; Harmon et al. 72; Perez-Huber et al. “DACAmended” 1). Bernardo describes his experience,

So the first one is in regard to financial aid or anything with that process. Once here, whenever I'm applying for financial aid again there were a lot of like little forms and all those things at first and I'm like I can't fill that out and I don't know how to fill it out so that brings up questions of what am I am doing, can I do this and often times I feel like I have to disclose this whenever I'm applying, so my financial aid within, within the hospitality school, when they are giving financial aid.

While Bernardo was able to receive financial aid through his major at his university. Other students are not given that opportunity. While on the one hand undocumented students have an extremely difficult process applying to this university, students have more financial opportunities. Private universities are not subject to the same limitations that public universities face with assisting undocumented students. Private universities may offer institutional aid in the form of scholarships and stipend positions paid through private funds. While undocumented students at public schools are accepted more regularly into public community colleges and universities, these

institutions have much more limited resources. Public institutions must be sure the funds they allocate to undocumented students are not derived from federal funding. Though they receive private aid in terms of scholarships, they have extremely limited privately funded scholarships to serve a growing community. Olivia for example chose to attend college despite having limited access to financial aid. Students must be able to effectively manage ambiguous circumstances to be able to survive in the academy.

That was very difficult. I think I got a grant, my first semester I got a grant from the school, but after that you know I can't apply for any scholarships, because it's hard, so I can't apply for any – like I can't apply for it, I can't apply for all those really big scholarships, although I did qualify for some of them. So, that was definitely difficult. The school doesn't really give a lot of scholarships for undocumented students, so that was very, very hard. We had to pay some [school fees] off.

Overall, undocumented students like Olivia must navigate so many barriers, particularly with financial aid there are many landmines. Depending on the school, the financial aid department may have limited knowledge of even state funded aid available to their students. In the case of Olivia, she does not have an opportunity to apply for scholarships available to documented students that cover most of the costs of attending college. A large local private scholarship is only available to documented students. This can also be very discouraging that students are competing for limited funds.

LACK OF MOBILITY

A common theme among the eight students interviewed is how they have been impacted by an inability to move freely within their own community but also outside of their communities. Due to undocumented status, the ability for the students to commute within the areas they live as well as the ability to travel is severely limited. They are limited in their ability to travel because in a large majority of the U.S. undocumented residents do not have access to driver's licenses and state identification. This impacts their ability to commute to school and work. In addition to that undocumented residents are unable to freely travel internationally. They are restricted from traveling to their home countries to visit families. Many undocumented residents and students do not have access to U.S. government issued identification and this makes little things like being able to join friends for entertainment difficult, Nancy alludes to this inability to freely move within the areas they reside:

being held back from those benefits like health insurance or those little things that people don't – and in my Chicano studies class this guy mentioned that his friend was undocumented and he didn't have an ID. So when they went to like clubs and they would ask for an ID, I guess they didn't take the Matricula or something or something happened that he didn't have an ID so that they weren't letting him in. And it's true; it's little things that we don't have access to.

Having state issued identification is a benefit that mostly goes unnoticed unless. For those without institutionalized access are much more aware of the privilege others have in being able to access state issued identification. While it may seem trivial to some for undocumented residents it is a much more consequential difference in their daily life.

Drivers Licenses. Drivers licenses are important to teenagers as they transition from being high school students to becoming college students gaining their independence. But for undocumented students this process is a source of difficulties in their lives for several reasons. Recently, the state passed state legislation that allows undocumented residents of the state to obtain identifications and drivers licenses.

On the driver's license thing that is for high school students it is a big deal I wanted to apply to get a license and they are like well you cannot you are not documented and I was like what is that mean I do not understand that I feel like a citizen I feel like I do everything I was supposed to do. I am involved in community and all that but they are like it does not matter if you are documented we cannot give you a license.

As evidenced in the above quote, Luis was hoping to apply for a driver's license like other teenagers, but was unable to apply due to his status.

Being excluded puzzled Luis. Although he has participated in community work he had not been allowed to apply.

Yeah everybody is like we are going to get our license. I cannot, I have to walk home. I have to walk here I have to walk there. It was awkward conversation sometimes but for the most part like my best friends parents they understood completely and eventually I started hanging out more with people that I can identify with like undocumented.

Luis would have to explain to other students and parents why he was unable to apply for a license. Though he did disclose his status to his best friend and his best friend's parents, he did not always disclose this information. Having that conversation can place undocumented students in awkward positions, as Luis mentioned, and unfortunately for undocumented students there are no other options to be able to drive. A young resident must apply through the Department of Motor Vehicles. The inability to apply for a license forces Luis to only rely on walking, biking, and public transportation. In a society where driving is considered a rite of passage, this exclusion is difficult for undocumented students. Without having a path to driving within the legal parameters, learning to drive becomes a politicized act.

Osbelia was forced into an extreme situation having to learn to drive in the cover of the night. She learned to drive in early mornings, before four a.m. to avoid police officers. This was an extremely dangerous circumstance for her and her father because if they were to be pulled over they would be exposed to deportation procedures:

My dad would teach me, he taught me how to drive like really, really late at night, it was like four. That's how I learnt how to drive because he felt that it would be just safer and since I was learning and I could like just wouldn't bump into like the cops, so I was working at a bakery and I would drive there, it was like four, actually like three because I had to be there at four. And I would just like very slowly drive there, and that's how I learned how to drive.

The reality is that many undocumented people around the nation are driving without a valid driver's license. Only twelve states in the U.S. offer drivers licenses to undocumented residents (National Conference of State Legislatures "States Offering"). Driving without a license though common is risky, it is risky for undocumented immigrants because they may be in a situation where local police are notifying ICE when they have apprehended someone they suspect is undocumented. Without a driver's license, many undocumented residents are also unable to purchase auto insurance and without auto-insurance undocumented residents are at risk for losing their vehicle to police impound as police officers may impound the vehicles of residents who have neither a license or insurance (Harrow "The Problem of Car Insurance"). As Osbelia mentioned, she purposely drives slowly to not attract the attention of police officers. Without being provided the guidance of a driver's education or time with an instructor, young undocumented students must learn on their own and like other persecuted communities must find refuge in the dark. Lastly, these drivers are at risk because in the case of an accident they do not have insurance coverage to cover any damages. This situation has several implications. One is that in case of an accident undocumented residents may leave the scene so as not to be questioned and subsequently arrested by investigating police officers. Further, they do not have any coverage to cover damages they may have inflicted on another driver.

This is seriously unfortunate because this is an argument frequently held against undocumented residents. As Nancy shares, "I mean I was driving, but did not have a license. And so we cannot really get a car, because my mom had to register her car

through like her friend's name.” Nancy and her family are unable to even purchase a car so they must register the vehicle under someone else's name. Again, it is a common practice that has several ethical implications that impact residents. In a country where only twelve states allow driver licenses to undocumented residents, one of the reasons for registering the vehicle in the name of someone with a driver's license is that it is much easier to purchase insurance, manage vehicle registration, or for any other administrative purposes that require paperwork, but also because they must present valid identification to their local motor vehicle office, if asked. Additionally, if an undocumented resident's vehicle is towed and impounded by the police department they may have a difficult being able to recover their vehicle. Having the vehicle registered in the name of someone with a valid identification, would ease the process of recovering the vehicle. Driving is integral in our world today; it allows residents to be able to move freely around the community. Although public transportation is available, it is extremely limiting. For many it offers the freedom of mobility to easily navigate the community and this is no different for undocumented families. Parents make a choice to either not drive or drive under less than desirable circumstances. Sometimes there are situations like having to take children to school or commute to one or possibly two employers. Some self-employed residents also need to be mobile and move throughout the city.

These situations are not ideal for anyone, and more so for families because of the threat of being ripped apart by immigration authorities. For others, they do not allow themselves to imagine the possibility of driving because of these possible consequences.

For example, Bernardo did not allow himself to consider the possibility of pursuing a driver's license:

I remember in high school I never really wanted to learn how to drive because I was like I can't get a driver's license, I don't want to be bothered with that and then I finally can drive, I've got into the point where I'm like so busy that I haven't had the opportunity to learn how to drive, so I still don't know how to drive, but I'm working on fixing that, it also impacts financial aid like, or your ability to even think of college, I know, then I was thinking of going to college...

By not allowing himself to dwell on being unable to have the option to obtain a driver's license Bernardo continues to maintain a focus on the goal of achieving a college degree. His citizenship status makes it more difficult for him to receive a degree. Furthermore, Bernardo is referring to the college choice of undocumented students. To many, college is either not an option or an extremely limiting option. Though students do have an opportunity to attend colleges and universities away from home, they must weigh several factors. Students must be careful of universities within the jurisdiction of Border Patrol. Border Patrol has a strong presence throughout the southern and northern borders with large Hispanic populations. Border Patrol also regularly visits campuses within the one-hundred-mile threshold from the border, that is their jurisdiction. In some areas Border Patrol has a checkpoint on all main highways leaving these cities (American Civil Liberties Union "The Constitution"). But more so, Bernardo is referring to the costs of attending college, students must be able to pay for college. This is made extremely difficult due to being unable to work on campus at public schools, which excludes them

from federal student aid, such as work-study positions. The options for undocumented students are looking for and working for employers off campus that are willing to employ them and pay them a living wage. Students facing the prospects of having to pay for their housing, managing school, working off campus without the ability to have a driver's license, and placing themselves at risk can often seem as too much to overcome. While others risk the odds stacked against them to attempt a "normal" college experience.

Although the state had passed legislation allowing undocumented residents to receive a driver license, residents like Karina still experience many obstacles. The process was made difficult for undocumented residents for two primary reasons. The first being that undocumented residents were only allowed to begin the process through specific regional offices in the state, and only four offices were initially created to serve a large community. This made it difficult for many residents who did not live close to one of the newly created regional offices. Second, the offices requested that residents book appointments prior to visiting and appointments were limited due to a high demand.

Karina struggled to find an appointment:

Para agarrar una licencia aun no voy a poder agarrar una licencia aquí porque las citas se llenan y la cita que tenía para agarrarla me la cancelaron y ya no me la quisieron volver a dar, entonces es muy incómodo para mi me siento que le estas rogando a alguien para que te de algo y yo no quiero hacer eso mis papás me dicen "trata de hacer una cita", no ¿porque no?

Porque son tan egoístas, somos buenos yo no manejo yo siempre ando en el camión o en la bicicleta o corriendo pero no sabes si la persona que viene enseguida tiene o no tiene licencia puede pasar un accidente a ellos les conviene que tengan su licencia y pero eso también no entiendo al gobierno la verdad pero ahorita no se en veces siento que mi sueño aquí se me está terminando.

To get a license, and still I will not be able to get a license here. Because the appointments are filled and the appointment I had to get one was canceled. And they did not want to give me another one. So it is very uncomfortable for me I feel that I am begging someone to give me something and I do not want to do that. My parents tell me "try to make an appointment, no? why not?"

Why are they are so selfish, we are good, I do not drive, I always ride the bus or I'm on the bike or running. But, you do not know if the person who comes next is licensed or not, you can have an accident, to them it is convenient that they have their license but I do not understand the government truthfully, but right now I do not know, at times I feel that my dream here is coming to an end.

Karina has struggled to the point of frustration, feeling like her dream has come to an end. The difficulty of securing an opportunity to receive a driver's license informs her decision to leave the country, and reflects the severity of the situation. Being able to legally drive in the United States is a tremendously beneficial opportunity for undocumented families. For all the reasons stated previously, undocumented residents would make sacrifices to be able to drive without having to fear for their lives. Karina was pushed to a point of having to beg for an appointment, an act that is done out of love.

She had her family in mind the whole time she was talking about this situation. Having someone in the family with the ability to drive provides much needed shelter; the ability to have a driver who would not have to fear being pulled over.

Daniela and her family would take the risk by driving with forged driver's licenses or no license at all:

Yeah, so, when my parents were here, it was always like, whenever we would see a cop, and we would be driving with either fake licenses or nothing at all and, you know, just be like, whenever there is a cop, we were like, don't even breathe, don't move, nothing, you know. So kind of like that, really like just always being afraid. When I was, I don't know, like, just I guess my mom having to find a job because there was a time where it got very, like they started to implement, they started verify things, like, they would check, like, Social Security numbers. So, my mom was always like, if they check, like, I don't know what I am going to do.

With DACA driving no longer is a daily gamble. No longer must families worry if they will receive a call from a local detention center. That is if they are even given an opportunity for notification. In some cases, families are not notified until weeks after their family member has been detained. During that period family members worry and are pushed to an extreme when a family member has not come home. The call from a local detention center is a relief. It is an extremely valuable opportunity to be a licensed; I cannot stress that enough. Still, it does not end there because even though residents may

have received a driver's license, not everyone in the community understands what that means for undocumented residents.

People who experience the license for the first time do not understand how to process the new information. Osbelia shares, "People question, my parents wanted to get a car at a dealership and we were going to use my driver's license and they wouldn't take it. And I find it, that to be discriminatory too because my driver's license is different from yours." The license is an official document, licensing residents to operate a vehicle within the state. Though there is a notification on the license that distinguishes it from other licenses stating "your new driver's license CANNOT be used for identification purposes." It will feature a message stating that it is for "driving purposes only, and not valid for voting, federal identification, or public benefits," (DMV). This negatively impacts the license holder as people may interpret the message in ways that restrict access, such as exemplified by Osbelia. Though the car dealer had no reason to restrict the family from purchasing a vehicle, they were not allowed to purchase one. Even after individuals and families have jumped through hoops to obtain a license it does not solve all the issues immigrant families face. Although a license is extremely helpful, the interpretation of the licenses is not clear for all, which in this case led to a family being denied an opportunity to purchase a vehicle.

Mobility for undocumented residents is extremely limited in their community as a result of not being able to obtain a driver's license. This does not capture the degree to which people are limited, undocumented resident's ability to travel is extremely limited. Although, a resident has a driver's license they may not use that license for travel

purposes. An undocumented resident must obtain a passport from their embassy, which can be troublesome if their embassy is not nearby, and much more troublesome if the embassy is out of state. Federal regulations have standard regulations for identification that is met by having a passport, and this is needed even if traveling within the country. Without having legal residency, travel is not an option. Residents in the country without papers are not able to travel outside the country because they will not be able to return. Residents who have received DACA can apply for Advanced Parole, through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and can legally study abroad and re-enter the country. Advance Parole is an immigration application for emergency travel by residents who are undocumented and have DACA or are in the process of receiving citizenship (“Emergency Travel” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services). Still because it is only open to those with DACA or in the process of application this is not available to all undocumented residents it is restricting. Prior to DACA students were not able, and in some cases, still are not able to participate in study abroad programs.

Study Abroad. The ability to study abroad is an invaluable experience for students. Unfortunately, these opportunities are not available to undocumented students. Prior to DACA students did not have any opportunities to study abroad. Several students I interviewed aspired to study abroad. They were not allowed to leave the country and this limited their college experience. For example, Olivia wanted to visit other countries and had not been given that opportunity. She stated, “Yes, I feel like I really, really want to study abroad, and that is something that I cannot do, and it’s something that I really, really want to do.”

Luis also has had opportunities to travel for school and has been unable to do so. Missing these opportunities has a detrimental effect on undocumented students. It is a disadvantage to their advancement in their collegiate career (Ortiz and Hinojosa 57). Students that can travel abroad and experience programs overseas have a competitive advantage in graduate and scholarship applications, not to mention the life experiences valuable to growing and developing minds. This continues to pain Luis; not being to visit these places that have been offered to him. Having to reconcile that he is unable to take advantage of the opportunities presented to him, he must continue to advance in his career:

Specifically travelling. Travelling has always been pain in the butt. Ever since high school I have been invited to go travel to France, go travel to Europe in general. Australia, Africa all these places, Asia. You name it but I have not been able to go because of that status. I have not been able to participate in these activities with my classmates because of that.

Study abroad weighs on Bernardo as well. As a student in a program with study abroad built into the major it poses a tremendous barrier. It was a barrier that required he reveal his status to program counselors and inform them that if he were to study abroad he would not be able to come back. Though Bernardo is a DACA student and is eligible for Advanced Parole, many study abroad programs are not knowledgeable on the process for applying for it. Therefore, many schools do not offer study abroad programs to undocumented students. There are some programs around the country that specifically offer study abroad programs to DACA students, but they are very few with many study

abroad programs choosing not to develop programming for DACA students. Bernardo tells me,

I always have to disclose and explain the situation along those same lines for that major, there's requirement to study abroad so I had to like explain like I can't study abroad because it won't be a study about it, it will be go abroad and stay abroad, so I have to explain stuff like that and so anything to do with money it's always like a very awkward situation for me like first coming to terms like this is who I am. This is my identity, it is what it is, but then also trying to get other people to understand what that means and realizing that often times no matter how well they know you they may judge you based on this identity.

In addition to having to experience exclusion from study abroad, undocumented students suffer sacrifices in their lives at home.

Families Torn Apart. Families are torn apart due to the current political climate for undocumented residents. Individuals who leave the country do not have legal recourses to re-enter the country once they have left. If someone decides to leave the country, they are essentially taking a one-way passage. They are barred from seeing and visiting family. They can go on for years without visiting their home countries and communities. Some have never met family at all, and their families continue to be torn apart. This weighs very heavy on families, especially during a loss in the family.

Nancy has family in Mexico she has not met and if she does not have residency she will not be able to leave the country. She won't be able to visit her family's home and

have an opportunity to spend precious time with relatives. It is also nearly impossible for Mexican citizens of lower socioeconomic status to receive a passport or visa. For many Mexican families there is a socioeconomic barrier nearly eliminating their ability to visit family that is across the border. Nancy shares her own experience of being torn apart from her family: “Even that is really hard, so we’ve gone to see or meet a few people. My grandma did come a few times, but it has been like years too. Yeah, because my mom has 13 brothers and sisters. So it’s like we have this huge family in [Mexico] that I really wish I knew. And I’ve met them through Facebook, but it’s not the same thing. And I’ve only met the people who have had the ability to come and visit, but that’s also hard getting passport or like a tourist visa.” Social media can transcend these barriers and allow contact between family that would otherwise not have an opportunity to visit one another. Still, it does not satisfy the desire people have to meet relatives. Nancy has not met many of her family members and she will likely not have the opportunity to meet them or be there with them during precious life moments. There are critical moments we experience in our lives, moments like birthdays, baptisms, *quinceañeras*, graduations, weddings, and many other moments. The limited mobility of undocumented residents is isolating and disconnects them from family support in critical life moments including moments of crisis.

Olivia and her sister have had a very similar family experience; while Olivia has had the opportunity to meet her grandparents her sister has not been able to meet them. Although Olivia’s sister is documented she has not been able to travel to Mexico to meet their family. Without her parents having the ability to travel it is difficult to have a

connection with family you have never met. Their parents are not able to travel even during moments of family crisis. They do not have the freedom to travel between borders. Olivia's father did not have the freedom to travel across the border and took a major risk by traveling to Mexico to be with his family.

It's the same and it's really sad. My sister, my other sister doesn't know my grandparents at all, because she's 12 right now, so she hasn't been able – but she was born here, she hasn't been able to travel, because my mom doesn't want to let her go by herself, so it's like she doesn't know my grandparents. She doesn't know what they're like, so it's sad. I haven't seen my grandparents since I was six, so I really want to see them before they leave, because my grandpa died in October, and I wasn't able to go. So I'm sad. It's really, really sad, because my grandpa, we had just seen him and he went back to Mexico, and he died in October. My grandma died about 10 years ago, so it's my dad's side. She died about 10 years ago. He left, but he had to cross back, you know illegally. When my grandpa died, I wasn't able to go see him, and we were really, really close, so it was really sad not being able to see him, and it was also really hard to see my dad like not wanting to go back, because he knew it was going to be hard to cross, so that was really sad. My mom lives in fear that it's going to happen to her too, that she's not going to be able to go see her parents. She hasn't seen them since I was six as well. It's just been really hard like not being able to see them, and they can't come over here either, so it's just been really hard, so my mom lives in fear that's going to happen to her.

It was a major risk because of the dire consequences if he were to be detained at the border. He did not have a legal means to return after visiting his family. It was a major risk returning without documentation and having to find an alternative to a legal re-entry. There was the chance of being detained and likely deported. Being detained from an unlawful entry into the country has been criminalized and has the consequence of a criminal record. A criminal record severely limits their father's ability to ever become a documented resident. He would essentially be barred from ever being able to receive legal residency or citizenship. Living within the U.S. for their father would be extremely difficult because he would be the target of ICE raids and any contact with authorities could lead to detainment and deportation.

Olivia's father risked finances as the family would face a tremendous financial burden if they were to lose a primary bread winner. Her mother feared the thought of being faced with the same decision. It is heartbreaking to imagine having to decide whether to place your family at risk or not be present to your own father's funeral. Either decision has a price, and not going to a parent's funeral could have significant mental health impacts.

Daniela's father was deported and detained when she was a teenager:

Yeah. It was my sophomore year in high school and we, I remember, when my mom told me that my dad would have been taken to jail. It was the morning. We just finished dropping off my brother in middle school. He was in middle school and we were on our way to drop me off to school

and she told me, she was, like, “Oh, they got your dad again”, because my dad had been in jail before. My mom told me, she was like, “Oh, they got your dad again”. But I don’t think, she told me, she was like, “I don’t think he is going to make it out of this one”, and I asked why. She was like, “I don’t know. I just don’t think he is going to make it out anymore.”

For many undocumented residents, not being able to move freely between borders within and outside of the country has significant consequences. Students’ lack of mobility has a deep impact on their lives. Being unable to obtain a driver’s license makes it difficult for students to travel easily between their home, school, and employer while attending college. Students are unable to gain experiences abroad limiting their academic advancement. Their families are torn apart and that takes a toll on the family and the individual.

PRESSURE, GUILT, MENTAL ANGUISH, AND DEPRESSION

The climate undocumented students face within and outside of the academy has a psychological impact on them. There are little to no resources addressing the mental health of this population of students. The lack of resources can be explained in part because of the lack of acknowledgement of undocumented students on their respective campuses. Not acknowledging their presence makes it difficult for faculty, staff, students, and community members in developing support systems for students. Students like Osbelia have earned the opportunity to attend college, but lack the support to be successful. She was a top student coming out of high school and set her goal of reaching a competitive pre-med program. She unfortunately struggled mightily. She believes a

lack of inclusion on the campus impacted her performance. She stated, “I don’t feel included at all. When I first transferred here, my first semester here was really bad. I think I failed all my classes.” She was unable to find support on her university campus until much later. She has since turned around her performance after meeting a supportive staff member who has gone out of her way to help her. Still Osbelia faces an uphill battle:

So even though I passed all my classes I was never informed that I have to keep each semester a certain GPA to get out of probation like they never told me that. I was never told that. So I passed all my classes and I’m about a 2.0 GPA right now. But they’ve suspended me this semester. So I talked to one of my professors to retake the final ... So me and Linda are going to try to work at the appeal process because obviously I feel like the lack of resources and not understanding and things like that, affected me at a greater level. I feel like I should have never have been transferred here. It should have like never even done that because this school is so behind on everything like, I wanted to do a pre medical program that they have here so that’s why I transferred in the first place; so learning from all of that I now feel like I suck at chemistry and physics and biology; so I changed my major since I’m really good at math and I always pass all my math classes no matter what. So I’m going towards and engineering now since it’s more my strength rather than or maybe - I know that I could have done the chemistry and the biology but it was just too much for me at the time. And even right now I’m just really stressed out about this whole suspension thing.

Her stress is understandable given her circumstances and lack of support. Her situation may be brushed off as a student who did not work hard enough to compete in the program, but many undocumented students face similar troubles. Receiving some support by a campus employee turned around her performance. From having failed the first year and nearly flunking out, she has worked hard to push her GPA above a 2.5. This is an incredible turn around. The support she received was tremendous as the employee connected her with a position on campus. She was working over forty hours a week as an employee of a large retail store; as a result, she struggled to balance her work and academic responsibilities. She did not have a community to connect with and felt excluded at a university that is pre-dominantly white institution (PWI). Having indirect academic support, emotional support, and guidance has helped her very much, yet she still faces much uncertainty due to her suspension.

Another student, Cesar, faces pressure from experiencing stress on campus not due to a lack of support, but from having to face Border Patrol on his campus. He struggled from having experienced friends and family being detained and deported. Imagine the stress you would feel to think that at any moment you may be detained and possibly deported because there are authorities seeking you. Officers walk throughout campus and the surrounding community looking specifically for people like you. In addition to facing the pressures of finals, undocumented students face the reality they may be detained. This is an enormous stress also because this student knows that his family is counting on him in many ways. Because his father and brother were detained

and deported previously, Cesar has taken on many responsibilities to support his family. This pushes him to want to quit and protect his family.

I wanted to quit, because it was just too much pressure. I come from a very connected strong culture community where family is important. You know you have to drop everything to help your family and at that time my family were dependent on me, because I was going to college, I know how to navigate the system and all that. But I don't know it was really, really tough to go through that your brother is been deported, for the third time and then your dad is also detained and so it's like, and so for me it was like shit, I don't want to be the next one. So that's why I freaked out when I saw the border patrol. And I don't know if they were going to ask me question or not, I did however ended up hearing stories that some other – there was one undocumented student who got picked up by them and so that really also freaked me out and I was like shit, I made it this far to let everything go like that it's like – for me it's not a story, it's real, it's like fuck I got to hide so, what I ended up doing I went to the store in the bathroom and I hid there for three or four hours.

Students make many sacrifices to help their family, especially when the primary income earners, like the father, is detained and deported. Students have an added responsibility of supporting their family, but also turn to their immediate family for support.

In this chapter I have covered the experiences of the eight undocumented students interviewed in this study. Students like Luis experienced depression in the beginning of

his college career. Luis offers, “During my first two years of college was very frustrating. I think I went into a deep depression and almost gave up.” He has since moved past his deep depression and is continuing his academic career. Luis credits his family and partner with helping him overcome this struggle during the beginning of his academic career. He was fortunate to have a strong support system to support him during this difficult period. Luis was deeply affected by the lack of assistance on his college campus. He mentioned that he was a successful high-school student and though he worked hard, it was difficult to experience barriers that had him question his worthiness and ability to be in college. Being able to center on their experiences has been effective in illuminating structural issues impacting their experiences. In the next chapter I address interviews through the lenses of Chicana feminist theories; *nepantla*, new tribalism, spiritual activism, pedagogy of home, and the *Coyolxauhqui* Imperative.

CHAPTER FIVE: CHICANA FEMINISMS AND THE EXPERIENCES OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

This chapter explores, how Chicana feminist theories help us understand the experiences of undocumented students. I start will begin by explaining the perspective of *nepantla*, to consider how *nepantla* has been enacted in the data, applied in this context. I follow with a similar application of spiritual activism, and new tribalism. Finally, I explore how pedagogies of home are performed by the students.

NEPANTLA: IN BETWEEN WORLDS

Through the lives of undocumented students, we can interrogate how their experiences are shaped in relationship to dominant structures. From this perspective, I illuminate through Chicana feminist theories how the experiences of undocumented students are shaped in contrast to institutional structures. By centering their lives, we can better understand how ideologies materialize to limit and regulate bodies on college campuses. A *nepantla* perspective centers the experiences of people who are occupying in-between spaces, who are in-between worlds. Undocumented students are the *nepantleras* living in the borderlands, the in-between spaces of ideological borders that have propagated structural and social inequalities. Olivia highlights living in this space:

I think that, because of all the things that are just put out on the news. I think that they would never understand that, I'm a college student and I want the same things as there're doing. I want to succeed, I want to finish my college, I think

that's something that they really would not understand of, they would probably judge me based on what they've seen on television.

Students attempt to make sense of their identity in a social climate where the dominant narrative positions undocumented bodies as pollutants (Cisneros 571). Another student, Luis struggled through the academy, wanting to quit. He recalls moments he felt he could not continue: "I don't know, I think I've become weak over time like I can't take, there times where I'm just like I can't take it anymore. But then I don't want to give up just yet." Luis felt an urge to continue despite the barriers he faced. Undocumented students are in-between ideological borders living in a space of wanting to find their own success through education. Anzaldúa describes *nepantla* as a depressive state of reflection (*Borderlands*). This can often result from the disorientation of constantly bridging or shifting positions, as well as not feeling at home. For Luis this manifested in the struggle to be included; to participate in education. Students feel misunderstood and experience educational spaces much differently than those in the dominant position. It is from this space of *nepantla* we can uncover the power being exercised over bodies shaping performances, constructing institutions, that are the foundations to inequitable institutional structures.

Nepantla fits best in illuminating the experiences of undocumented students. Being able to explain how students experience the academy despite institutional efforts to address this inequality. Each of these campuses have adopted diversity policies like inclusive excellence that make promises of creating inclusive spaces in at their respective campuses. These are not tacit promises but documented, openly expressed, and

championed policies. These campuses have adopted versions of inclusive excellence policies. The AACU outlined four principles of inclusive excellence. The first principle is diversity. This concept honors the role of individual and social cultural differences and how people's various identities (based on race, gender, sexuality, religion, and political differences) inform how they experience academic spaces. Second, the core principle of inclusion recognizes the need to be active, intentional, and sustainable in engaging diversity initiatives; to develop more inclusive curriculum; to create community and individual spaces that increase awareness and knowledge; to increase cognition of how to address organizational changes; and to foster the skills to empathize with people of color and understand the complexity of our lives. Third, the principle of equity stresses the purposeful creation of opportunities for underrepresented communities and the provision of equitable access to higher education. Fourth, the principle of equity-mindedness pushes for an increase in institutional awareness at the leadership level, including developing an awareness and willingness by institutional leaders to address equity issues.

Damon Williams conceptualized that excellence within the term inclusive excellence "should be measured by how well campus systems, structures, and processes meet the needs of all institutional citizens, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, gender, or other characteristics" ("Achieving Inclusive" 9). Williams posited that true excellence should embody solutions to deeply ingrained social problems ("Achieving Inclusive" 9). Inclusiveness must be practiced throughout the university, which includes the classroom.

For example, Damon Williams conceptualizes institutional diversity policies of inclusive excellence, describing them as an ongoing process (“Beyond the Diversity” 14). He describes the policy making as an ongoing perpetual process of “disturbing and realigning structures and mind-sets,” a process that enables questioning of the past while encouraging students, faculty, and staff to find new ways to support and nurture the process of creating knowledge (Williams “Beyond the Diversity” 14). Inclusive excellence initiatives attempt to create space where students with marginalized identities feel valued, yet are predominantly in spaces where political and economic dominance occurs by one group of people over others. Academic spaces and the processes of education serve to indoctrinate and distance scholars of color from the communities they are a part of. It is these everyday processes that a dialogical performance perspective aims to uncover.

Additionally, institutions must be aware of their surroundings and their role in the community. Inclusive excellence efforts in higher education settings do not occur solely in a vacuum and strategies for achieving excellence must include partnerships with community members and individuals (Williams “Achieving Inclusive” 14). It is vital that universities, colleges, and specific programs understand how they are impacted by demographic trends and their implications for recruitment (Williams “Achieving Inclusive” 9). Systemic change requires that diversity be embedded in the symbolic and cultural fabric of the institution by integrating inclusive excellence within the school mission (Williams “Achieving Inclusive” 12). It must be the driving vision of the organization as a whole (Williams “Achieving Inclusive” 12). Institutional leaders must build a powerful message, communicate diversity, vision, strategy, outcomes, and

consistency (Williams “Achieving Inclusive” 13). Additionally, top leadership must also invest in change if they expect to sustain it for the long haul. Investing in change comes in many forms including: creating inclusive spaces where students can create community and establishing an “Integration and Belonging” process for entering students before they even enroll and begin classes. These types of programs can also help recruit students initially and retain students in the long term (Williams “Achieving Inclusive” 19). Creating inclusive programming benefits undocumented students, but it is key that administrators at all levels of the campus buy into inclusiveness.

Despite the promises made to students on these campuses via inclusive excellence policies, students experience living in a space of *Nepantla*. Students understand living in two worlds, with one foot in the academic world, and another foot in the shadows. Students live in the shadows of these institutions which have openly declared their intent to tackle inequality at their respective campuses.

Living in the Shadows. Undocumented students encounter invisible barrier after barrier, yet they continue toward their dream of becoming college graduates. Facing institutional and social barriers has deep implications in their day to day lives. Students attempt their best effort to be successful. These performances are helpful for survival, but they do come at a price. Olivia struggled, stating, “Because I hadn’t made any connections with anybody on the campus, anybody or not even students or people or anything like that. I was just really isolated like I don’t know I went into this really dark place.” Olivia suffered for attempting to reach her goal of attending postgraduate school in a health field. Students are aware of the public imaginary of undocumented residents, they feel the

societal pressure, weathering negative experiences and enduring with limited shelter or relief from that pressure. These experiences can be similar to what Anzaldúa terms the shadow beast (*Borderlands*), which Calafell connects to *nepantla* (*Monstrosity*). Calafell argues that the shadow beast, or the trauma that haunts us is often worked out in the *nepantla* state, as evidenced in Anzaldúa's unpublished piece, "Woman in the Basement" (*Monstrosity*).

Impacting students further is the isolation they experience from being unable to disclose their experiences of these barriers. Students live in the shadows of society among everyone, but always in obscurity. They are hidden from sight, often unable to express or have their struggles validated. Cesar speaks to this experience:

[University name] is very close the Canadian border, like an hour away. You know the fact that you don't have documentation is another fact to your life right. A lot of times we were scared, my family and I were scared about asking for resources because they were going to ask us about our status and it was just a thing we never talked about it. We knew we lived under the shadows and it was very hard for us to ask for help and so it was scary, you know because you never know what's going to happen to you, right?

Fear of deportation is much more relevant in communities near the border and is a central fear of disclosing of undocumented status. Being strategic about who to disclose to is vital to survival. Deportation raids are scary, having authorities break down your door in the early morning is a story that all families fear. Fear that they have disclosed their status to someone who has reported them. Though authorities say that they do not investigate

individual reports of undocumented residents, it is not assuring because of the many stories people have heard or in many cases have experienced themselves detainment of relatives. Their undocumented status and the resulting fear are in many ways similar to a materialized shadow beast that students must continually face.

Fearing the possibility of disclosing to someone who may have a negative view of undocumented immigrants, disclosing to someone who might report them, or someone that may use their citizenship status to exploit them is always on the minds of undocumented students. They also students fear sharing because of the shame ascribed toward undocumented residents (S. Muñoz 57). Students struggle to create supportive communities on college and university campuses. Nancy, a student at MSC believed she could not disclose to any of her friends; “No, the saddest part is my friends don’t know any of this. [O]ur challenge is always having to hide our reality.” Being undocumented is similar to a closeted space, a space where there are personal and societal benefits to continuously hide your identity (S. Muñoz 57).

Susana Muñoz addresses the complexity of the “coming out” process for undocumented students. Building on the scholarship of Judith Butler, Muñoz compares the complexity of undocumented students’ management of disclosing their status to that public disclosure of someone’s queerness. Like a public disclosure of queerness, public disclosure by an undocumented student’s status may also be viewed as an act of resistance, and like disclosure of queerness it does not necessarily equate liberation from oppression. Oppressive structures remain, they are continuous, it is not a single finalizing moment, disclosure is an ongoing process. There is always someone new or situations

that come along that pressure or even force individuals to disclose their status (S. Muñoz 57). Bernardo describes the trepidation of disclosure:

The first year of college is just a lot of trying to fit in and figuring out who you like, who you can trust, and I remember back then it was just like kind of like a very taboo subject, and I was like I'm not going to bring it up, or when people will be like how can you not know how to drive, like I'm not going to talk about that. It was a lot of ways, it was just like very complicated or whenever people would talk about like scholarships that they applied for, that they wanted to apply for, it was just like a constant reminder like oh I wish I could at least apply for the scholarships like that.

The decision to disclose their status is a continuous process of identity management where students continuously weigh moments whether to “come out” or not (S. Muñoz 57). Nancy did not want to disclose to anyone around her because of the shame she felt because of her status. She actively works to not reveal her status and this requires a lot of wordplay. Because people do not know of her status, they are unable to help and support her through difficult moments.

Documentation. Living within these spaces helps students learn patience for ambiguous and shifting realities; key aspects of Chicana feminism. Anzaldúa terms this the tolerance for ambiguity (*Borderlands*). This is a constant shifting of positions that is required to thrive in the borderlands. A shift that occurred within the undocumented community, and something that became apparent in an interview with Karina, is how we have created a level of classes among undocumented students. Many services on the campuses intended

to serve undocumented students only applied to DACA recipients. This was something Karina wanted to be sure that I understood; undocumented students were still not being served although there was more programming being promoted as serving undocumented students. She expressed that workshops on financial aid, career services, and more were only focused on DACA recipients. This is troublesome because although there are many undocumented students that have taken advantage of the benefits received from DACA, for example undocumented students who have received DACA are eligible to work and receive certain forms of financial aid from the state. It is true that financial stability is vital to the success of students, yet undocumented students were locked out of receiving any of those benefits. This is best explained in Conquergood's application of DeCerteau's theory of intextuation. Conquergood writes, "[m]ore often than not, subordinate people experience texts and the bureaucracy of literacy as instruments of control and displacement, e.g. green cards, passports, arrest warrants, deportation orders..." ("Performance Studies" 35). Services that have been made accessible are limited to students with DACA, but those without DACA continue facing discrimination and are disturbingly left without a voice to continue to advocate for them. They are in a vulnerable position of having to advocate for themselves at times because while people have turned their attention to supporting the Dreamers, they have left students without DACA to advocate for themselves. They have been affected by bureaucratic instruments of control and those who are not able to meet the textual requirements by providing adequate documentation/text are continue to be subjugated. These uncertain and changing situations (depending on lawmakers and laws) require students develop and perform a tolerance for ambiguity.

Many undocumented students have taken advantage of DACA and they have been afforded some sense of relief. Although, this path does not lead to permanent residency it has provided some an opportunity to be employed and receive a driver's license, identification, and access to some state financial aid. While some might argue this is a hegemonic structure, Aurora Chang asserts this is a form resistance and agency takes place within dominant structures (Chang "Hyperdocumented" 519). Moreover, students that have taken advantage of this do so as survival mechanism in response to what Chang calls an American common sense (519). Students with DACA are provided with a 'semivisible forcefield' giving them a semblance of security. Being able to meet very specific criteria reinforces the common sense understanding of proper documentation, but also simultaneously disciplines bodies. Only those that are textually deemed legitimate through this process of documentation can access this program. Seven of the eight students interviewed in this study have been recipients of DACA and the one student who was unable to qualify has struggled because her chosen area of study does not allow undocumented students to be licensed. Karina's goal to become a doctor is in danger because she will not be allowed to practice medicine in her state. She has had extreme difficulty in finding schools within the state that will accept her application and the possibility of being unable to practice medicine frustrates her to the point of wanting to quit.

Inversely, these ideologies reinforce, U.S. American common sense, those that are not able to furnish textual proof continue to be considered illegitimate. While Karina has been locked out of opportunities we must be careful not to deem the actions of the seven students as hegemonic. We must not consider the seeking of documentation as

hegemonic. The effort to secure refuge within the system as a response to danger like being detained and deported as agency (Chang 519). Achieving security for those seven students has been valuable to their continued development as scholars and shielded them from the dangers of detainment and deportation. Still, this choice is not without consequences for the individuals themselves and the communities they are a part of.

Furthermore, the disciplining of students' bodies does not end merely with intextuation, forced legitimacy via hyperdocumentation. Susana Muñoz calls attention to assumptions underlying the value placed on the performance of exceptionality by undocumented students. She questions the narrative framing DREAMers (Development, Relief, and Education, for Alien Minors) as perfect students, stating that it “perpetuates the assumption that only those with high scholastic abilities or those who most resemble assimilationist perspectives of “American” values are most deserving of legal status” (83). Undocumented students are framed as being worthy based solely on their proficiency to achieve success in the academy, only allowing those students that are considered legitimate to have access to these spaces. Their presence on campuses is legitimated based on their talent, meaning that only those students who perform academic exceptionality may occupy these spaces. Conflictingly, undocumented students are not allowed to be average because those students are not deemed worthy to occupy academic spaces. Students like Nancy, who have been valedictorian, taken leadership positions on campus, and received institutional awards and recognition, are considered high achievers and deemed worthy. They are worthy to be visible through school marketing campaigns in the sense that only high performing undocumented students are provided an

opportunity to be recognized and even highlighted. They get placed in a dichotomy that positions them against other students in positions similar to themselves.

Anguiano and Chavez call attention to this construction of model citizenship within the undocumented community, where successful students focus on their individual achievements “in order to demarcate their belonging” in the academy (91). Building their identity by contrasting themselves against other immigrants, they position themselves as contributors to society and social good while those that are not able to occupy these spaces and have success are rendered silent (Anguiano and Chavez 91). Successful undocumented students construct their identities against this framing, detracting from potential critiques of larger systems of inequity. Students use their success to justify their access to spaces uphold values of meritocracy.

A consequence of this process of hyperdocumentation and exceptionality is that these become values that are reinforced (Anguiano and Chavez 91; Chang 8). John T. Warren states “[s]tudents of color are punished most discretely by being forced into a school system that reinforces the cultural values, styles of interaction, communicative norms, and learning methods valued by the culture of power” (*Performing Purity* 49). Still, resistance to these structures can be better understood through Jose Esteban Muñoz’s theory of disidentificaiton. Disidentification is a strategy utilized by a minoritarian subject to a performance of self that give the performer access to a space they might otherwise have access to (164). It is a strategy for survival in oppressive structures, Muñoz describes it as a response to “process of self-actualization come into discourse as a response to ideologies, that discriminate against, demean, and attempt to

destroy components of subjectivity that do not conform or respond to narratives of universalization and normalization,” undocumented students by performing exceptionalism are disidentifying for survival (J. Muñoz 164). Muñoz makes it extremely clear that disidentification is about “cultural, material, and psychic survival” (161).

Chang exemplifies disidentification by performing ‘exceptionality’, which she argues is the ability to perform ‘exceptionality’ and ‘smartness’ that have provided her with access to privileges that would have otherwise been denied to her (“Undocumented Intelligence” 8). It is this ability that at times provides her with an ability to pass within the academy. Exceptionality, like race, is a social construct, these constructs operate in a similar way in that they both produce hierarchical categories, dominant ideological constructs of race privilege whiteness, and dominant ideologies of ability privilege ‘smartness’ and intelligence (Chang “Undocumented Intelligence” 8). Furthermore, these constructs share a symbiotic relationship as they both operate in relationship to one another to disparage individuals and whole communities. If someone is not able to display ‘smartness’ they are framed as uneducable and disposable. This belief is applied to whole communities who are unable to perform ‘smartness’ not considering the underlying values shaping understandings of ability. Chang posits that schooling processes taught her that academic achievement is a source of protection from unwarranted inquiries into a student’s legal status (Chang “Undocumented Intelligence” 2).

Cesar would struggle in his pursuit of an education, in this space of *nepantla* he was in pursuit of his education and experienced paralyzing moments like this one:

It was hard you know to face that, because I used to see border patrol on and off campus and so one day I started to get something to eat at the store just like from here to Safeway. I wanted to get something to eat before I was going to start the next class, so I went in it was a hanging store and I went in and I was getting some stuff very quick just to get something to be ready and next thing you know I saw border patrol here like I can definitely tell who they are by the color that they wear and the uniform is says like border patrol and so homeland security or something like that and so I saw the sign and I freaked out and so I was like shit.

Undocumented students struggle to survive the gauntlet and have access to these spaces while unfortunately being shaped in very specific way to be able to sample the privilege of academic spaces. It is through hyperdocumentation and their ability to perform ‘exceptionality’ and ‘smartness’ that allows them to continue their academic career while potentially simultaneously moving them further and further from their communities.

Micro-aggressions. In addition to facing a myriad of institutional barriers undocumented students face individual barriers that are just as intangible and deeply troubling. Students face interactions that are harmful to them, acts that are done with little conscious effort and that communicate negative stereotypes about individuals or communities. They may be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect behavioral, verbal, or environmental slights toward an individual from a non-dominant community (S. Muñoz 44). Micro-aggressions may be subtle insults toward a person of color, either conscious or unconscious daily interactions that are harmful to individuals (S. Muñoz 44). These slights toward an undocumented student may come in the form of a verbal insult like the

use of the term “illegal.” The use of the term may or may not be purposeful; however, regardless of intent it causes harm toward undocumented students as it is essentializing of a person, it is a reduction of their existence to citizenship status.

Micro-aggressions occur often but also often are difficult to distinguish. Because at times they generally are not directed at someone or directly reference a community. For example, in Olivia’s interaction with a former high-school softball teammate at her university Olivia is hurt by the way her teammate frames attending a local public university that is a designated Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), meaning that its student population is above 25% identified Hispanic students (HACU “Hispanic Serving”). By stating that she did not enjoy or like school herself, she is self-deprecating, positioning herself as someone who does not enjoy school but also positioning the school as less valuable. She implies that the university is less than for accepting of students who do not prioritize education. She frames herself as someone who does not like university and has not “tried” very hard, but has still been accepted to the university. Meanwhile, for Olivia it is a wonderful opportunity to better herself.

Like there was this girl, we went to soccer to... like we – I mean sorry, we did softball together and she was a teammate. And she was kind of like the bad girl, didn’t really go to like school, or attend classes a lot. And then one year that I was here, I saw her, I was just like what are you doing here, I didn’t know you are coming here. Back then we were on the same team, is in softball, we’re kind of tough to each other. So we’re always picking on each other, but she was like, isn’t that funny like I don’t even like school and now you’re in the same college as me,

like kind of saying, putting herself down by putting my – me down with her. But like making it seem like it was a bad thing for her. And she was playing around, but it really did hurt me. Like she laughed, and she was like, oh, I'm kidding, but I knew she meant it. It was just tough like it's little things like that that it's hard to explain sometimes.

As Olivia mentioned, these types of interactions are subtle, they are difficult to explain. Backhanded insults are difficult to extract from surface level qualifiers. for example, a comment like this is made in jest and therefore not meaningful. While for someone like Olivia, who is grateful for the opportunity, it is a painful to hear that the school you are attending is not desirable because it is affordable and has accepted you to attend, is considered a school that is not worthy of students who “like” school, and on the flip side is worthy of students who do not ‘like’ school.

These micro-aggressions are not limited to other students, but also staff and faculty. For example, Cesar experienced an interaction with a counselor who was unsure if he should join a “normal’ English class. The counselor discouraged Cesar from attending because of his accent. Though not directly stated the counselor believed that his skills were not to the level needed for their English course.

And so when I went to high school I challenged myself because my freshman year they put me in ESL and the thing that our ESL teachers make us do just put movies and watch movies. And right about it that's it, you know I'm not learning anything, I can do this at the house and watch a movie and just right about it. I need to know how to write and read and I need to like how to – I don't know like

increase my vocabulary and all that and so I went to talk to me counselor and tell her, I need to take some normal English classes and she's like are you sure, you know your English is not very good, I'm like I don't know, but I have to do something I can't be staying here all the time. So that was in school though, but the community was very white.

Students without support from their high schools have difficulties in achieving access to colleges and universities (Gildersleeve and Ranero 25). Notwithstanding the lack of support from his counselor Cesar understood that he needed to improve his level of English and sought out to improve by taking courses in English that would help his development. After all, isn't that what college and universities are for, to improve our skills. Cesar wanted to challenge himself and improve his English skills. Unfortunately, he experienced a counselor that discouraged his development. If only momentarily, it has affected his continued development. Since then, he has developed his writing skills and as a scholar, recently he joined a master's level program and aspires to continue as a doctoral student.

Students that are high achievers are doing things the "right way," while students that struggle like Osbelia are not only in danger of being locked out of their school, but also at risk of losing their protection of exceptionality as a university student. We must consider the performative aspects of academic spaces, and interrogate the practices that construct them as an exclusive space, with those that can perform excellence can be accepted in this space. Now knowing these limitations of access to the academy begins to clarify the dismal graduation numbers for undocumented students. Statistics of

undocumented students, like only fourteen out of every one hundred undocumented students entering high school are achieving a bachelor's degree, begin to make sense (Perez-Huber and Malagnon).

Undocumented students internalize their struggle and ascribe to the myth of believing that it is by their individual effort they will succeed, not accounting for the systemic barriers they face. They often believe it is through their individual effort they will overcome these structures. By pulling themselves up by the 'bootstrap' that they will be successful. This hegemonic American Dream ideology is detrimental to the success of students for various reasons, including that it ignores historical inequity and how the very structures we live within are imbued with power and unearned privilege.

The academy has yet to understand these shortcomings deeply impacting its ability to change course to create more inclusive spaces. Acknowledging what undocumented students face when choosing to attend college would help some of the most vulnerable students on a college campus. Understanding the struggles students face because of structural inequality would be helpful in developing programming that addressed these barriers students face. Students could move from feeling excluded and suffering from a micro-aggression of institutional neglect and move toward a space of healing (Perez-Huber et al. "Silenced Struggles"). Self-healing does not occur by only improving oneself but also healing the wounds caused from experiences within the academy. Thus, the *nepantla* space as a place of deep depression comes from constant barriers, such as micro-aggressions, systems that pit undocumented against one another in the need to perform exceptionalism, and the emotional and physical exhaustion that

comes from performing a tolerance for ambiguity. Inclusive excellence advocates would be wise to consider how students act as *nepantlaras* as a way to make their efforts more attuned to their needs.

SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM

Undocumented students are driven to help others. It may be because of the intrinsic fulfillment they would gain, but that view privileges an individualistic view of helping others. Olivia exemplifies spiritual activism:

I think that definitely I would like to help people, so being undocumented I've been able to do that, help other undocumented students and like I did the training and that makes me feel very helpful and knowing that I'm undocumented and there's something out there for me to be able to make a change in the world. That's always been a plus for me, so I think that's definitely the most positive thing that, there's a chance for me to help people out there and make a change.

Anzaldúa argues that scholars help others not for merely intrinsic fulfillment but to heal themselves (*Light in the Dark* 154). Anzaldúa's theory of spiritual activism provides a better perspective from which to understand the meaning underlying this 'intrinsic' drive by undocumented students (*Light in the Dark* 154). First, students experience wounds in the form of micro-aggressions, demeaning situations within unequal systemic and social barriers as described in the findings. From being denied services, forced disclosure of their status, to constantly living in fear of detainment and deportation, these wounds may at times leave a physical mark, but they are deeply damaging and leave psychological and spiritual damage. Unlike physical wounds that mostly heal over time, spiritual wounds

are different in that they are consistently opening and re-healing. These wounds are impacting individuals and communities. Education is viewed as a means of self-change and self-improvement.

Students see others suffer wounds similar to their own. For example, Nancy has struggled along with her siblings:

And then I graduated valedictorian in my high school, so I feel like they were expecting a lot from me and then I saw that in current moment as a great opportunity just because I didn't have a lot of access to other things. And my siblings didn't go to college, because there is no money and they had to pay three times more and there wasn't that much help back then and so my brother and sister didn't go, they just graduated high school. My brother was also valedictorian and my sister graduated in the top six. So like my mom expected or like she wanted a lot for us and like we worked hard to get good grades and get involved. But then it was like all went down, I don't know like it wasn't easy for them.

When watching others like themselves being denied and locked out of education, a spiritual connection is accentuated. Students seek healing for themselves and the communities they are a part of. Education provides a pathway toward healing. Self-education is empowering yet our current education system is also a source of wounds for members of marginalized communities.

The personal (inner) and community (outer) are intimately related. Keating explains that spiritual activism is the intertwining of 'inner works' with 'public acts.'

Students find healing in helping others and working toward social justice (“I’m a Citizen” 57). But as students struggle to create social transformation, changing structures and institutions within our societal system is extremely difficult. Students seek systemic change to heal themselves and the communities they are a part of. Students’ private concerns are social issues (Keating “I’m a Citizen” 57). For them they pay attention to personal and collective issues. Olivia speaks to this:

I think that definitely I would like to help people, so being undocumented I’ve been able to do that, help other undocumented students and like I did the training and that makes me feel very helpful and knowing that I’m undocumented and there’s something out there for me to be able to make a change in the world. That’s always been a plus for me, so I think that’s definitely the most positive thing that, there’s a chance for me to help people out there and make a change.

Spirituality comes from within ourselves, giving us the authority to work toward social transformation. Spiritual activism means developing ourselves to improve our self-esteem but also work toward holistic epistemologies that support collective change (Keating “I’m a Citizen” 58).

As spiritual activists, self-change and social transformation are mutually interdependent (Keating “I’m a Citizen” 59). The spiritual transformation sought by these students is also self-healing as I have addressed before. Students seek protection for their family and friends. They seek to create shelter for others so they do not have to experience the same suffering/wounds. Cesar speaks to this desire:

I want to have an education to educate others or others like me to not go through the same way challenge that I went to, it's tough and in the fact that sometimes you know like, I don't know if you can Google it, but [University of the Westcoast] the school that I went to it's in [City of the Pacific], it's a city that's the biggest city that's very close by Canadian border, so there's a lot of border patrol near the community just because of the Canadian border is very close by that community and so.

These students are a part of, but never subsumed by dominant structures. They are helping others and in the process making impact on the current system. This spiritual activism connects to bridging, or the idea that as people who have a tolerance for ambiguity, we are always serving as bridges to connect to and for various communities.

NEW TRIBALISM

Students fight to be a part of something greater than themselves and create new realities. New tribalism can also help us illuminate these experiences within border spaces asking that we move beyond “deterministic” language to better understand the experiences of members from marginalized perspectives. Olivia dreams of breaking stereotypes:

I absolutely loved computers since I was little, but also knowing that I would be one of those – there's not a lot of women in computer science, but there're not a lot of Hispanic women in Computer Science. That's going to be also like

another- I want to be like a role model to other women, but also Hispanic women.
Just because we're Hispanic doesn't mean that we can't do it.

I argue we cannot apply stereotypical labels or operate from rigid dichotomous labels to identify ourselves, others, and whole communities. For example, undocumented students must not be framed as cultural or ethnic Others separate from U.S. American culture. Most of participants have spent a larger portion of their lives living within the U.S., and operating from labels, such as Mexican or criminal, creates boundaries that obscure their connection and participation in the development of U.S. American culture. Labels focusing on nationality/ethnicity/citizenship status are much too ridged and limited in capturing their full-experience as residents of the United States (Calafell *Latina/o Communication* 88). Similarly, Calafell explores the marking of Latinx popstars, such as Ricky Martin and Marc Anthony who were rhetorically positioned in the media as “crossing over” into the U.S. even though both hold U.S. citizenship (*Latina/o Communication*). Undocumented students are rhetorically positioned in legal and academic settings as not being a part of the U.S. even though they may have lived here their entire lives. The label of criminal limits our conceptualization of these students and prematurely frames them as unworthy, less than, and therefore not a part of our community. Most undocumented people live among us, surround us, and adopt U.S. American practices. Though they may not have documentation, they have developed cultural understandings and identities as U.S. Americans. We cannot make the mistake of solely focusing on the students as Other. These students want to drive, graduate college, find a career, and at a minimum feel included in society. One of the students, Osbelia, stated this hope for inclusion in response to the question of “how has being

undocumented been a positive influence on your life?” Her response was, “[b]ut I guess, work and just I guess that being able to drive and feel safe when you drive just, I guess it makes you feel a little bit included in the society at least.” She focused on her DACA status giving her access to a driver’s license and authorization to work.

Undocumented students are defying social barriers and not allowing themselves to be defined by dominant beliefs embedded within institutions that make it more difficult for them to attend. These students are resisting dominant narratives of undocumented people as criminals, unintelligent, and therefore unworthy of having access to education. They are not allowing themselves to be defined by institutional and structural limitations. Students challenge dominant beliefs and they inherently unsettle categories. Labels place undocumented students as less than or unworthy because they are constructed as criminals that have broken laws. Students like Bernardo challenge stereotypes of Latinx students. They maintain a hope of education as an opportunity to create change. They maintain strong community ties and they are constantly emphasizing their need to help others like themselves. For example, Bernardo tells me,

I believe that schools and higher education have such, they are just such a magical place, I feel like they have such an influence on people and how they develop, and how they think about the world and how they interact with one another and the opportunities they provide for people and I want everyone to have those opportunities and everyone once they do have this opportunities, once they are there to feel comfortable and it’s really, that thought has really shaped what I want to do being an undergrad, so I want to be working at a university. In the

future I want to get a masters and a Ph.D. in higher education and work as a staff faculty hybrid. I want to stay here forever, stay in the world of higher education and just open those doors for people.

Undocumented resist these rigid labels of undocumented people because they are finding success within the academy and beyond. They unsettle these categories of citizenship, race/ethnicity, and intellectual ability. These students stretch the boundaries of these categories by defying assumptions. Furthermore, their very existence in these spaces resist dominant notions of citizenship. Despite having a limited access to resources on campuses, they have found success learning to use a disidentifying performance of exceptionality to maneuver through the academy.

In these experiences of the border, within a space of *nepantla*, students develop a ‘border consciousness.’ They develop a political consciousness based upon their experiences within and outside the academy. Students manage ambiguity and tolerate the oppression they experience in hope they can transgress societal limitations set upon them to attempt to transform structures and institutions. In addition, these students are teaching us new realities. While they are playing a role that is geared toward semi-assimilation, they are never subsumed within the academy completely.

Karina faced moments filled with ambiguity. She chose to attend community college because her family could not afford the cost of a university. Katrina started college with a negative experience. She visited a community college near her and was mistreated, believing she was shut out because of her undocumented status. They ignored

her and did have programs that offered funding and support specifically for students like her. She had a different experience at another community college near her, stating:

Si la matriculación, entonces mis papás, somos gente humilde y trabajadora pero mis papás no me van a poder pagar todo esto. ¿Cómo le vamos a hacer?, entonces fue cuando paso todo eso del ASSET porque yo de hecho había ido a [colegio de comunidad de los Rockies] que está por acá por [nuestra ciudad]. Entonces me dijeron que no que porque no tenía mi seguro y se portaron bien feos conmigo y fue ahí cuando más sentí el rechazo por ser indocumentado. Y, aplique aquí a la escuela a [Mountain State Colleg] y no me mandaron una carta que me aceptaban. Habían agarrado mis resultados de ACT y que todo estaba bien. Que nomás necesitaba venir a una orientación y escoger clases. Y entonces ya después vine y llene una aplicación que del (aid name) y del (aid name) que me dijeron que aunque no fuera residente...-

If enrollment, then my parents, we are humble and hardworking people but my parents will not be able to pay all this, how are we going to do this? that's when ASSET happened. Because I had actually gone to [Community College name], which is here around [my city] Then I was told no, that because I did not have my social and they were very ugly with me and it was there when I felt the rejection for being undocumented. And then I applied here to this school to [University name]. And they did not send me a letter of my acceptance, they had grabbed my ACT results. And that everything was fine that I just needed to come to an

orientation and choose classes. Then, I came and filled an application from (aid name) and (aid name) that I was told even if I was not a resident.

She experienced staff treating her in an unwelcoming manner, much less providing her help in applying to the school. She recalls how she was treated and how different her experience was at her current institution. She mentioned that she had someone specific to work with and this person was well known in the community as someone undocumented students could get help from. In fact, this person had helped most the students I interviewed. She was and continues to assist undocumented students and has helped many apply to the community colleges and universities nearby. Unfortunately, negative experiences are common with undocumented students and most of the time they either experience someone who is apathetic to their situation, unknowledgeable, or worse has a negative attitude toward the students themselves. Students face structural inequality before stepping foot on a campus, in high school students are met by financial and legal barriers that in turn discourages undocumented students from applying to college (Enriquez 482). Micro-aggressions have a lasting impact in the lives of students and students must create strategies to ensure their survival in these hostile environments.

These students perform new tribalism as they resist and break down deterministic language that seeks to exclude them from academic spaces (Elenes 136). They create new performances of identity that enable them to envision new possibilities and futures. New tribalism allows them to “unlearn stereotypical labels” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 85).

PEDAGOGY OF HOME

A pedagogy of home is a “cultural knowledge base” that has helped Latinx students survive the academy (Jimenez “The Making”131). It is a knowledge base built from family and friend support systems, that has assisted with resiliency, and self-advocacy.

Olivia exemplifies this cultural understanding:

It’s really my family, they’re like my motivation. Especially my little sister, I really – she was born here, so she won’t have the same challenges as I’m having, but knowing that I can be that role model for her to go to college, that’s really, I want to why and even if I don’t finish college, knowing that I actually tried to give her that role model figure of going to college. That means a lot.

For Olivia, it is important that she be a role model for her younger sister. She intends to attend college whether successful or not to be able to demonstrate to her younger sister that it is a possibility. Survival in the academy is not just for her own self-preservation but for the preservation of those that come after her. Family serves as motivation for her but it also maintains Olivia connected to her community, to those that have helped her

In response to the barriers they face undocumented students must be extremely resilient, driven, proactive self-advocates, and hopeful. They build their own support systems. Lisa Flores describes this endeavor by Chicanas to create their own space, “[f]or Chicana feminists to create their own space, ultimately their own homeland, and thus, their own identity, they must first reject the definitions imposed on them by others” (“Creative Discursive Space” 146). Karina determined to reach her goal of becoming a doctor fights for space at her university, she shares,

Si pues, en las cosas que, de que bueno, por lo mismo si yo veo una beca pues la voy a ver la voy a checar y como te decía anteriormente tienes que ser un residente permanente, un ciudadano, tienes que ser estudiante con DACA. La otra cosa es que yo me levanto y me voy a la cama con mi preocupación todos los días pienso en esto que me está pasando porque soy la más grande soy la primera que va al colegio de loca escogí la carrera de medicina, pero yo también pienso en mi familia que va a pasar con mi familia con mis hermanos que ellos no tienen sus documentos que va a pasar cuando ellos vengán al colegio y todo eso, entonces yo vengo no y pienso en mis posibilidades de que no esté en termino mi licenciatura voy a México termino allá lo que me falta me regreso y cosas así, vas con un advisor le vas y le preguntas y no saben nada, te dicen no pues no sé.

Yes, in the things that, what good is it, for this reason, if I see a scholarship. I will check it and as I said to you before you have to be a permanent resident, a citizen, you have to be a student with DACA. The other thing is that I wake up and go to bed with my concern every day. I think of what is happening to me because I am the oldest I am the first one to go to college. Out of insanity I chose the medical career. But I also think of my family, what is going to happen with my family, with my brothers, that they do not have their documents, what will happen when they attend college and all that. Then I come and I think about my chances that I will not finish my degree. I will go to Mexico I finish there what I need to finish and return. Things like that, you go with an advisor you go and ask him and they do not know anything, they say no, I do not know.

Osbelia attests to the importance of family in shaping her goals. A continuing theme throughout the responses of the students was their gratefulness for support from family, friends, and staff. Students are very appreciative of the support they receive. Though it is important to not undermine the value of support networks. Valuing friends and family is not just due to a sense of gratefulness for receiving financial help from family, help applying to college, student success support, and recognizing students for their efforts. It is a survival strategy of creating strong bonds with family, friends, and university staff to be able to maneuver and survive through the academy. Each student I interviewed experienced barriers and inequitable treatment; however, they tend to focus on the positive aspects of their lives and the connections they have made within college.

But they had a training for teachers in high school, who were helping other students apply for college, so that's when I really felt included, because it was really for undocumented students, and I felt we were really being included, not just in college but also it would help teachers in High School. So that's when I really felt included.

Olivia was grateful for the support she received in applying to college during high school. She felt supported by staff from her university who attended her high school and provided not only students with support, but also provided high school staff with training. They trained high school staff on best practices for supporting undocumented students. This in turn created a positive environment where she felt valued and included. This made her choice for college much easier as she decided to attend the university with staff that made her feel supported. By providing culturally relevant practices to their

recruitment strategy the school developed a reputation for being a campus where undocumented students are welcomed and they have developed the most inclusive strategies of the three campuses that students I interviewed attended.

Nancy felt included most at a local community college where she was highly involved. She participated in student orientation and leadership positions and was recognized for her efforts. In fact, her image was used in school marketing and promotions. Nancy is a high achieving student with high aspirations. She was accepted to a competitive nursing program at the a local university. Recognizing students' efforts and having the willingness to promote the success of undocumented students assists in creating a supportive environment. Nancy spoke of her experiences being involved on campus:

With orientation – new student orientation. So, I was doing tours and orientations and things like that. And so, from that everybody knew me, and then I won a student success award and we have a little ceremony and they took our pictures and then they put those in the websites and used it as an advertisement.

In the case of Daniela, she felt included because she had a community of people who understood her, was highly involved on campus, and because of the many workshops available to undocumented students. Having this supportive environment fostered her confidence; therefore, Daniela has become a leader on campus for a student organization. This level of student connection with the campus is important to the success of students (Perez-Huber et al, “Struggling for Opportunity” 7). Again, students at Olivia’s university report feeling more supported by their university and have had several students take

leadership positions. Daniela led a committee to create a regional summit with workshops and helped other undocumented students.

Daniela also has a close group of people that she considers to be her classmates:

I think, I feel, I think it's like, sometimes I think it's like two lives. Because it's like you have, yes, I feel included, but I feel included just because I have a circle of people around me in the support system that, that's who I go to school with, you know. I don't go to school with all these white kids. I go to school with my circle, people in the support system and I think in my line of work and that was it, so it's just like, that's why I feel supported.

On campuses that do not exhibit the same level of support for undocumented students they report relying on the support of family. Bernardo expresses a deep appreciation for his family and the assistance they provided during his undergraduate experience at a Private University of the Rockies. His family was encouraging, helping him with groceries and emotional understanding. Still, there were some struggles with Bernardo and his family. Though he felt his family was very understanding, he felt guilt. This guilt stemmed from his opportunity to attend college while his older sisters were not given the same opportunities. This made it difficult for Bernardo to have an open conversation with his family about college.

They provide a lot of support in terms of like the beginning of college, they would provide a lot of financial support, they would buy food or come visit me or I would come visit them but now it's kind of a decision where I like finance a lot of it, so usually when I see them they are taking me to the grocery stores, since I

don't drive they would just drive here and then they will take me out to Target to buy some groceries for the apartment, always providing support like I talk to my mom for 2 to 3 times a day, I was talking about school how it is going, talking about grad school and what I want to do. But it's realizing that to a certain extent there isn't that much they can understand because they didn't have the opportunity to go to higher education, go through it and I remember that it was something and I sued to feel very guilty about and I still do a lot, just thinking about how much my sisters wanted to go and they didn't have the opportunity. So it is definitely like tricky to navigate because sometimes when I want to talk to them about I want to go to grad school, I also feel guilty because I know they didn't have the chance to go to undergrad in the first place. So it's definitely tricky in that sense.

These traits are learned from home. Pedagogies of the home are funds of knowledge students have acquired from their friends and families. These pedagogies of home are experiential knowledge derived from theories in the flesh. From these pedagogies, students have learned strategies for survival. These embodied knowledges reflect feminist sensibilities of valuing the body as a site of knowledge. Furthermore, this subversive knowledge has arisen out of the need to survive and has come about in embodied ways because women of color have historically been denied traditional forms of education. Pedagogies of home act similar to bell hooks' understanding of homeplace as a space of survival. Undocumented students learn how to navigate oppressive government and other structures locally that could harm them, Reliance on family and home to overcome

difficult barriers is a beneficial strategy. Students have also learned to be resilient and driven from their families.

COYOLXAUHQUI IMPERATIVE

A central question driving this study asks how does the bridging of Chicana feminist theory and a dialogical performance method impact the co-construction of research with undocumented students? More specifically, the question asks how bridging Chicana feminist theory and dialogical performance method help to interrogate and remedy the power relations within the process of conducting research/fieldwork. Anzaldua's conceptualizes her theory of *Coyolxauhqui* keeping in mind the embodiment of theory and research as a process (*Light in the Dark*). The story of the goddess *Coyolxauhqui* represents being tossed into the void by traumatic events; disintegrating into a thousand pieces. *Coyolxauhqui* symbolizes a process of reconstruction, it is a reframing and rebuilding of ourselves as scholars after having suffered a *choque*, a wound. It is an ongoing process of making and unmaking ourselves but also healing ourselves after having experienced a *choque*. As a Latinx/Chicano researcher, I come to these moments and experiences, having experienced a *choque*, shifting me into a *nepantla* state, a liminal state (Anazaldúa *Light in the Dark* 17).

Framing *Coyolxauhqui* within the research process, I can express the falling apart and putting myself together as engage in this research, evidenced in my own narrative. I hope to demonstrate the need for epistemological diversity within our epistemological tools for exploring our academic system. I can express how I feel caught in a *remolino* (vortex), which are different, contradictory forms of cognition, perspectives, worldviews,

belief systems, all within the transition of *nepantla*. I am torn between traditional academic ways and the knowledges my body presents me; thus, I seek harmony. It is the putting together of the pieces in a new way (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 20).

I believe this is an opportunity for pivoting toward the *Coyolxauhqui* Imperative as a dialogical performative stance. The *Coyolxauhqui* Imperative achieves the framing of knowledge production processes within a larger social structure. A privileging of the body in fieldwork/ethnography is like writing is a “gesture of the body, a gesture of creativity, a working from the inside out” (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 57). Within the *Coyolxauhqui* Imperative one’s lived experience is not theorized as an abstract concept, but understood materially and corporeally (Anzaldúa *Light in the Dark* 5). Both Anzaldúa (*Light in the Dark*) and Conquergood (“Performing as a Moral”) see the body is a central site of knowledge. Anzaldúa conceptualizes writing not as “being in your head,” but instead it is a response to physical, emotional, and external stimuli (*Light in the Dark* 5). As researchers, our bodies are also responding to physical, emotional, and external to theorize, record, and create order. Centering our bodies as fieldworkers we must consider our social positions throughout the research process. Thus, we must see scholarship as a process that creates political knowledge.

In critiquing objectivist and imperialistic views of ethnography Conquergood argued for a rethinking of ethnographic research (“Rethinking Ethnography” 96). Conquergood persisted in the integration of performance theory suggesting that ethnographers be co-performers to understand the embodied meanings within cultural practices like conducting research (“Rethinking Ethnography” 96). The dialogic performative, or co-performative witnessing, is useful to interrogate social relations

governing the research process (Conquergood “Rethinking Ethnography 93). Co-performing is a repositioning of the researcher, it is moving from distanced and detached observer to positioning our body to one of involvement and engagement or as Conquergood describes it as a ‘coactivity’ (“Rethinking Ethnography” 93).

Conquergood began his push for fieldworkers to account for their social positions by emphasizing the performative stances a research engages in throughout. Conquergood pressed ethnographers to move away from relying on a viewpoint of the ‘world as text’ and to imagine the ‘world as performance’ (“Rethinking Ethnography” 96).

Conquergood’s pitfalls, point to this like the Curator’s Exhibitionism (“Performing as a Moral”). It is vital to couch the research process within larger structures of power. Exploring the positionality of the researcher before they have stepped into the context of the study and interrogating structural dynamics that dictate the scripts available to the performers within this larger social drama of research is key. It is important to understand how we become researchers, how institutions shape us as well as the choices we make, and the resulting political choices we make as we conduct research. Dialogical performance focuses on theorizing the politics of positionality, politics of the knowledge production process, questioning the role of actors within this process, and asking that we consider how the scholarship ethically impacts all of those involved in the performance.

From this vantage point Conquergood posits we can consider the process not only of ethnography, but of conducting research in segments may assist in revealing and breaking down the institutions that shape us as scholars into segments so that sites where the ethical junctures/choices occur that have been rendered invisible become visible

(“Rethinking Ethnography”). They occur without much thought because they are eclipsed by the normative structures. The frame of the researcher’s social position in relation to the research process is often obscured. We must understand the research process and the researcher as part of institutional structures are couched from within societal systems.

The *Coyolxauhqui* Imperative as a performative stance offers a tool for meta-analysis for researchers. Framing the *Coyolxauhqui* Imperative as a performative stance can assist in identifying the sites of power impacting choices that I as a scholar face throughout the research process. The choices we make have deep implications beyond just the process of research. Choices we make in the research process impact the trajectory of my growth as scholar. The process allows me to illuminate the ethical predicaments or choices I make and to illuminate choices that have become hidden within normalized practices of research. It is an opportunity to explore the relationship between native researcher and the communities they are a part of, but also the context of research. It is opportunity to interrogate what occurs within larger social structures whose interactions are mediated through social positions that dictate the performance of the relations between participants.

COYOLXAUHQUI IN PRACTICE: REFLEXIVE METHODOLOGY

As I conduct research I constantly torn apart by traumatic events. This being torn apart began from the moment I chose to research the experiences of undocumented students. I had been torn apart, attempting to pull myself to together. To make myself whole. I am the son of immigrants who migrated to the U.S. without documentation; thus, I have intimately experienced hurt and pain. This pain has hurt me and my family and has torn

me apart. Experiences, such as comments made toward my parents for the way they speak; their broken English ridiculed by employers. It drove me to speak English properly to show how intelligent I am. Or my experience growing up poor in a city with enormous wealth. My parents each worked two jobs to be able to provide for our family, yet I would feel like it was not enough because I compared our family to wealthy families. I felt down on myself even though my parents worked extremely hard. I would hold it against them that they could not provide us what other children/kids got from their parents.

Finally, I maintain the wound of being afraid that at any time I may lose my parents during something as ‘mundane’ as a traffic stop. For undocumented families traffic stops are anything but mundane. They are encounters we fear because of the unknown extreme results that may occur. I know this fear from experiencing checkpoints with my family. I strive to educate myself and to learn because I value and enjoy learning. But this is the first time I have openly admitted to being driven because of an inferiority complex. I have believed that I was less than because I did not have certain things, such as having money, a big house, and nice cars because my family has had to work. Work a lot. My self-worth was tied to material objects. In addition, I believed that by educating myself I could transcend class barriers. By doing so I would be validated, not only as a scholar, but as a person. Through the three letters that I will hopefully earn, my degrees, would legitimize my existence. I would not be considered another dumb, lazy, Mexican. Through my existence in the academy I believed becoming a professor would shield me from being poor and considered incompetent. I have actively sought legitimacy and validation.

Conducting this research is emotionally turbulent, filled with highs and lows. I began this project with an emotional high, eager to engage undocumented students, this high quickly dissipated conducting my first interview. The high I felt was transformed, I went from joking with Bernardo to listening attentively to his story. How he has triumphed over his struggle, still, I felt anger. Anger toward a system that would keep students like himself from attending graduate school. Each interview was also mentally and physically demanding. I would go. A couple times I sat in my car and cried, immediately after my interview with each student. I saw myself and my family when the students described their struggles. I would vacillate constantly from a feeling of overwhelming impotency to help students about their citizenship status, to joy from being able to help guide them through an application for financial aid. Hoping that through this project we would be able to make systemic change.

I was torn apart as I conducted research and learned about the terrible conditions undocumented students face in the United States. It was worse than I imagined. It tore me apart inside. How do I continue to push students to attend college knowing the costs they have to pay to attend? I've learned about the social conditions while also navigating my privilege. I was torn when having to decide my project and my methodological approach. I fell apart after each interview. The eight interviews I conducted took a deep toll on me. Each one was emotionally exhausting and spiritually draining. At times, I have known what students have felt because I can empathize with them. Their scenarios are ones my family has faced. I have cousins who have been locked out of attending college in Georgia and have been forced to work full time. Several have been deported.

It is an emotional labor to work within the academy, it is a labor smile while I work with students that I identify with, students that identify as Latinx and Chicanx but are undocumented. I see them and I interpellated myself as they speak, thought I do not live the life of an undocumented student I see myself in their shoes. It is circumstantial was born in the United States and that gives me privileges people dear to me do not have I see myself in them, their struggle is my struggle. Knowing this I struggle to “sell” the academy to not only undocumented students, but to students of color, in general. I hope that what I am doing is worth the price students of color pay to be in the academy. I do not mean just the financial burden families endure so that their children achieve a college degree. I struggle to convince myself the struggle is “worth it.” I feel I must convince myself that attempting to create space for students from marginalized communities. Education of oneself is always a worthy endeavor but I am not completely convinced the current system benefits all students equally and so I labor. I maintain a smile as I tell students it is worth it. I utter the words and in the back of my mind the doubt lingers. I know they will experience micro-aggressions, be burdened from the financial cost. I know they will sacrifice and I hope that it is worth it. I hope that achievement of a degree will help them achieve their goals. Because for undocumented students, sometimes all they have is hope. Hope that the system changes. Hope that achieving a degree will help them transcend laws that tell them they may not be legally employed. Or they may not practice law or medicine.

Feeling something deep within myself, I am conflicted, helpless, and desperate. I am pushed into a state of *nepantla*. This state of inner conflict is constant, as a researcher living between worlds. Growing up and living in a world of Chicanx’s/Latinx’s/Mexican

Americans. I live a divide between communities, between the communities I grew up with and the academy dominated by white ideologies. I am a bridge, learning to operate in this border world to create systemic change by creating opportunities for students who identify with marginalized identities like myself. In this study, I focus on the context of undocumented students with a goal of contributing to change, of creating space and understanding for undocumented students.

Writing has brought me some coming together, a sense of wholeness, and continuing this project has been vital to making me whole. Because of this I decided to be close to my family. A part of me wishes I had chosen an emotionally easier topic. I am too close to this topic and I feel the pain. Education and the dissertation process is not easy as there are many obstacles and sacrifices that are required to achieve the goal of education. Sacrifices my parents have made to give my sisters and I a better life continue to flood my mind. Although I was born in the United States, I identify with undocumented students to the extent that I can share their parent's reasons for migrating from their home countries. There is a lot of pressure and obstacles, yet despite that students persevere. The pain shapes them as the guilt of surviving to graduation visibly grounds them. They are grateful for any help received on the long road to graduation.

I tell myself I want to do work that matters, but I am failing. I cry out of frustration as I have the same excuse for these students that I received from school administrators. They tell me, "We can't do anything, it's the system." We can't change it to allow more students to attend. I want to give up myself, asking myself why even do this if the system is not going to change. These moments of doubt happened after each interview. The pain, feeling of powerlessness, the loss of hope, the loss of drive, and loss

of belief that there will be change defined my experience after each interview. I hope for a new day, a day where students of color, undocumented students, marginalized students are valued. A day when institutions make a commitment to do what they said they will do by providing adequate services so we can focus on our studies. I envy my colleagues who have said they treat graduate school like a 9 to 5 job. I want that. I want to be detached at times, to not feel the pain, to not feel the loss of so many intelligent minds given up on. To not feel guilty for surviving. To be left to wonder if I belong here, suffering from imposter syndrome, believing I should not be here. I should not be here because my friends are not here. I should not be here because I do not feel welcomed here. Because it is difficult for me to connect with the people here. I have smart friends that could be here with me but they 'got caught up,' and I was not caught, arrested, and charged with a felony. Somehow, I have survived and my friends would have too. I question whether I would have survived to this point with a felony on my record? I have survived and I am blessed, grateful for the help I have received along the way. I am not entitled to anything and I am reminded of that almost daily.

Research Positionality. As someone who has close ties to undocumented residents, I possess the ethical drive Madison describes. My goal was to address a process of unfairness: in this case, the process of systemic stratification of undocumented students, as told through their own experiences. I strive to illuminate how these structures of inequality are constructed through performances, language, and culture. And, contextually speaking, the lived domain of these social dynamics and experiences occurs within a U.S. academic setting of higher education and undocumented communities.

In order to be careful and sensitive with my approach, I was required to understand the political and social climate of undocumented residents. Conducting research of state policies, public resources, and educational resources impacting undocumented students provided me with background knowledge, in addition to my personal background knowledge. This knowledge allowed me to navigate dialogue regarding the different issues undocumented students face within and outside of school. I attempted my best to be careful and aware of my privilege as a documented Latino/Chicano/Mexicano while collaborating with undocumented students, as these interactions could cause me to potentially make problematic assumptions. I was intentional about the language I would use while speaking with students, careful not to rely on words like “illegal.” I tried to be aware of my privilege not only through language, but also by not making assumptions about the status of students in terms of DACA. It was important to be able to distinguish myself as someone who assumed that all undocumented students were eligible for DACA and other in-state programs. Though I come from a family with members who are undocumented, there are still many aspects of those experiences I do not understand.

Interviews can be major sources of consternation for researchers; finding participants can be extremely difficult because of how insulated communities are. It may take researchers an extensive amount of time to develop rapport with their target populations. They must also develop rapport with their participants to ask questions about personal and private information. All of this is done with a concern for conducting a ‘successful’ interview that yields significant data. Although my target population is extremely vulnerable, I was granted relatively easy access to it. Part of what made

students so accessible to me is the fact that I am a Latino student—that I speak Spanish and have firsthand experience with undocumented family.

Another reason that I was granted relatively easy access is because I identify and perform as a heterosexual male. Being a male in the Latinx and Chicanx community grants me much easier access to participants, because of having privileges that are attached to being male-identified and male presenting I am granted access to spaces much easier than female and queer identified colleagues. This has been true for most (if not all) of my academic career. During my doctoral program, I was conducting ethnographic research for a non-profit organization specifically focused on the needs of Latinx women. From the moment, I presented myself in this space, I was granted the level of access of the executive leadership. I believed I would have trouble finding participants though this was not the case, male privilege but also class privilege. I must acknowledge the class privilege that grants me a perceived position of power and authority. Undocumented residents are some of the most vulnerable populations in our community and many are hopeful to find assistance for their situation. Many are welcoming of support and open to building allyship. Perceiving me as someone in a position of authority—as a Latinx student, a Spanish speaker, and someone with a family of undocumented residents, but also with the power to impact their situation—undocumented participants were willing to speak with me about their situation.

As an ethnographer, if I intend to collaborate with marginalized communities, it is not enough to be aware of my positionality, but also to understand the impact of my research and scholarship beyond immediate benefits. I must also be aware of the material effects of the research process itself. I need to be cognizant of the hidden meanings

beneath the surface to be able to unsettle neutrality—assumptions obscured by mechanisms of power (Madison “Critical Ethnography” 5). It is my duty to not only disrupt the status quo, but also resist the “domestication” that occurs in these processes by shifting away from re-articulating the status quo and moving toward practices that, at minimum, lessen stratification. This can be attributed in part to the politics occurring with the communities we find ourselves inhabiting. Citing Thomas, Madison, states that this is “because the critical ethnographer is committed to the art and craft of fieldwork, empirical methodologies become the foundation for inquiry, and it is here ‘on the ground’ of others that the researcher encounters social conditions that become the point of departure for research” (*Critical Ethnography* 5). Dialogical performance offers innovative ways to present data that can honor and dignify the community and people who are providing the information.

While I identify as a Latino and Chicano, I have vested personal interest in the contexts of Latinx and Chicanx communities because of my cultural background, I am also a communication scholar. I am invested in communication scholarship, advocating for a shift in how identity—in research contexts—is associated to researchers. Part of why I chose to research undocumented students is that I believe power is made the most visible by vulnerable populations and conversely, it is in the most privileged communities of our society where power is obscured (Madison *Critical Ethnography* 5). Being careful as an insider researcher requires that I recognize my positionality as a researcher who can pass in different settings (Carmona 114).

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

I remember sitting in the library of my undergraduate program during finals week feeling excited about graduation, but even more excited for graduate school. I was excited because I was told I could study anything I wanted. As a scholar, I wanted nothing more than to be able to talk about race in my writing. Up to that point, I had not been able to. The scholarship I was introduced to acknowledged race from a distance. My professors steered me away from those subjects. I told myself that was normal and that I must try to be more objective. I needed to be a true researcher. I hoped graduate school would teach me to be an objective researcher of race.

I reached my master's program and found I enjoyed my scholarship. I enjoy reading, critiquing, and arguing, though I struggle with my writing. I learned an interpretive paradigm and I loved my coursework in interpersonal, familial, political, and strategic communication. But this track of coursework left me feeling empty. Spiritually, I struggled as I tried to understand communication theory and theories of culture that did not make sense to me. I would continually ask myself how could I research and study communication and not account for race or ethnicity, for inequality. The language of Communication Studies felt, and at times still feels, like I was learning a new language in a foreign land. I still could not study the contexts I wished to. The scope of the theories I studied in my first and second year of graduate school still did not quite encapsulate the communicative phenomena that I believed were evident. At times, I was disillusioned and wanted to give up.

I almost did give up and I did not initially apply to doctoral programs. I did not feel welcome. During a graduate school fair at a national conference, I visited several tables with the intent to gather information for graduate school. I walked from table to table, asking questions. Often, I waited... no response. I would ask again and wait...“One second,” I was told. I waited some more and eventually I was handed a flyer. During that one hour, I tried to make conversation with people who did not want to engage with me for one reason or another. There was one person who gave me hope. I came to her table and she took time to talk with me. She asked about my interests and though I am sure she does not remember, I appreciated her kind words when I mentioned I was interested in intercultural communication. I was holding out hope that intercultural communication was the area of study where I could at least somewhat address inequality. For the most part, I left that conference with a negative impression, feeling academia was not the place for me and that I must find another way. Still, that person stayed on my mind.

It was early March and graduate school deadlines had passed, but I decided it could not hurt to ask if I could still apply to her program. She encouraged me once again, but I did not want to believe her. I did not want to go to school for four more years compromising myself, compromising my beliefs. Throughout my program, I felt like I was telling people that I study ghosts—that I talk with ghosts. That I am a medium who can see what others cannot. I could not spend another four years with people looking at me as though I was disturbed and lost my mind. I did not want to experience those looks anymore. I became painfully self-aware in classes. I learned to be strategic about what I said and how I said it, disciplining myself to speak and write in non-threatening prose.

After a while, I would rather not bring up race and have to argue—not about the validity of my argument, but about my sanity and competence.

And here I am today, interested in the societal construction of knowledge.

Seeking to better understand, from a cultural perspective, how our society communicates the structures and processes through which knowledge is developed and legitimized. By focusing on the contexts of academia and undocumented students, I hoped to flesh out the beliefs, values, and ideologies underlying those communicative practices through which our institutions are built. Centering the bodies of undocumented students has revealed the norms, practices, and communication that contribute to the stratification of communities.

My doctoral program and this project have felt, at times, self-indulgent in critical scholarship, and I acknowledge that. I hope my professors in the program do not feel slighted. I want you to understand that it is not because of any negative intent; however, it is personal to me. It is my personal journey toward scholarship that speaks to me—scholarship that does not leave me feeling spiritually empty, as I attempt to construct myself in resistance to dominant structures.

Though the goal of this project was to learn about the subjective experiences of undocumented students on university campuses, it was also (and still is) a project creating scholarship that resists the status quo and that can be messy. It is a project that resists practices and beliefs that have contributed to a system of inequality. I want to learn to develop the tools necessary to both resist dominant structures and build more inclusive structures that support equitable participation by all in society.

In this study, we uncovered the many barriers undocumented students face throughout their academic career. Chapter Five began with a summary of the findings:

resisting the barriers students face. The next chapter was followed by a review of Chicana feminist theories that assisted in making meaning of the experiences of undocumented students. I now consider the implications for policy and research of this study, and I briefly explore future directions of this study.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Findings. All students interviewed in this study faced significant barriers in reaching college and also sustaining success to graduation. Students like Cesar and Karina faced high school counselors who either ignored or discouraged their participation in college. Once students reached a college campus they faced a myriad of additional barriers. Cesar worried about border patrol during his undergraduate career. Daniela worried about her family and how to pay for her tuition. Luis struggled to receive mental health support. Osbelia worried she would not recover from her academic suspension. Olivia worried for her physical health. Karina worried she would not be able to practice medicine. Despite these barriers, they all continued hoping their hard work and determination would be rewarded.

When students do arrive on a college campus they face these barriers despite diversity and inclusive excellence policies that are specifically intended to address structural inequality within higher education. This group of students all attended campuses with inclusive excellence policies and each faced significant moments of exclusion. Lack of culturally competent academic counseling, career services, and other services leaves many undocumented and first generation students to figure out the process on their own. They seek help from people around them, such as friends, family,

and acquaintances. Institutions that espouse inclusive excellence have failed them, as they are not inclusive to the kind of excellence these students bring.

Students face institutional neglect because their presence is not acknowledged. Institutions, such as PUR and PSU—two schools that have publicly acknowledged the presence of undocumented students on their campuses—still ignore the need to create an official process to enroll these students. They are unable or unwilling to create programs and policy that supports undocumented students. This lack of acknowledgement or recognition not only contributes to a chilly and unwelcoming climate, but also creates space for micro-aggressions to occur toward undocumented students.

Analysis. *Nepantla* as a theory asks that we ontologically shift to a positionality centered on the body (Anzaldua *Light in the Dark* 2). Centering the body means we center our own bodies and the bodies of our research participants. In the case of this study, the perspective centers on the bodies of students who face clashing realities of authority and self-commitments (Anzaldua *Light in the Dark* 17). Centering their bodies means that I shift from focusing solely on their narratives to understanding how communication operates within and through their bodies, which in turn asks us to re-imagine theory and knowledge production. This ontological shift of identity and experience has been explored in performance studies as well as feminist studies through the work of Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's theory in the flesh. Anzaldúa conceptualizes identity as complex and in process. She writes:

For me, being Chicana or any other single identity marker is not enough—is not my total self. It is only one of multiple identities. Along with other border *gente*, it is at this site and time, *en este tiempo y lugar* where and when, I help co-create my identity con mi arte. Neither art nor a person's identity is an entirely willed activity. Other forces influence, impact, and construct our desires— including the unconscious and collective unconscious

forces and residues of those that came before us, our ancient ancestors” (Anzaldua *Light in the Dark* 64).

She continues saying, “The process of making yourself whole requires all your parts- you can’t define yourself by any single genetic or cultural slice” (Anzaldua *Light in the Dark* 89) For example, the students I interviewed would all be considered ‘exceptional’ self-starters and high-achieving students—because they must be. The power exercised over the bodies of undocumented students forces them to be exceptional. Undocumented students cannot afford to be anything less than ‘exceptional’ because the price of attending college is much too high. Students pay financial, emotional, and familial tolls for the opportunity to attend college in hopes they will be able to transcend their citizenship and economic status. Students pay these tolls even though the universities they attend have not adopted policies to create inclusive academic spaces. Students at all three campuses felt excluded for different reasons, and yet, discouraging as it was for them, they did not give up. Instead they continued their singular goal of reaching graduation despite the costs they pay financially, emotionally, and spiritually.

For these students, structures within institutions of higher education shape the experiences of their bodies. They are bodies that have been deemed unworthy to receive a college experience because they lack documentation. Institutions, like the syntax of language, have limiting parameters that restrict which performances are desired and possible within these spaces. Not only do they limit performances, but they also employ everyday practices and stylized repetitious acts—the foundation of systemic inequality. In these spaces of *nepantla*, resistance is not an either/or proposition. Chang explicates hyper documentation, meaning the more documentation one can provide, the more legitimacy a resident can gain. The performances that occur with institutions are often

described dichotomously as either hegemonic or not hegemonic. Jose Esteban Muñoz's theory of disidentifications can help us understand a more complex explanation of these resistance and assimilationist performances. In many cases, these are the types of performances with which these students engage.

Additionally, these performances are more complicated when you consider that members of the same family may be documented, DACAmented, and/or undocumented. Unfortunately, there is a divide that has developed between students who have received DACA benefits and those who did not qualify for DACA. The one student who had not received DACA, Karina, mentioned feeling frustrated not with students who had received DACA, but with the programming of workshops that were available to undocumented students, as they tended to center on DACA. She stated that students without DACA were not receiving as much assistance and the workshops she attended often centered on providing help to DACAmented students. She mentioned that financial support and career services support was predicated on having received DACA. She was unable to apply for regional scholarships that continued to exclude students who did not qualify for DACA. She was frustrated; without DACA she felt further marginalized. I argue this points to the systemic control of bodies. While bodies that are hyperdocumented have been legitimated by the system through a process of documentation end up receiving support, those who do not are pushed further to the margins.

Chicana feminist theory and dialogic performance illuminate obscured knowledge. They make visible the subjugated knowledge that is otherwise invisible to the dominant culture. Conquergood describes subjugated knowledge as "the local, regional, vernacular, naïve knowledges, neglected by the dominant culture that privileges empirical

observation from a distanced perspective” (“Performance Studies” 33). Undocumented students understand how to perform in spaces where dominant ideologies dictate how people are allowed or not allowed to perform. Knowledge about being able to survive as an undocumented student is not part of the dominant zeitgeist. Understanding how to survive in the U.S. or attend college without documentation are subjugated knowledges.

Still, by re-centering the body, we re-imagine experience and identity, thus requiring we also change our praxis as researchers. Performance studies conceptualize experience not as mundane acts disconnected from structures of power, but rather theorize experience as constituted through feelings and expectation. Our uneventful everyday happenings, the ordinary moments where we are on auto-pilot that are seemingly inconsequential are given meaning (Madison “Critical Ethnography” 167). We give these moments meaning and they become something more than mundane and tied to structures that are constituted and reinforced by the social structures that as a society we have created. Furthermore, it is through performances that we realize how our experiences and expressions are interrelated (Conquergood “Between Experience” 85). We must build new connections to create new realities. Being able to center the experiences of undocumented students illuminates underlying ideologies operating within these specific academic spaces. These spaces are not neutral, and nor are the practices occurring within them. It is vital to bring attention to practices that are not neutral, yet there is little to no interrogation of them in academic spaces. One practice that becomes outstandingly noticeable is the silence regarding undocumented students. Remaining silent and not speaking out against these practices is an implicit agreement condoning this behavior.

Yet, I believe the praxis of centering on the body theoretically needs methodological development. I turn to Chicana feminism because Chicanas have been doing this theoretical work, and their theories have helped make meaning of situations similar to those undocumented students face. Chicanas have interrogated the power exercised over bodies—power that is seemingly invisible to some communities, yet evident in the scholarship of Chicanas. To be able to uncover these understandings, we must not only consider our positionality and standpoint, but also seek to understand how structural and societal communicative (language and performance) phenomenon exercise power over us. We must be cognizant as we build our institutions through everyday academic and research practices, because our institutions are shaped by these practices, there is an ongoing need to further develop epistemologies that have a wider scope to capture disparate sources of data. How we conduct research matters—our positionality and standpoint matter. Though not just a matter of ethics, there are real and material consequences in not accounting for these dynamics. Ethics in how we conduct our research has a material impact on the communities we research. Simultaneously, there is an impact on who we are and who we become as researchers. The same practices that shape who we are and who we become also reify the social structures we build and the institutions we are a part of.

The blending of Chicana feminist theory and dialogical performance has been difficult, but I believe it has been successful. Something I have taken away from this is the necessity for theorizing from the body and further development of methods that coincide with this theoretical development in Communication Studies. The centering of

the body is an ontological shift—one that can help us better understand how our social position impacts the standpoint from which we, as scholars, operate.

RESEARCH and POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Research Implications. Chicana feminist theory has been valuable in revealing the experiences of undocumented students. Furthermore, Chicana feminist theory has been vital to understanding the complexity of the lives of undocumented students. Continued theoretical development of Chicana feminism and performance studies would be beneficial to improve understanding within and outside of the contexts of undocumented, Latinx, and Chicana/o communities. Continued bridging of performance scholarship with the work of scholars of color would assist marginalized communities in uncovering underlying values, beliefs, and worldviews embedded within communication occurring at a micro-level. Conquergood writes, “Performance flourishes within a zone of contest and struggle” (“Of Caravans” 27). Academic spaces are zones of contestation and struggle; again, bridging performance theories and the work of scholars of color will be beneficial to understanding these struggles and contestations. Methodologically, this study is in conversation with dialogical performance and studies on performance ethnography, as well as work by Communication scholars, such as Bernadette Calafell and Shane Moreman. Chicana feminism and performance theory share similar goals in seeking to develop new epistemologies and creating methodologies that offer more equitable realities in the construction of knowledge. This was an exploratory study, which revealed much potential as well as the difficulty in the praxis of these theories. Ultimately, there is more development needed.

Policy Implications. The implications of this study for policy include changing of practices at the leadership level for practitioners in the academy, faculty and staff that work daily with students, in order to address the large discrepancy of graduation rates between documented students and undocumented students. Educators may learn more about culturally relevant educational practices, like including culturally relevant texts and pedagogies that connect to students' experiences and histories (Knight et al. 53). Critical communication scholarship asks we create more inclusive spaces (Alexander *Critical/Performative* 315). Following the ethos of critical communication pedagogy, these are some of the policy and program suggestions for practitioners in order to create structural change for undocumented students within their institution:

- Provide explicit support of undocumented students
- Application counseling
- Study abroad support
- Career services support
- Transportation support
- On campus employment/internships
- On campus housing
- Financial aid support
- Mental health counseling and support
- Parent and family integration into student programming

These suggestions are purposeful in combating institutional neglect. For example, Bernardo stated that his university has prided itself on creating study abroad experiences for students and it is one of the curricular requirements for graduation, but undocumented

students are not able to travel at all beyond their borders. Students with DACA can travel with the proper immigration application of the Advance Parole form, but there is no administrative support for this process. In addition, requiring study abroad for majors leaves undocumented students at a structural disadvantage that is currently unaddressed.

Critical communication pedagogy pushes us, as scholars, to create space for students who identify as marginalized. This is an opportunity to further critical communication pedagogical scholarship. Undocumented students face barriers on campuses and are also limited in their physical mobility. Students have trouble reaching campuses because they have a difficult time obtaining driver's licenses and gaining employment. Undocumented residents have limited options in their choice of transportation. There are some states like Colorado, which allows them to obtain a driver's license, while other states only allow residents who have qualified for DACA to obtain a license. Without a license, many undocumented residents are limited to public transportation, walking, biking, and sharing rides. These options can be viable, but for many in Colorado it is not the most time efficient option. Daniela noted this and disclosed that at times, she and her family drove without having a license. Driving without a license is risky for undocumented residents because what might be a routine traffic stop for documented residents becomes a nightmare scenario of detainment and deportation for undocumented residents. Being able to travel between home, school, and place of employment is not as easy for undocumented residents and this limits where they can live, work, and attend school.

Additionally, finding and keeping employment is also an energy-consuming task. Finding employment without an authorization to work can be extremely difficult and

leaves undocumented residents open to exploitation. Being unable to be adequately and securely employed makes it difficult to primarily focus on education. Education becomes a luxury that many cannot afford. This is one of the reasons only certain students make it to and through college campuses. Students face extreme amounts of pressure to be successful because their families are also dependent on them.

Students also face having to deal with the terrifying possibility of detainment and deportation of family members. Two of the eight students I interviewed had parents who had been detained and deported. Both faced pressure from shifting family responsibilities. Others faced difficulties because they are part of mixed status families and have siblings who are documented and undocumented, which can be a point of conflict. Some siblings may be eligible for DACA, while another is not. This can lead to guilt and dissonance for undocumented students.

The undocumented students I interviewed reported feeling depression and anxious; they did not know that they might have access to counseling services on their campuses. Students are not provided adequate counseling services because they are ineligible for insurance coverage and many students experience mental health issues from traumatic events. Students struggle to search for services because they have to weigh whether or not to disclose their status to receive services. Several students reported having poor experiences disclosing their status and it has discouraged them from seeking out other services. Students face pressure from home, as well as economic, academic, and social pressure. They are expected to succeed in an environment that pushes for their failure.

Future Research and Directions. Future research should be focused on the development of Latinx, Chicanx, and performance studies scholarship that resists colonial conventions that have shaped research practices. This research study points to a future direction of Latinx Communication Studies scholarship that continues in the direction of the development of anti-colonial research practices. The development of methodological tools can assist us in interrogating increasingly complex issues surrounding communication practices impacted by the dynamics of a globalized world. We need theoretical development of methodological tools to interrogate the complexities of the hyper-hybridization occurring as we speak.

This also means we need continued conversation with the work of scholars such as Calafell, Conquergood, Warren, Madison, and Alexander. Continued development of methods that can impact institutional structures and create space for undocumented students is necessary. Chicana feminists have pushed scholars to consider their positionality at different stages of the research process. Sarah Amira De La Garza proposes the four seasons of ethnography to help researchers conceptualize the process of research not in a timeline, but a holistic stage of conducting research that is connected to nature. Conquergood proposes dialogic performance to conduct research and offers four performative stances with negative ethical implications that impact the communities being researched. Rodriguez questions how interviewers position themselves as they interface with participants. Linda Tuhiwai-Smith questions the positionality of indigenous scholars conducting research within their own communities. Bryant K. Alexander has similar questions about ethnographic authority as an insider researcher in

the article *Telling Twisted Tales: Owning Place, Owning Culture in Ethnographic Research*.

Future possibilities for Chicana feminist theory is the necessary to continue developing theories of *Coyolxauhqui*, *nepantla*, spiritual activism, new tribalism, and pedagogies of home. Through interdisciplinary partnerships, we must continue to push the boundaries of epistemologies to create systemic change. Future directions for this work must include interrogating power, researching administrators and leadership, and exploring the bridging of inclusive excellence policies with performance methods and Chicana feminist theory. We need to re-imagine inclusive excellence through these theories. We can imagine new possibilities and new, more inclusive futures. We can continue pushing forward with anti-colonial theories and methodologies to better understand their potential and how they benefit the development of knowledge production. In this study, I bridged Chicana feminist theory and dialogical performance, two theories emphasizing the need to theorize from our bodies to illuminate the how institutional structures not only shape how we understand ourselves but also understand how we can act in this world, as shown from the perspective of undocumented students.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

Approval Date: (Enter After Approval) Valid for Use Through:[Exp date]

Project Title: Exploring the Experiences of Undocumented Students: Chicana/o Feminism Performances of Resistance

Principal Investigator: Sergio F. Juarez, MA

Faculty Sponsor: Ramona Beltran, LCSW, PhD

DU IRB Protocol #: 734794-1

You are being asked to be in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The study is conducted by Sergio F. Juarez, MA, and Adrienne Martinez MA. Sergio F. Juarez can be reached at 805-660-6225 or Sergio.juarez@du.edu. Adrienne Martinez may be reached at 303-871-7660 or Adrienne.martinez@du.edu. This project is supervised by Dr. Ramona Beltran, Graduate School of Social Work Department, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208. She can be reached at Ramona.Beltran@du.edu. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part.

Invitation to participate in a research study

You are invited to participate in a study that will give you an opportunity to tell your story about your experience as an undocumented student at universities in the Rocky Mountain region. The goal of the study will be to generate a climate report that is representative of your story that will be presented to leadership. The results from the study will be used to educate administrators of how they may better serve students whose status prevents them from accessing spaces and services on campus. Our goal is to inform policy particularly in the areas of student recruitment, students affairs, academic counseling, and overall school policy. Your participation will benefit those wanting to learn more about the experiences of Latina/o students who lack documentation and how schools can better serve them. This project seeks enable those in the fields of social justice, education, and immigration to better understand and therefore better advocate for undocumented students and create a more inclusive space.

Description of subject involvement

You will be asked to complete an in-depth individual interview about your experience in as a college student at a school in the Rocky Mountain region and how your daily everyday experiences are affected by your status. The interview will last approximately 1 hour. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary.

Possible risks and discomforts

The risks associated with this project are minimal. For example, the interview might trigger difficult memories; you might re-experience strong emotions such as stress, anxiety, grief, fear, loss, etc. If you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Possible benefits of the study

This study is designed for the researcher to learn more about the experiences of students with undocumented status on university campuses to impact policies and provide leadership with suggestions to policy relating to students with undocumented status.

If you agree to take part in this study, there will be no direct benefit to you. However, information gathered in this study may improve the conditions for students with undocumented status through policy change that is provided to university leadership.

Study compensation

You will not receive any payment for being in the study.

Study cost

You will not be expected to pay any costs related to the study. You will be expected to pay for your own transportation, parking, or child care, if needed.

Confidentiality, Storage and future use of data

Your responses will be identified by code number only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researchers, Sergio F. Juarez and Adrienne Martinez, and their supervisor, Ramona Beltran, will have access to your individual data and any reports generated as a result of this study will be presented in the aggregate.

To keep your information safe, the researchers will conceal *your name and will not be attached to any data, but a study pseudonym will be used instead. The data will be kept on a password-protected computer using special software that scrambles the information so that no one can read it.*

The interview data/audio recordings you provide will be stored on a password protected computer. The researchers will retain the audio recordings for one year and erased after a year. The interview data will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study and will not contain information that could identify you. The audio recordings will only

be made available to the researchers Sergio F. Juarez, Adrienne Martinez, and Ramona Beltran.

The results from the research may be in published articles. Your individual identity will be kept private when information is presented or published.

Who will see my research information?

Although we will do everything we can to keep your records a secret, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Both the records that identify you and the consent form signed by you may be looked at by others.

- Federal agencies that monitor human subject research
- Human Subject Research Committee

All researchers on this project are required to keep your identity confidential. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Also, if you tell us something that makes us believe that you or others have been or may be physically harmed, we may report that information to the appropriate agencies.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to withdraw early, the information or data you provided will be destroyed.

If there are any new findings during the study that may affect whether you want to continue to take part, you will be told about them.

Contact Information

The researchers carrying out this study are Sergio F. Juarez, Adrienne Martinez, and Ramona Beltran. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call Sergio F. Juarez at 805-660-6225.

If the researchers cannot be reached, or if you would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) about; (1) questions, concerns or complaints regarding this study, (2) research participant rights, (3) research-related injuries, or (4) other human subjects issues, you may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-4015 or by emailing IRBChair@du.edu, or you may contact the Office for Research Compliance by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu, calling 303-871-4050 or in writing (University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121).

Agreement to be in this study

I have read this paper about the study or it was read to me. I understand the possible risks and benefits of this study. I know that being in this study is voluntary. I choose to be in this study: I will get a copy of this consent form.

Please initial this box if data from this research may be used for future research.

Please initial here and provide a valid email (or postal) address if you would like a summary of the results of this study to be mailed to you. _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Consent to Audio-recording

Please indicate whether it is okay for the interview to be audio-taped.

Yes, I agree to have this interview audio-taped.

No, I do not want this interview to be audio-taped.

Initials of subject
Date

Appendix B: Sample Email

Hello:

We are looking for participants for our current “*Exploring the Experiences of Undocumented Students: Chicana/o Feminism Performances of Resistance*” research project.

Students with *undocumented status* or *DACA status* are invited to participate in a study that will give them an opportunity to tell their story about their experience as an *undocumented student* on a university campus in the Rocky Mountain region. The goal of the study will be to generate a climate report that is representative of your story that will be presented to leadership. The results from the study will be used to educate administrators of how they may better serve students whose status prevents them from accessing spaces and services on campus. Our goal is to inform policy particularly in the areas of student recruitment, students affairs, academic counseling, and overall school policy. Your participation will benefit those wanting to learn more about the experiences of Latina/o students who lack documentation and how schools can better serve them. This project seeks enable those in the fields of *social justice, education, and immigration* to better understand and therefore better advocate for undocumented students and create a more inclusive academic space.

Participants will be asked to complete an in-depth individual interview about their experience in as an undocumented college student at a school in the Rocky Mountain region and how their daily experiences are affected by their status. The interviews can be held in English or Spanish. Also, participants will be able to choose a confidential location of their choosing in the community (i.e. library, non-profit, the University of Denver, etc). Participants will not need to share their names and will only need to initial the consent to protect their identity. We take confidentiality very seriously. We estimate that interviews will last about 60 to 90 minutes. The following are the specific qualifications for inclusion for the individual interviews:

Participating in this project includes participating in interviews and a follow development of a school climate report of undocumented students and student suggested policy changes.

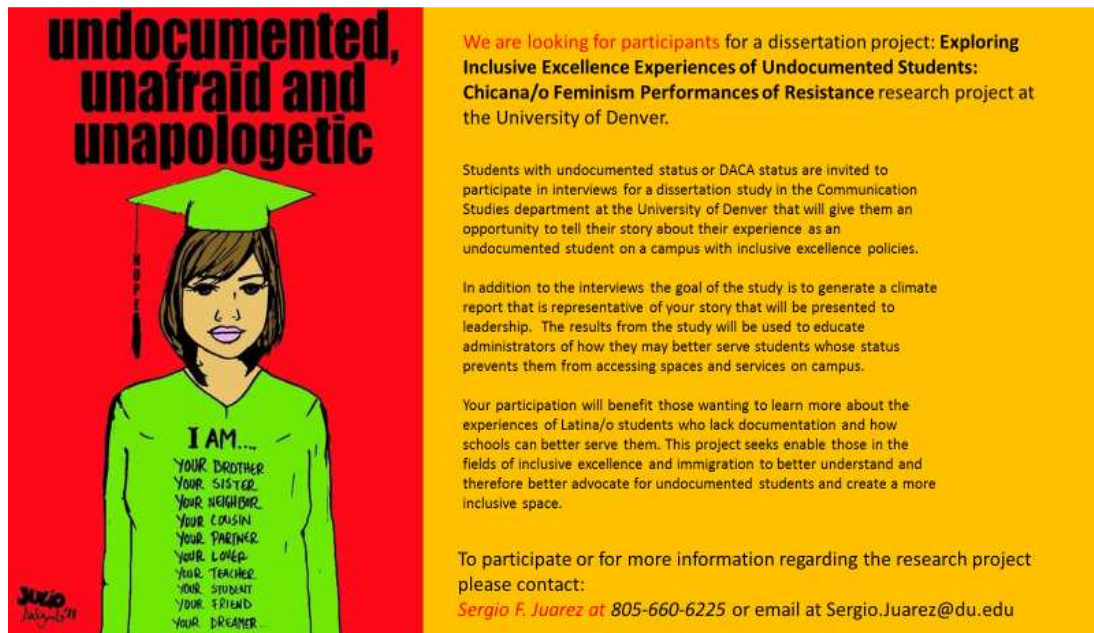
Participants should be:

- * Are 18 or older
- * Attend a college or university in the Rocky Mountain region
- * Have or had experience as a student with undocumented status

If you know anyone who might be interested in completing an individual interview, please ask them to email myself or Adrienne Martinez. They may contact us at sergio.juarez@du.edu or call me directly at 805-660-6225. Adrienne Martinez may be reached at 303-871-7660 or Adrienne.martinez@du.edu.

If you know someone who would like to complete an anonymous letter, please call me at 805-660-6225 and I would be more than happy to drop off an interview questionnaire or mail one to you.

Appendix C: Flyer Example



**undocumented,
unafraid and
unapologetic**

I AM...
YOUR DROTHER
YOUR SISTER
YOUR NEIGHBOR
YOUR COUSIN
YOUR PARTNER
YOUR LONGER
YOUR TEACHER
YOUR STUDENT
YOUR FRIEND
YOUR DREAMER

We are looking for participants for a dissertation project: **Exploring Inclusive Excellence Experiences of Undocumented Students: Chicana/o Feminism Performances of Resistance** research project at the University of Denver.

Students with undocumented status or DACA status are invited to participate in interviews for a dissertation study in the Communication Studies department at the University of Denver that will give them an opportunity to tell their story about their experience as an undocumented student on a campus with inclusive excellence policies.

In addition to the interviews the goal of the study is to generate a climate report that is representative of your story that will be presented to leadership. The results from the study will be used to educate administrators of how they may better serve students whose status prevents them from accessing spaces and services on campus.

Your participation will benefit those wanting to learn more about the experiences of Latina/o students who lack documentation and how schools can better serve them. This project seeks enable those in the fields of inclusive excellence and immigration to better understand and therefore better advocate for undocumented students and create a more inclusive space.

To participate or for more information regarding the research project please contact:
Sergio F. Juarez at 805-660-6225 or email at Sergio.Juarez@du.edu

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Exploring Experiences of Undocumented Students: Chicana/o Feminism Performances of Resistance Interview Guide

Individuals' Demographic Information:

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Ethnicity:
4. What languages do you speak?
5. What year of college are you in?
6. Do you work?
7. What do you do?

Transition to Migration Questions:

8. Where were you born?
9. If not in U.S., when did you immigrate to the U.S.?
10. Tell me about your experience emigrating to the U.S.?
11. What challenges have you encountered while living in U.S.?

Transition to Education Experiences:

12. What does inclusive excellence mean to you?
13. Do you feel included in your school?
14. How does your citizenship status affect you most in terms of receiving an education?
15. What was it like applying to your school?
16. Do you have trouble receiving services? academic counseling, health, or others?
17. What are things that you have to do to protect yourself while on campus?
18. Does your status affect who you make friends with?
19. Do you believe status differs for people by gender?
20. Do you believe status differs for people by sexuality?

Transition to Project:

21. Are you interested in being an activist in your community? why?
22. Are you interested in continuing your education? Why or why not?
23. What would you tell administration if you could tell them to fix something for undocumented students?
24. How could schools better serve you?