UNDOCUALLY TRAINERS' RISK, RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE: A
DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

by

Jennifer A. Crewalk
A Dissertation
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Graduate Faculty
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of
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Education

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                                  George Mason University
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UndocuAlly Trainers' Risk, Resilience and Resistance: A Descriptive Case Study

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to our undocumented students and their student organizations. You are part of the legacy of freedom fighters that mark this decade. Your journeys, resilience and resistance are truly changing our nation for the better. Thank you for trusting me so that others may learn and grow, as I have, in your presence.

Acknowledgements

   Thank you to my colleagues, my friends and family who have listened, supported and encouraged this goal over many years. Thank you to Javier, Vincent, Alessandra and Rosa for always grounding me in something hopeful. Thank you to my Godparents for always encouraging and believing in me. Thank you to my committee, Dr. Shelley Wong, Dr. Earle Reybold and especially to Dr. Kim Sheridan, whose expertise, guidance, patience and humor made this long journey possible.

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Abstract

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DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

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George Mason University, 2021

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This descriptive study analyzes the experiences of 10 student-trainers of an
UndocuAlly Training Program and assesses this particular program as a potential
resilience structure that leads to compelling support for student-trainers in liminal status.
The study builds on the ecological framework of Suárez-Orozco for describing the assets
and challenges of undocumented college students at the student, campus, and
state/national levels. This study also addresses their recommendations for the need for
further research into programs with promising practices that lead to positive outcomes for
undocumented students.

The findings are presented and discussed within ranges to underscore the
liminality and variety of student experiences. Analyses from multiple data sources (semi-
structured interviews, optional focus group, field notes and document analysis) extends
prior research on risk and resilience, more specifically on resilience environments and on
ambiguous loss. Understanding more about the risk and resilience of undocumented

students surviving in the last decade deepens insight into student resistance and cultural capital. This study introduces the concept of *resilience structures*, counterspaces that support undocumented students to navigate, access resources and engage in transformative resistance to cope with adversity. These spaces intentionally utilize ecological and critical race theory frameworks to build on the cultural wealth of minoritized students while offering valuable resources to mitigate adversity at the personal, campus, and state/national levels.

Key words: undocumented students, critical race theory, UndocuCrit, LatCrit, community cultural wealth, capital, ecological framework, risk and resilience, academic resilience, resilience structures, transformative resistance.

Chapter One

The UndocuAlly Training Program with a Virginia University (VU) research site, serves to engage, resource, and educate attendees on the student, campus, and state/national lived realities of undocumented populations. The training's educational purpose is to build allies and institutional change agents from the population of attendees that include students, student affairs professionals, faculty, and community trainees. UndocuAlly programs have been created across the country and sometimes have dedicated part-time or full-time staff to manage the logistics and facilitation of such trainings. However, a distinction at VU is that these trainings are all *student-led*. These student-trainers themselves also identify along the immigration status spectrum from completely undocumented, DACAmented, liminal (between or transitioning statuses) and U.S. citizen allies. What follows is a topography of the case study, a mapping of the concepts covered in the training as well as the political landscape that distinguish this descriptive case study and its setting.

A portion of the 11 million people in the undocumented population, often referred to in popular media as "DACA recipients" or "DREAMers" or "dreamers" are the young people who entered the United States as children or teenagers. This latter term was coined from the ongoing "DREAM Act" bill from 2001 to 2021, which would allow students to access college and earn a pathway to citizenship (Olivas, 2012). Due to in-

community preference and nuances of privileges and perceptions, the term '*undocumented students*' will be utilized in this study instead of "DREAMers" to be more inclusive of those in liminal statuses from fully undocumented students, students with temporary protective status (TPS) to recipients of deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA).

Most undocumented students and their families flew into the country legally on tourist or work visas and stayed in the United States after their visas expired. Some entered through Mexico without any form of documentation (Olivas, 2012). Many undocumented students go through K-12 public schools, yet continually live in the shadows of our educational systems that misunderstand, exploit, support, or remain unaware of their unique assets and challenges (Gonzales et al., 2013; Olivas, 2012; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). The combination of systemic racist-nativist barriers at the local, state, and national level creates multiple oppressions that disrupt internal and external protective factors, often resulting in students leaving college early or not entering at all, possibly perpetuating a cyclical immigrant underclass (Pérez Huber, 2010; Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015).

Educational and psychological researchers often use an individual level of analysis and focus only on areas of problems. This has resulted in what scholars often term a "deficit model" approach. There exists a disproportionate amount of racially biased literature that focuses on the distress and negative outcomes of the student (Caplan & Nelson, 1973). This bias often implicitly blames the student and family for their distressed situation. The danger in using a framework to focus on decontextualized,

individual factors allows structural inequalities like systemic racism, poverty, and inequities to be overlooked and escape accountability (Corona-Ordoñez, 2013).

Therefore, this study flips this lens to reframe what it means to be "at risk". Rather than repeating decontextualized, individual cases of distressed students, this study takes up the adversity imbedded in systems and structures that lead a population of students – undocumented students – toward an increased risk for systemic oppressions at the campus, state, and national levels.

Such adversity for undocumented students may be experienced as nativist racism, family separation and immigration trauma, exclusion from a right to vote in policies that directly impact their daily lives, fears of deportation, constant financial burdens, and high levels of anxiety - all while handling the known academic and social pressures of being a college student (Johnson et al., 2015; Pérez Huber, 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Engaging and being persistent in the multiple dimensions of adversity is what defines the psychological construct of resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003; González-Torres & Artuch-Garde, 2014), which many undocumented students demonstrate academically and civically (Bjorklund, 2018; Gonzales, 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Undocumented students, some of whom are academically resilient, despite a multitude of barriers, find support through models of resilience and their own cultural strengths, perhaps even some of them enhanced through adversity itself (Carter, 2008; Johnson et al., 2015; Pérez Huber, 2010; Pérez Huber et al., 2009; Yosso, 2005). Another relevant perspective on resilience is a need for "*environments* to facilitate the navigations and negotiations of individuals for the resources they need to cope with adversity" (Ungar, 2013, p. 7).

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How does the civic engagement environment built into the UndocuAlly program engage student-trainers to access resources and cope with adversity? Such is the curiosity of this study. Can this contextualized, uniquely student-led UndocuAlly program, that aims to expose systemic inequalities simultaneously bolster resources and resilience in the undocumented students who facilitate the program?

The nuanced educational experiences of undocumented students exist in these tensions. They exist in the intersections of risk, resilience, and resistance within the constant fluctuation of educational, state, and national agendas (Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Gonzales, 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Therefore, analyzing the experiences of students provides rich data about larger policy, social and political contexts that students must navigate (Castagno & McCarty, 2017). Much of the recent descriptive literature explored these experiences separately on a student, campus, state, or national level. Few studies incorporated all, therefore research through an ecological research lens can uncover a deeper understanding of resilience in relationship to achievement under constant adversity (O'Neal et al., 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015).

Transformative educators, researchers, and institutional change agents, who understand this level of complexity, are especially poised to explore, and analyze undocumented students' experiences in relationship with them (Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Southern, 2016). Ideally this exploration will yield a deeper understanding of how best to support students towards positive outcomes. Findings from this study ultimately and

practically leverage support for undocumented students while simultaneously acknowledging and addressing the systems that perpetuate the adversity.

In a review of relevant literature, it is clear that undocumented students are under great duress and compressed by multiple oppressions (Pérez Huber, 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015). To activist-scholars and allies, this is a call to serve. There is a great need for ally-building, transformative educators, and institutional change agents to share student risks and resilience (Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Johnson et al., 2015; Southern, 2016). There is a great need for faculty who work closely with undocumented students to lean into the privileges of status and positionality to creatively amplify the voices, needs and nuanced lived realities of our undocumented students. More specifically, research can be described and explored through education programs that seem to encourage positive outcomes, while examining the roles institutional agents may play in addressing the adversity students experience.

There is a clear gap in literature on current promising practices that utilized the assets of undocumented students, encouraged positive development despite risk resources models of resilience and supports transformative resistance (Bjorklund, 2018, Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Johnson et al., 2015, Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004, Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Many studies focused on the risk, resilience, and resistance of undocumented students. None, however, explore all three constructs through the lens of a promising training program that educates on adversity at the campus, state, and national levels.

This descriptive case study explored the risk, resilience, and resistance of undocumented/DACAmented/TPS students and their experiences as student-trainers

through both Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Ecological Frameworks (EF). These frameworks contextualize and texturize the undocumented student landscape and point to possible protective factors that increase resiliency and/or decrease the trauma of adversity, while the wider systemic barriers are strategically exposed and critiqued (Pérez Huber, 2009, 2010).

Background of the Problem: Racist Nativism and Educational Inequity

At the core of the multiple oppressions undocumented students are "at risk" for experiencing is the racist nativism that exists in educational settings (Pérez Huber, 2009, 2010). Pérez Huber (2009) defined racist nativism as the assigning of values to differences in order to justify the superiority of the 'native', who is perceived to be white [white European settlers] over the non-native, who is perceived to be [Black, Indigenous, People of Color] which thereby defended the 'natives' *perceived* right to dominance (p. 42).

Ladson-Billings (2000) explained critical race theory (CRT) allows scholars to examine these dynamics of racial discrimination by challenging social, educational, and political issues and to instead prioritize the voices of BIPOC most effected by them. Further, research explained, "Latino critical theory (LatCrit) demonstrated *how* critical raced-gendered epistemologies recognize Students of Color as holders and creators of knowledge" (Bernal, 2002, p. 106). Critical race theory (CRT) and LatCrit therefore may provide a more accurate lens to examine systemic problems, especially at the student level of experience or unit of analysis (Bernal, 2002). This descriptive case study aligns directly with this tenant of CRT, as the student-trainers are the holders and creators of the

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UndocuAlly Training Program. Their varied and nuanced experiences within a systemic, ecological lens are the primary focus of this research.

Statement and Responses to the Problem

Risk

While definitions of risk and resilience within an environmental or ecological framework vary, youth are not viewed as a storehouse of social ills but as a fountain of potential for achieving positive outcomes in a society if their community and personal resources are maximized (Furman, 2000). Risk is operationally defined here as the *forces that contribute to the problematic conditions in the micro, mezzo, and macro-level system levels* (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004). In the context of this descriptive case study, these "forces" are the practices of racist nativism and educational inequities embedded in the policy and cultural environments that impact undocumented students within the personal, campus, and state/national levels. Some examples of risk include (a) a recipient of DACA, after working to earn $495 to renew ahead of the expiration, falls out of status anyway due to the backlogged USCIS renewal system. Without their DACA renewal, they then lose their stay-of-deportation, their EAD work permit, their in-state tuition and resident assistant (RA) job that included housing, due to the domino effect of this federal fluctuation in DACA policy; (b) Inconsistent locked-out policies in a state that deny college admission to a fully undocumented student. She applies and obtains a full scholarship for an out of state university, but anxiously worries and debates enrolling in the university due to deportation fears and leaving her family and community to pursue her dream of a higher education; (c) A TPS recipient who serves as vice president of a

campus group supports his student executive board to 'get out the vote' event for upcoming elections but cannot register to vote himself, nor elect officials into power that would give his family and community a pathway to citizenship; (d) An undocumented student is often judged by his peers because he is sometimes late but they do not know that he cannot obtain a license and takes two buses to the university that takes 1 hour and 20 minutes to commute instead of the 25 minutes it takes to drive directly.

The daily racist nativist and educational inequities described here create tensions and higher risk for students at multiple levels. As bills with pathways to citizenship and national comprehensive immigration reform remains stalled, the politics and policies surrounding undocumented families have fluctuated from ambiguous to directly anti-immigrant, in that these forces of institutional racism and fear embedded in state and campus policies have become normalized (Castagno & McCarty, 2017; Muñoz et al., 2018; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Therefore, to survive, students must be extraordinary just to endure the every day. To survive, risk and a heightened vigilance become a daily practice, as "fear is endemic among immigrant communities" (Aguilar, 2019, p. 2). While student-trainers and their families are impacted by these risks, in addition to the typical pressures of college life, they still choose to *heighten the risk* of exposure by facilitating campus UndocuAlly trainings. *This study explored this choice of risk in relationship to benefits of UndocuAlly Training Program.* One of the distinguishing characteristics of this descriptive case study was to highlight student experiences through the perceptions of a culturally specific lens and, from a participant observer lens (Maxwell, 2012; Stake, 2005).

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The context of the UndocuAlly Training Program serves as a platform for such a student-trainer to co-create a learning space that encourages the critical examination and amplifies the impact of policies and practices at the student, campus, and state/national levels. Many undocumented students, despite the risks, believe it is essential that their voices, values, and contributions be shared through campus and civic engagement (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Their choice for student-trainers to lead and potentially expose themselves in public may be markers of positive adaptation, resilience and a form of resistance to these adverse and dangerous forces that silence and push many other directly impacted students into the shadows.

Resilience

In educational psychology literature, one way to mitigate risk, according to Fergus and Zimmerman (2005), is through positive adaptation. Positive adaptation is seen as a resilient outcome in students. Resilience is operationally defined in this literature by three conditions: (a) growing up in or finding oneself in an adverse situation (b) the availability of internal and external protective factor (c) managing to adapt positively despite the experience of adversity (González -Torres & Artuch-Garde, 2014). There are three waves to this construct of resilience as described by Richardson's (2002) theory of resiliency that focus on support systems: resilient qualities, the resiliency process and innate resilience. The *resilient qualities* of individuals and support systems predict social and personal success, resulting in protective factors that help a person grow through adversity. The *resiliency process* is defined as coping with stressors or adversity in a way that results in the awareness and enhancement of protective factors. *Innate resilience* is

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the identification of motivational forces within individuals and groups and the creation of experiences that foster the activation and utilization of these motivational forces (p. 308). Though all waves may be relevant to an UndocuAlly student-trainer's experiences at the personal and family level, this latter wave may be most salient in the creation of a space and experiences that activate motivation. Supporting this latter view, in research with undocumented students, resilience was shown to exist not only as a personal trait but also as a form of *cultural capital* that was displayed within a community's cultural wealth (Pérez Huber, 2009; Yosso, 2005).

The literature on resilience reviewed has examined internal processes of the individual, their support systems, and their creation of experiences. Yet, how can the responsibility of resilience and its measurement be only on individuals and targeted communities to positively adapt to societal constructions of oppression without also critiquing the oppressive forces? Understanding the risk, there is a need to share this responsibility for building resilient communities by societies' dominant identities and institutions as well (Muñoz et al., 2018). There is a need for institutional spaces to participate in resilience, for the "*environments* to facilitate the navigations and negotiations of individuals for the resources they need to cope with adversity" (Ungar, 2013, p. 7).

Therefore, the guiding questions on risk and resilience are considered here: How does the UndocuAlly training experience build on these waves of resilience and cultural wealth despite heightened risk? What do UndocuAlly student-trainers bring and create in this space to enhance their assets/protective factors and their perception of resiliency?

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This descriptive study explores how UndocuAlly Trainers navigate this liminal space in between risk and resilience to activate individuals and community protective factors on a community scale.

Resistance

> ***"They tried to bury us but they didn't know we were seeds"***
> **~**Mexican protest chant

At both the individual and community levels, civic engagement and resistance capital has been cited as protective factors (Carter, 2008; Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011; Nasir et al., 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). In a notable national study, 72% of 998 undocumented students reported civic involvement such as petitions, protests, walk outs, organizing, as motivation to continue studying (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Therefore, some of the academic resilience documented by these researchers may also be informed by such civic engagement. This is an important note for student persistence and a call for universities to support such civic engagement rather than fear it or deter it in students and institutional agents (Chen & Rhoads, 2016).

There is also an ideology of *academic achievement* as resistance itself in response to systemic barriers and educational inequalities (Carter, 2008). This concept supports undocumented students in the shadows of higher education who are often conflicted about studying or being more involved and vocal activists. It is a strong encouragement that doing well academically in an educational system not originally created for undocumented success, *is enough*. It also expands the range of resistant experiences for undocumented students beyond the model minority myth of thriving activist-scholar and beloved DACA-darling the media proports. *Therefore, the third purpose of this case*

study was to explore educational UndocuAlly trainings as a possible student practice of civic engagement or resistance. The UndocuAlly program in essence provides a topography which calls on the student-trainers to feel the weight of risk, develop and access protective factors and resources to find ways to adapt, even through adversity all within a protective structure. These acts of educating others to increase allyship, in itself, may be seen as an act of resistance against the status quo and serve as a protective factor. Together these experiences may support student resilience in many forms (Wong et al., 2018).

Purpose of the Study

These insights into problematic, systemic inequities and possible responses for them drives the purpose of this descriptive case study. The purpose of this study is to further explore and understand how undocumented student-trainers may experience these constructs of risk, resilience, and resistance through their involvement within their multidimensional UndocuAlly Training Program at VU. Most studies have detailed the experiences of undocumented students on the individual level, yet not through their interactions of programs that critique systems and provide resources and opportunities to cope with adversity.

This study provides an example of a promising practice where such students-trainers lead UndocuAlly Trainings, interacting with the impacts of policies at the state and national levels. This case study setting was selected because of 1) its environment for undocumented student support, 2) potential for theoretical advancement, 3) timely relevance, and 4) its focus on the complex interrelationships that contextualize the

UndocuAlly student-trainer experiences at local and national levels. The aim of this study was *not* to evaluate the impact of the UndocuAlly Training Program on its attendees, but rather to understand the behind-the-scenes experiences of the student-trainers as leaders within this program-- as undocumented, as students, as human beings.

In summary, this case study filled a gap in undocumented student literature describing a promising practice that yielded positive outcomes for undocumented students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). It focused on a university program that is uniquely *student-led* requiring participation from faculty, staff, and administrators, thus shifting the education power dynamics, reflective of CRT. This setting also served as a *counterspace* that speaks directly to CRT framework. This study centered the voices of students of color as holders, creators and disseminators of knowledge and creators of communities (Pérez Huber, 2010; Yosso, 2005). It also explored student-trainer storytelling on the impacts of policies at state and national levels, therefore grounding the ecological model and real-life complexity of undocumented students. This served as a CRT space to critique racist nativism, offer counter stories, and name the multiple forms of oppression undocumented students are "at risk" for due to their immigration status (Pérez Huber, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In my multiple roles as a researcher, a participant observer, and as the UndocuAlly faculty administrator working closely with undocumented students, I was an inside-outsider. The phenomena I was witnessing could easily be seen within this insider context, but as an outsider, could also be surfaced for intensive case study and closer analysis (Glesne, 2016). This positionality, built through

time, deliverables, and trustworthiness, increased the safety for participants, and revealed patterns and connections for nuanced understanding.

Background of UndocuAlly Training Program

The UndocuAlly training was established and has been sustained at VU from 2014-present, during a period in which there had been many shifts in policy and heightened levels of student and national activism on immigration reform. Past and current trainers were able to provide insight on the formation of the UndocuAlly program and its evolution and processes over time through a resource UndocuAlly training manual (2016, 2018). This manual was used for document analysis to fortify this study. An overview from this document follows to trace the timeline of this program from 2014-2019, the five-year mark for this training program and focus of this descriptive case study.

The UndocuAlly Training Program at VU was originally modeled after the UndocuAlly trainings conducted at UC Berkeley (Canedo Sanchez & So, 2015). In 2014, the student president of the "Undocumented and Unafraid" student organization connected with UC Berkeley facilitators to learn more. To his surprise, they spoke to him at length about how to build a similar program at VU and gave him a copy of all presentation materials and slides to modify as needed to the current legislation and campus climate at VU. Grateful to the UC Berkeley trainers, the student leaders quickly built out a six-hour training program on Saturdays and expanded their organizations mission statement to include this training in their educational goals. The student leaders introduced their first UndocuAlly training in the spring semester of 2014. This training

was designed to educate faculty, students, and community on the history, legislation and the current realities of undocumented students and their experiences. The goal was to cultivate a more supportive environment for undocumented students through education, inclusion, and institutional support. In the beginning, attendee records and evaluations showed a higher level of students and peer attendees. While this was important for campus climate, student leaders desired to see more administrators, counselors, and community leaders in attendance, to better inform their advising, policies, and practices. Therefore, the trainings were reduced to four hours on Fridays which nearly tripled this targeted audience, with a range of 35-45 registered attendees per training. Modifications were constant and ebbed and flowed according to the current campus context and political landscape this training lived within. Figure 1 illustrates some of these moments in a timeline of the UndocuAlly Trainings and key transitions.

Upon completion of the four-hour training, "UndocuAllies" agree to serve as knowledgeable campus resources for colleagues and undocumented students seeking support. The trainings usually took place three times a semester, were typically four hours long, and composed of several interactive and informative activities. Trainees would first fill out their pre-training survey to understand their current knowledge. After introductions, the student-trainers lead trainees through interactive activities to learn definitions and myths surrounding undocumented communities. Next, the trainees work in small groups to learn about the most current state and national legislation and how they directly impact undocumented families. Each student-trainer rehearses and presents various slides on an extensive PowerPoint presentation that is updated and improved for

each training to both introduce and underscore activities. After a provided lunch, the training included a video and an outdoor privilege walk activity to appeal to a wide variety of learning styles and developmental levels. The end of the training consisted of national, state, community and campus resources leading up to the grand finale.

Spring 2015

Evaluations reveal student-led training to be impactful. Funding shifts to compensate student-trainers.

Spring 2016

Internal grant awarded to compensate student trainers and partial institutionalization of training.

Spring 2014

First Undocu-Ally training funded and led by student organization.

Fall 2017

DACA is rescinded.

Fall 2014

Change from student citizen ally-led to mixed

status-led. Attendance increases.

In-state eligibility

for DACA students

Fall 2015

Training begins in local community

Fall 2016

Trump elected; Grant discontinued & funding precarious.

Spring 2018

Burnout: Students and staff pause trainings; UA manual is created.

Figure 1.
UndocuAlly Program timeline

The end of the training was a storytelling piece usually by a guest student leader or student-trainer who shared the emotional journey of their family to the United States and the impacts of hope, racist-nativism, poverty, drive, parents' sacrifices, legal barriers, and their persistence in school. These were some of the most engaging moments of the trainings according to the post evaluations. Very often these personal stories would drive in the learning of the training and give faces and names and humanity to the disconnected and a renewal of purpose to the allies in the audience. The educational outcomes were for the trainees were to leave the training with an understanding of the current immigration movement and legislation and how it impacts undocumented families (constantly changing); the connotations and misconceptions that are attached to undocumented students; the personal stories of some undocumented students in the VU community; the statistics on the undocumented student body population at VU and in Virginia itself; the resources available on campus and in the community for undocumented students; and, roles and responsibilities of trainees, now as allies.

What was unique to this UndocuAlly training at VU is that it was entirely student-led and partially funded from student organization from Spring 2014 to Fall 2016. This training had been modified, organized, and facilitated by undocumented students and citizen student allies. These students provided trainings three times a semester or six times a year on-campus for students, staff, and community members. However, student leaders often graduated, left to work to pay tuition, some also became burdened by the

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responsibilities, weight, and emotional experiences of the trainings. Student-trainers needed to be compensated for their labor and contributions to the university.

Therefore, in December of 2016, an institutional grant for $10,000 was sought after and awarded. This grant was to compensate student-trainers with tuition assistance for their labor. A budget reallocation in the diversity office was approved to financially support logistics of UndocuAlly Trainings. There is no Dream Center yet at this VU institution. This researcher served as the grant writer and point person to coordinate the logistics of this institutional support for UndocuAlly Trainings and has had appropriate access to observe multiple levels of student-trainer preparation and participation from 2014-2019. This role supports the participant observation of this study (Calderón, 2004). Given the multilevel experiences the undocumented student-trainers engage in and the campus and community level challenges and assets, this case study sought to explore and note these experiences. The experiences of these undergraduate student-trainers through their UndocuAlly Training Program surfaces awareness of the impacts of these levels and maps easily onto the ecological framework needed for this case study.

Thus, informed by Suárez-Orozco (2015) ecological model, this study explored the interconnected challenges and assets of undocumented students-trainers in this UndocuAlly Training Program at these various levels with key critical race theory research emphasized. Noting the risk, resilience, and resistance of undocumented students within a review of educational research, this case study will explore how undocumented students experience and navigate risk and protective factors through their role as UndocuAlly student-trainers. The UndocuAlly Training Program will provide a

grounded context to explore undocumented student-trainer experiences at various levels during a critical time in immigration history. Thus, the following research questions are proposed.

Research Questions

The three research questions were:

1. What assets and challenges do UndocuAlly student-trainers experience at the student, campus, and state/national levels?

2. What risks (Racist-Nativist) and resilience of protective factors do student-trainers acknowledge and build upon, if any, through facilitating the UndocuAlly Program?

3. How does UndocuAlly serve as a model of an environmental resilience structure?

Significance of the Study

Theoretical studies seek to reveal patterns and connections, in relation to theoretical constructs to advance theory development. The significance of this descriptive case study is to add connections to further research in ecological and CRT frameworks. More specifically adding to ecological resilience theories by gaining a more robust understanding of promising practices that potentially lead to positive outcomes in undocumented students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Ungar, 2013).

This case study builds on the ecological framework of Suárez-Orozco (2015) to further analyze and raise awareness of challenges, risk, and protective factors during a critical time for undocumented students. Significant connections of this study may

support and extend literature review in that UndocuAlly spaces may buffer risks as it served to create an environment to support trainers' assets and resistance or navigational capital to intentionally cope with adversity, supporting Ungar's work on ecological resilience (2013). Through facilitation of UndocuAlly, student-trainers may further build on assets they possess by engaging in such activities as public speaking for counter-storytelling, community building as an act of resistance, and increase their access to community and financial support networks. UndocuAlly may fulfill student-trainers' personal needs (e.g., financially) while they effectively advocate for the education and inclusion of peers with this stigmatized identity.

Significance may also be evidenced by potential increase in community support and transformative resistance through this training, as involvement may serve as a protective factor for trainers despite inherent risk factors (safety, racist nativist attitudes and practices, low internal or external protective factors, time management, financial stress). Involvement may also serve as a space to acquire or build resistance capital. What may potentially emerge is how the UndocuAlly Training Program contribute to larger educational and advocacy efforts about the liminal state of immigration reform. Its significance may also extend, beyond that of the individual student level experience, to systemic influence towards equitable changes in policies and practices at the campus, state, and national levels. Lastly, findings compel education researchers to shift the focus away from deficit gaps towards promising practices and programs to create institutional change agents and drive transformative resistance on college campuses (Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Southern, 2016).

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Definition of Key Terms

The Dream Act, Past and Present

The Dream Act bill was first introduced in 2001 (Barron, 2011; Schmid, 2013). It had gained momentum when the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act was reintroduced on May 11, 2011, in the Senate (S. 952) by Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and 32 fellow senators, and in the House of Representatives (H.R. 1842) by Reps. Howard Berman (D-CA), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), and Lucille Roybal-Allard. The DREAM Act proposed two major shifts in the law: It would permit qualified immigrant students who have grown up in the United States to apply for temporary legal status and eventually obtain a pathway to permanent legal status and U.S. citizenship if they attended college or served in the U.S. military. Qualified would generally mean that students entered the United States at a young age and have no conviction record. The DREAM Act would also eliminate federal penalties for states that provide in-state tuition to Undocumented students. If passed, the DREAM Act would have a life-changing impact on the students who qualify, dramatically increasing their average future earnings while significantly reducing criminal justice and social services costs to taxpayers (Barron, 2011; Schmid, 2013). However, some Republican senators and conservative Democrats defeated various versions of the Dream Act bills from 2001-2018 commonly citing: no "amnesty" for families who entered the country illegally; felt the act would put U.S. born students at a disadvantage by increasing the pool of competition into colleges; and, allowing for in-state tuition for undocumented students would stress already

underfunded colleges and universities. As of this writing, the now 20-year-old bill was reintroduced in the senate again in 2021 by the same senators and is awaiting review.

DREAMer/Dreamer/Undocumented Student

In review, the portion of the 11 million people within the undocumented population are the young people who entered the United States as children or teenagers. They are often referred to in popular media as "DREAMers" coined from the ongoing "DREAM Act" bill (2001-2021), which would allow students to access college and earn a pathway to citizenship (Olivas, 2012). A DREAMer/dreamer is the name coined by media and young activists who pursued and pushed for the DREAM Act law to pass that would offer a pathway to full citizenship for undocumented youth in the country. Now, due to in-community preference, and nuances of privileges and perceptions, the term 'undocumented students' will be utilized in this study instead of "DREAMers" to be more inclusive of those in liminal statuses ranging from fully undocumented students, students with temporary protective status (TPS) to recipients of deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA). Undocumented students include this whole range of people in a liminal status, who do not yet have a pathway to citizenship in the United States.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

With the failure of congress to pass the federal Dream Act over the years, a mounting pressure from college students and community organizers was evident. Immigrant organizations and student continued protests as night raids and deportations were further separating many undocumented families. In June 2012, answering partly to this political pressure, the Obama administration passed an executive order known as Deferred Action

for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This order would allow only qualifying undocumented students (and not their parents) to be safe from deportation, obtain a two-year work permit and in most cases, a driver's license renewable every two years. According to the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Service (Executive Action on Immigration, 2014), as of this writing, students that qualify for DACA include young people (born on or after June 16, 1981) who came to the United States before the age of 16 who:

- Do not have a lawful immigration status.

- Have lived continuously in the U.S. since June 15, 2007.

- Are at least 15 years old or under 31 years old.

- Currently in school or a graduate of high school or GED recipient or honorably discharged military veteran.

- Have a clean criminal record and pass a background check.

- Pay $465 (for application and biometrics, though expected to increase).

Though often confused, DACA is not the federal Dream Act as it does not allow for a pathway to permanent residency or citizenship. It is an additional liminal status, similar to the long held Temporary Protected Status (TPS), that has both positive and negative impacts.

Impact of DACA. The Obama era executive order known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is estimated by the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services that the number of applicants who have been approved for their initial or renewal DACA status between 2012-2014 alone was 1,239,404. According to the National UnDACAmented Research Project (NURP) survey, 2,684 DACAmented or DACA

eligible young adults between the ages of 18 and 32 indicated access to resources experienced through DACA two years after its inception (Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014). In addition, Batalova, Hooker, Capps, and Bachmeier (2014), in their report for the Migration Policy Institute revealed the early impact of DACA on the economics of our country showing strong economic gains by increasing the work force. The results of this type of quantitative research show numbers that may influence policies toward or against support for comprehensive immigration reform. Some of the benefits of DACA (a driver's license, work permit, increased earnings, etc.) are framed as overall positive impacts, which to some extent, they are, from the level of understanding at the state and national policy.

Yet, to imply that DACA is good "enough" leaves many students and especially their families in a liminal state as parents are not protected and DACAmented students cannot participate fully as citizens. The implications of this are far more nuanced than economic gains; it is about humanity, creating problematic stress points and ambiguity for college campuses and students alike. What follows highlights this and the impact state and national policies had at the campus level.

DACA/DACAmented student/DACA recipient

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a 2012 executive order by President Barrack Obama which gave deportation protection, work permits and licenses to undocumented youth who qualified (Schmid, 2013). A student who is granted this temporary status may be referred to as DACAmented or more appropriately a DACA recipient.

In-state eligibility

Several states, including Virginia, have interpreted this status and students in DACA status as eligible to apply for in-state tuition rates (United States Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Virginia, 2014). Interpretations on policies and practices are dependent on the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) for domicile employee trainings and updates. At VU, students must qualify through either an admissions classification upon entry or a domicile appeals process sharing confidential information for example, addresses, expired visas, ownership of car or license, years in the country, tax information and reasons for living in Virginia that are not limited to educational pursuits. Students at VU are considered in-status per semester for the full semester. For example, if a student receives in-state tuition status, it remains as such for the whole semester. Thus, when DACA was rescinded and students "fell" out of status, their in-state domicile was lost and their tuition rates *tripled* the following semester with an out-of-state status, making degree completion impossible for many students and their families. This was a common occurrence that resulted in student stop-outs. Amplifying the yo-yo effect of legislation, the rescinding of DACA in 2017 led to court appeals and in Sept. 1, 2018, a decision in the Texas and D.C. federal courts allowed for DACA to be renewed but accept no new applications. Then later, in the much anticipated and surprising Supreme Court decision of June of 2020, the rescission of DACA by the Trump administration was overturned. As of this writing, DACA can now be renewed, and new applicants may apply.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

According to the USCIS website, the Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a foreign country for TPS due to conditions in the country that temporarily prevent the country's nationals from returning safely, or in certain circumstances, where the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately. The Secretary may designate a country for TPS due to the following temporary conditions in the country:

- An ongoing armed conflict (such as civil war).

- An environmental disaster (such as earthquake or hurricane), or an epidemic.

- Any other extraordinary and temporary conditions.

Similar to DACA, but established long before it, many TPS recipients have no pathway to citizenship. Though they may benefit from work permits and in-state tuition in some states, recipients, even those in the United States for 20 years, are still considered within a liminal status.

U Visa

According to the USCIS website, a U nonimmigrant status (U visa) is set aside for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and are helpful to law enforcement or government officials in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity. Some undocumented students may qualify for protection under a U-visa pending a screening through legal services (Hanson, 2010).

Assumptions/Limitations

As noted above, such rapid and or stagnant fluctuations in legislation may increase risk for students to voluntarily participate in a research study, so UndocuAlly

student-trainers of all immigration statues were included in study. The intention of this study was to examine the experiences of these 10 student-trainers within the context of living under these policies, not to generalize to all undocumented students or any other student population. The UndocuAlly Training Program has been modified over the years for specific use and modification within the VU campus needs and the current state policies. Therefore, findings may not be relevant to other similar UndocuAlly Training Programs (student-trainers vs. full-time staff) on another campus, state institution or community trainings. The frameworks used have their own scope. The ecological framework and critical race theory together draw on individual, community, campus, state, and national viewpoints to expose racist nativism and critique systems. However, a limitation of this study is that the students themselves may not be aware of or share in these anti-oppression viewpoints, perhaps from their own conditioning, internalized oppression, for safety, or many other reasons, derived from their experiences as people living with an undocumented immigration status. For example, an undocumented student identified as a Republican and casually called himself and families like his "illegals". This is a taboo word in most advocacy circles and corrected to "undocumented" in UndocuAlly trainings. However, the intention of this study was to be inclusive of all self-references from directly impacted students, and their experiences, especially outliers who nuance the range of these conversation on what it is like to be undocumented in the country.

In summary, this study critiqued these settings and systems through the narrative voices of the undocumented students themselves and amplified the impact and ripple

effect of campus, state, and national agendas specifically through the ecological

framework in the work of Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) and Teranishi et al. (2015). What

follows in Chapter 2 is a review of relevant literature that raises these frameworks for use

in this study.

Chapter Two

This dissertation study design complements and extends the growing body of research dedicated to the risk and resilience of undocumented students in higher education. Given the complexity in understanding educational psychology experiences within a stigmatized population, there is a need for an interdisciplinary review of research (Pérez Huber, 2010). Therefore, literature was reviewed from the following academic fields: educational psychology, critical race, comparative education, Chicano/Latino studies, youth development studies, college student development, student affairs, personality, and social psychology. After an initial review, a focus on ecological and critical race informed frameworks were chosen.

In setting out to review the growing body of literature on undocumented college students these guiding questions were asked: What are the theoretical and analytic frameworks researchers used to understand undocumented student experiences? How are undocumented student stories revealed through choices in methodology? What transformative insights do these studies contribute to social justice and educational equity?

First, key word searches such as "undocumented college student" were entered on Psych INFO and ERIC (EBSCOhost) educational databases and peer-reviewed journal articles on undocumented students were found online and reviewed. Within each article, reference pages were assessed, and research commonly cited by specialists in the field was noted and reviewed. Given the flux of policy on immigration, an alert was created to

mark new research that increased exponentially on undocumented students from Fall

2015 to 2019. This research was then selectively reduced through inclusion criteria that

consisted of (a) undocumented student populations (entering in the country as children

versus international students who aged out or fell out of visa status as adults); (b) samples

that included college-age students; (c) samples from predominately 4-year public

institutions to align better to dissertation study site selection; (d) studies that had a social

justice or transformative resistance lens; (e) studies that included relevant updated

policies. A similar, secondary, search was also performed to provide additional support

for key findings and clarification for discussion section. Table 1 is a summary of research

reviewed and major findings between 2012 (post-DACA).

Table 1.

Holistic themes in literature highlighting assets in undocumented students in higher

education (post DACA 2012-2019).

	Themes					
Author(s) (year)	Financial burdens	Psychological & social burdens	Lack of access to social capital	Assets	Non-Latinx & geographic differences	Federal, state, & institutional policies
Anguiano & Gutiérrez Nájera (2015)		x		x		
Borjian (2016)			x	x		x
Cervantes et al. (2015)	x	x	x	x		x

Author(s) (year)	Financial burdens	Psychological & social burdens	Lack of access to social capital	Assets	Non-Latinx & geographic differences	Federal, state, & institutional policies
Ellis and Chen (2013)			x	x		x
Gonzales (2008)	x	x	x	x		x
Gonzales et al. (2013)		x	x	x		
Gonzales et al. (2015)		x	x	x		
Muñoz (2018)	x	x	x	x		
Muñoz & Maldonado (2011)		x		x		
O'Neal et al. (2016)	x	x	x	x		
Pérez & Rodriguez (2011)	x	x		x		
Pérez, W. (2009)	x	x	x	x		
Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015)	x	x	x	x		x
Teranishi et al. (2015)	x	x	x	x		x

Note: *Adapted from Bjorklund (2018).*

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Race Framework

The inclusion criteria yielded research frameworks predominately from critical race theory (CRT) and Latino critical race theory (LatCrit). Of primary focus initially, CRT scholars (Bernal, 2002; Bourdieu, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and LatCrit scholars (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011; Pérez Huber, 2009, 2010; Yosso, 2005) were reviewed to explore the depth of the three questions. For nearly two decades, educational researchers have been utilizing critical race as a theoretical framework to analyze the role of race, racism, and the intersections of racism with other forms of oppression in the lived experiences of people of color (Pérez Huber, 2009).

Educational scholars Solórzano and Yosso (2002) suggested that a CRT framework in education can be used in the following five ways: (a) To center the research focus on race, racism, and the intersections of multiple forms of oppression. For example, how an undocumented Latina college student may experience sexism and xenophobia in the classroom; (b) To challenge dominant ideologies imbedded in educational theory and practice. For example, to pathologize a perceived deficit of a student of color, without context or critique of oppressive policies; (c) To recognize the significance of experiential knowledge (of undocumented students and transformative institutional agents in this context) and utilize this knowledge in research; (d) To utilize interdisciplinary perspectives; (e) To guide this work with a conscious commitment to racial, social, and economic justice.

CRT and Capital

Of the CRT studies reviewed, each offered depth and insight into how students navigate within supportive and oppressive systems. Additionally, they were analytically and methodologically useful to reveal the voice of undocumented students and their experiential knowledge of these systems. There was an inquiry and emphasis on protective factors and *capital* that students develop to navigate obstacles or to find resources (Bourdieu, 2011; Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011; Pérez Huber, 2009, 2010). Yosso (2005) identified community cultural wealth capital in some of this literature was used as an analytical tool as well (Pérez Huber, 2009).

According to Bourdieu's work (2011), capital was inspired by noted disparities in student academic achievement due to socioeconomic class (p. 82). Thus, the forms were

articulated as capitals that could be embodied, objectified, or institutionalized: (a) economic capital as it relates to money and property; (b) cultural capital as it relates to educational qualification; and (c) social capital as it relates to connections. Yosso (2005) took this further and inquired through a CRT lens, "Whose culture has capital?" Challenging an ideology imbedded within institutional practices that dominant groups hold capital of more value, Yosso developed a theory from the critical race concept of *cultural wealth* "the unique forms of cultural capital, accumulated resources, and assets, that Students of Color develop and utilize in spaces of marginality within educational institutions" (Solórzano et al., 2005, p. 290). Therefore, intersecting Bourdieu's capital with CRT concept of cultural wealth, she developed six forms of cultural capital: (1) Aspirational capital, (2) Linguistic capital, (3) Familial capital, (4) Social capital, (5) Navigational capital, (6) and Resistant capital. These have been utilized as a framework for analysis in CRT/LatCrit qualitative studies reviewed here and will be discussed in more detail later in Chapters 3 and 4.

In summary, critical race theory (CRT) and Latino critical race theory (LatCrit) studies reviewed were insightful yet limited in scope due to sample size and to the student level of analysis (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011; Pérez Huber, 2009, 2010). Many of these studies focused on Latino and Chicano student identities, the largest and fastest growing demographic of undocumented students in the United States (Olivas, 2012; Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). As Chicana, Chicano, Latino, Latina, Latinx are gendered-ethnicities within larger cultural constructs of race (Pérez Huber, 2010), it was also important to expand and consider studies that were inclusive of Black, African,

Middle-East-North African, and Asian-diaspora risk and resilience experiences as well. So, while CRT studies provided valuable depth, adding studies with ecological frameworks provided an increased scope of student and campus experiences interconnected by national liminal immigration reform.

Ecological Framework

Ecological studies reveal this increase in scope (Bateson 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). These generally included four main bioecological mechanisms: person, process, context, and time (p. 82), all central to this research topic. The model also accounts for the interactive nature between these mechanisms, which reflect the current ambiguous and unpredictable context of immigration reform. The ecological framework supports some CRT findings in that they both account for risk and resilience - imperative to a better understanding of undocumented students. Given this, a background review of key studies on risk and resilience were added to literature review to understand the expanse of the ecological framework.

Risk and Resilience

Definitions of risk and resilience understand that youth are not viewed as a repository of social ills but as possessing the potential for achieving positive outcomes in society if environment and personal resources are maximized (Furman, 2000). Similarly, Fraser (1997) had expanded the framework from psychology and youth development and organized both risk (forces that contribute to the problematic conditions) and an agency of protective factors (both internal and external resources) into micro, mezzo, and macro-level system levels (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004).

In earlier research, Latino students, first generation college students and low-income students were framed by deficit models, such as "at risk" labeling, achievement gaps or in crisis from failed social policies (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Pérez Huber et al., 2006). While these lived realities were necessary to understand, it revealed only one aspect of the problems or risk, without the assets students or communities employed to navigate them. Educational researchers invested in cultural context and resilience began to employ an alternative lens and a conscious call for an asset-based orientation (Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). Over time, much of the research began to invest in uncovering resilience factors that mediated risk, such as family influence and motivation (Dennis et al., 2005; Urdan, et al 2007). The role of motivation to attend college was found to be both an internal and external resource that was noted in key research on first generation and ethnically marginalized students (Côté & Levine, 1997; Dennis et al., 2005; Orbe, 2004; Urdan, et al., 2007) as well as factors in academic resilience among college and undocumented students (Johnson et al., 2015; Pérez et al., 2009).

As a cluster of research, this strengths-based perspective shows an empowering alternative to deficit models, in that young people are not only able to survive and move forward, but to thrive over stressful life circumstances (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004). The ecological aspect of the framework recognizes that both *individual* people and *systems* of people have a dual capacity to create problems, negotiate them, as well as resolve them. Emphasizing systemic responsibility in wellbeing, the social ecological theory of resilience provides a definition of resilience that "highlights the need for *environments* to facilitate the navigations and negotiations of individuals for the

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resources they need to cope with adversity" (Ungar, 2013, p. 7). Ungar described three

principles that may inform resilience relational to risks of adversity. They are (a)

equifinality, well-being can be derived from many proximal processes and expressions;

(b) *differential impact*, the perception of resources as accessible and valued to mitigate

the risks [a student] may face; (c) *contextual and cultural moderation* (variety of contexts

and cultures creates access to different processes of resilience as it is defined in

community). Ungar's contributions to resilience research expands norms of individual

positive development, noting the opportunity structures in relation to resilience by both

the intensity of the risk and resources provided (Ungar, 2012).

Research that used the risk and resilience ecological frameworks studying

undocumented students revealed both assets and challenges and had larger sample sizes

than the previous CRT studies due to methodology choices (Rodriguez, 2004; Suárez-

Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015). Yet, both frameworks share a similar social

justice emphasis.

Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) and Teranishi et al. (2015) used this assets/challenges

ecological model in their methodology and analysis for the largest ($n=909$) national study

with undocumented students and campuses to date. This revealed the complex pressures

and protective factors unique to undocumented college students at the personal and

campus levels due to the liminal policies at the state/national levels. Given this scope, the

Suárez-Orozco (2015) model will be utilized to organize and review key studies and

supportive documents in further depth by ecological level of analysis. In Figure 2, the

model is shown to summarize the and complexity at the state/national, campus, and

student levels.
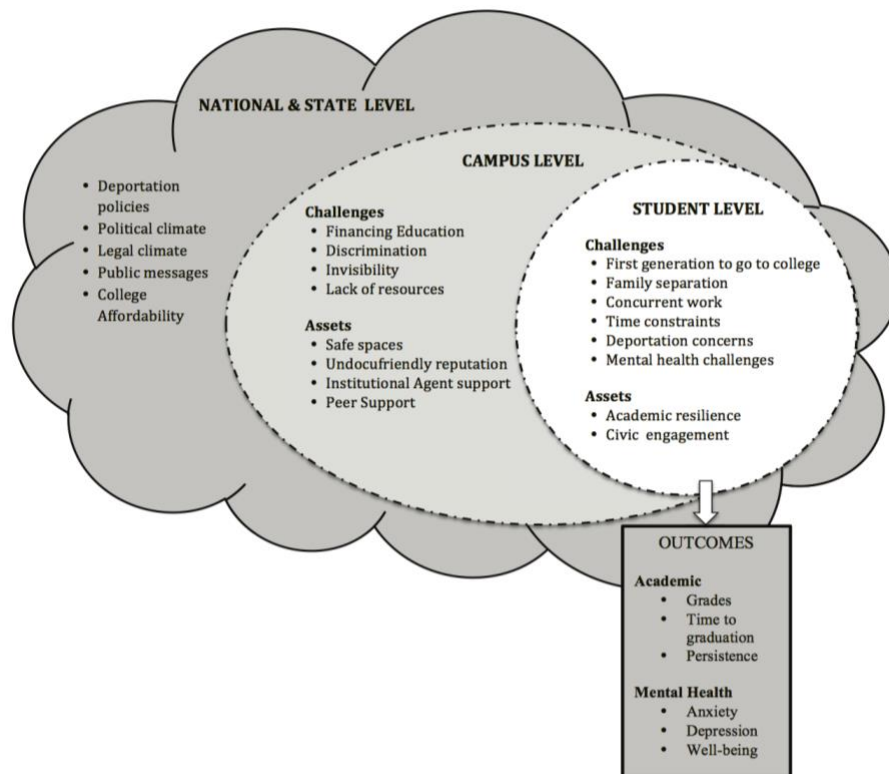
Figure 2.
Suárez-Orozco (2015) Conceptual framework of student and campus level challenges and assets within an ambiguous policy context.

National and State Level

Using the ecological model, the national and state policies are described in detail below to explain the political and legal climate through challenges (deportation policies) to assets (protective policies). Together, these frame a history and a present of liminal immigration reform (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015) and its impact. A summary of the key bills and executive orders are repeated again here for ease of reference as needed.

The Dream Act. According to the National Immigration Law Center, the Dream Act bill was first introduced in 2001. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) proposed two major shifts in the law: It would permit qualified immigrant students who have grown up in the United States to apply for temporary legal status and eventually obtain a pathway to permanent legal status and U.S. citizenship if they attended college or served in the U.S. military. Qualified would generally mean that students entered the country at a young age and have no conviction record. The DREAM Act would also eliminate federal penalties for states that provide in-state tuition to undocumented students. If passed, the DREAM Act is perceived to have a life-changing impact on families, increasing their future earnings while significantly reducing costs criminal to taxpayers (Schmid, 2013).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). In June 2012, answering partly to the political pressure, the Obama administration passed an executive order. This order would allow only qualifying undocumented students (not parents) to be safe from deportation, obtain a two-year work permit and in most cases, a driver's license.

Though often confused, it is important to note that *DACA* is not the federal Dream Act, as it does not allow for a pathway to permanent residency or citizenship. It is a liminal status that has both positive and negative impacts. The implications of this are more nuanced than economic gains, creating problematic stress points and ambiguity for college campuses and students. What follows highlights this and the impact state and national policies have at the campus level.

Campus Level

Challenges. State and National level policies impact in-state tuition eligibility, institutional support, and empowerment agents at the campus level. Because of the halted progress on the national level for comprehensive immigration reform, and openly interpretive parameters at the state level legislation, many colleges and universities have vague or inconsistent policies and practices when working with undocumented students (Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Southern, 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015). While some public colleges do not admit undocumented students, other institutions will enroll undocumented students, yet charge out-of-state tuition rates, creating an inaccessible opportunity. In Teranishi et al. (2015) the economic demographics of 61.3% of undocumented students had an annual household income *below* $30,000. Inconsistencies with such lived realities and institutional practices add to student isolation as campus policy and practices set up students and their families for socioeconomic distress (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). For example, though undocumented students are not yet benefitting from state aid nor federal financial aid, the practice is often to ask them to apply for FASFA to reveal their financial need which creates

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confusion for campus staff and administrators as well as students (Teranishi et al., 2015).

Given that many undocumented students and families live below the poverty level

(Teranishi et al., 2015), college tuition is usually a barrier for most undocumented

immigrant families. Suárez-Orozco (2015) revealed campus challenges noted were that of

affording college (95%) and discriminatory practices (67%). As of this writing, less than

half of states have allowed for undocumented students with DACA to be eligible to

qualify for in-state tuition rates.

   In-State Eligibility. In April 2014, Attorney General Mark Herring (United

States Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Virginia, 2014), in a letter to the

Commonwealth of VA stated that students with DACA status could become eligible for

in-state tuition through an application and review process. While VA universities offer

in-state eligibility for undocumented students, personnel and students are often untrained

to navigate application process and systemic barriers, which add to the fear and

uncertainty for students to *access* this resource. Politically conservative administrators

often feared the cost and impact such a decision would have on stakeholders or delayed

in scaffolding university policies changes. Yet, according to the National Immigration

Law Center, the states that have passed in-state tuition bills increasingly show that such

legislation did not reduce revenue from large numbers of students who would otherwise

pay out-of-state tuition. Instead, it raises the amount of high school graduates who will be

motivated to pursue a college degree. This decree is consistent with researchers who

explored the impact of educational policy on Latinx and undocumented students and

urged for not only support of the access granted by law to K-12 and college, but for

sweeping national changes on immigration and education reform to support this

population of underserved students (Cuevas, 2015; Olivas, 2012). In an essay on the

holistic care of undocumented students in higher education, Canedo-Sanchez and So

(2015) implored educators to seek the skills and potential of undocumented students

within their campuses, communities, and states. The pull-push that is set up here by

disparate policies conflicts students to risk the danger and discouragement at the state and

national levels for the possibilities at the campus level.

In *The Latino Education Crisis: The Consequences of Failed Social Policies*, the

tensions of the "Brown Paradox" are discussed. This term, introduced by Gandara and

Contreras (2009), is described as the growing numbers and influence of Latinx/a/o in the

United States juxtaposed to the privilege-protecting policies that hinder their upward

social mobility. The term "DREAMer" in itself shows this conflicting dichotomy as "the

American dream" of coming to North America (U.S.A.) to find work to uplift families

juxtaposed with 20 years of the failed Dream Act to secure a pathway to citizenship.

Literally the name itself shows the precarious limbo undocumented students and their

families face daily.

In similar research, Urdan (2012) conducted a review of literature on influences

of the motivations and achievement of immigrant students, he described the Immigrant

Paradox. This paradox is understood to be the intersection of family obligation and

motivation for college seen as both as a privilege and a necessity to mitigate the cycle of

poverty (Urdan, 2012; Urdan, et al. 2007). These paradoxes rest within the conceptual

framework of Suárez-Orozco (2015) and the swirling current of policies that include

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thwarted pathways to citizenship by the DREAM Act bill, the back and forth of the rescinded/ redeemed Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in 2017-2018, and In-State tuition equity practices. Therefore, the urgency of campuses to envision and enact an equitable solution is needed more than ever (Chen & Rhoads, 2016).

Institutional Supports

In research by Southern (2016), educating and mobilizing institutional empowerment agents are at the heart of meaningful environments for undocumented students. His anonymous, semi-structured interviews with 11 high level administrators revealed their capacity to engage and the immediacy felt to act. The participants had high levels of access to both resources and undocumented students to bridge support systems, leadership experiences, financial resources, and navigation to holistically care for the needs of their undocumented students. Insights from this study reveal not only how to scaffold institutional support, but also the lack of institutional support for such agents in their efforts.

In further research by Suárez-Orozco (2015), undocumented undergraduate participants surveyed shared insights into campus assets that supported them as well as recommendations to administrators to mitigate the challenges. The 909 participants answered questions (forced choice items) and three open-ended qualitative questions. Participants were identified and invited through a web portal to take survey, encouraged by student, community, and institution advisory board members they knew and trusted. Undocumented students revealed that the campus level concerns related to college cost, location and campus climate were of high value and importance. Students also

acknowledged the importance of safe spaces for people like them on campus to navigate

systems and access resources and support (i.e., student organizations, centers, offices).

These spaces were also important for students to be able to share their experiences

(Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011), directing administrators to further resource their campuses

and environmental spaces. Institutional empowerment agents were also important for

perceived institutional support, yet students (53%) felt they did not have staff or faculty

members to talk to about their immigration status nor financial challenges (Suárez-

Orozco et al., 2015). Therefore, not only were safe spaces themselves important, but the

people within them. Student recommendations (paraphrased) to make a campus more

"Undocufriendly" included: (a) Learning from undocumented students, (b) Training staff,

(c) Endorse support for undocumented students publicly, (d) Treat students equitably

through policies and practices and resources to implement those policies, (e) Empathy, (f)

Respect privacy of students, (g) Create and maintain safe spaces, (h) Share information

transparently, (i) Increase access and resources for financial aid and counseling centers.

Through the voices of undocumented students to institutional agents, research suggests

the crucial role campuses have in creating a culture of acceptance and support within the

larger polarized and politically charged nation. Moving now from the campus level to

the more personal student level, a literature review of both challenges and assets of

undocumented college students' experiences follow.

Student level

Many undocumented students go through K-12 public schools, yet still live in the

shadows of our educational systems that misunderstand, exploit, or remain unaware of

them (Gonzales et al., 2013, 2015; Olivas, 2012; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Students who graduate from K-12 often cannot continue onto college in the same state system due to conflicting national and state policies or practices that keep them out, thus creating a cyclical underclass (Cuevas, 2015; Olivas, 2012).

However, according to the Migration Policy Institute approximately 65,000-98,000 undocumented students graduate from high school. However, many do not go on to attend college or work to access the social capital necessary in ending the cycle of poverty many immigrants face (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). It was estimated that only 26% of undocumented graduates go to college compared to 70% of U.S. born high school peers (Chen & Rhodes, 2016). At the time of this writing, it is estimated that 454,000, or 2%, of undocumented students are now in higher education (New American Economy Report & Presidents Alliance on Immigration in Higher Education, 2021).

These undocumented students who access higher education in their state or open states, are challenged further through barriers in university systems not designed for their inclusion, persistence, or graduation (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011; Pérez Huber, 2009, 2010). Some students who risk navigating their way into college often thrive, standing out in leadership, activism, academics, and athletics and yet still live with the stigma and often hidden identity of being undocumented (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Given this, how will students in the shadows *share* what matters most to them?

Undocumented Student Demographics

Undocumented students were often incorporated into first-generation college student literature. This body of first-generation research largely focused on the impact of

various achievement gaps and barriers for immigrant children (Bernal, 2002; Dennis et al., 2005; Orbe, 2004; Solórzano, 2005; Teranzini, et al., 1996). Though 67.6% out of 909 undocumented students in a national study self-identified as first generation (neither parent had attended college), this extensive body of first-generation research is beyond the scope of this literature review (Teranishi et al., 2015). So, while many campuses support undocumented students under the umbrella of first-generation college students, the literature here will focus specifically on undocumented students in research.

Contemporary researchers with trustworthy access to undocumented students, brought to light nuanced strengths and protective factors of undocumented student experiences existing within these challenging environments (Canedo Sanchez & So, 2015; Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011; Pérez Huber, 2009, 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015, Teranishi et al., 2015). Though methodologically groundbreaking like critical race theory, much of the literature prior to 2015 had minimal access to or explicit participation from undocumented students. As such, the sample sizes were too small to generalize to the broader undocumented student population to influence policy, but gave insight into the complexity and the next best research questions.

Large descriptive statistics were finally yielded from a national study in 2014-2015 by UCLA's UndocuScholar Project, In the Shadows of the Ivory Tower: Undocumented Undergraduates and the Liminal State of Immigration Reform (Teranishi et al., 2015). The 909 survey participants were from 34 states and 55 countries of origin. Most of the items on the survey were forced choice items, though three open-ended qualitative questions were included. Participants were identified and invited through a

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web portal to take surveys, encouraged by student, community, and institution advisory board members they knew and trusted.

This survey study shed light on the diversity of undocumented students in both two-year and four-year colleges. Undocumented students are diverse in terms of countries of origin, languages spoken at home, and religion. They encompass a range of immigration histories and vary along the spectrum of socioeconomic status. On average, participants had resided in the United States for 14.8 years and in most cases lived most of their lives here. Participants reported 33 different primary languages spoken at home. In terms of socioeconomic background, 61.3% had an annual household income *below* $30,000, 29.0% had an annual household income of $30,000 to $50,000, and 9.7% had an annual household income above $50,000. Many of the students also worked while attending college (72.4%). Many of the undergraduate students were from families with mixed immigration statuses, as 64.1% reported having at least one member of their household who was a citizen or resident. Deportation was a constant concern; over 75% of participants reported worries about being detained or deported. More than half of the students (55.9%) reported personally knowing someone who had been deported including a parent (5.7%) or a sibling (3.2%).

This UndocuScholars' national study shed further light on the characteristics of undocumented students across the U.S. and answered a call of curiosity across disciplines to further understand more from this increasing population of students entering, attending, and graduating from college (Teranishi et al., 2015). Expanding on the project and the data yielded from this national survey, Suárez-Orozco, Katsiaficas, Birchall, et

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al., (2015) went further with to provide insight from 264 colleges. Through an ecological framework that accounted for an integrated model of risk and resilience, Suárez-Orozco was able to address how undocumented students navigate through campus, state, and national agendas. What follows centers on understanding how undocumented students cope and navigate given the risks and opportunities of college life. The study revealed that undocumented students noted family characteristics, constant time constraints from work and school, deep concerns about safety and threats of deportation and high levels of anxiety. In terms of the assets of undocumented students, many undergraduates were academically resilient and nine out of ten were civically engaged within the last month according to the national survey.

This civic engagement aligns with Yosso's (2005) theory on a community cultural wealth framework that was developed from the critical race theory concept of *cultural wealth.* Cultural wealth are the unique forms of cultural capital, accumulated resources, and assets, that students of color develop and utilize in marginalized spaces within educational institutions (Solórzano et al., 2005). Yosso's framework is described in more detail here (see Table 2): (a) Aspirational capital, (b) Linguistic capital, (c) Familial capital, (d) Social capital, (e) Navigational capital, and (f) Resistant capital.

Table 2.

Community of cultural wealth

Type of Capital	Framework Description
Aspirational	The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite real and perceived barriers
Linguistic	Skills learned through more than one language and through visual art, music, and poetry.
Familial	Forms of knowledge developed through kin relations and hold oneself in a space of community knowing, history, and memory.
Social	The connections of people and community knowing of resources that help students navigate through social institutions.
Navigational	The set of knowledge and skills developed moving through barriers through the support of social networks.
Resistant	Guided by a motivation to change and transform oppressive institutions and structures, this cultivates skills and attitudes to challenge inequities.
Spiritual	A set of resources and skills rooted in a spiritual connection to a greater reality than oneself and can provide a sense of hope and faith (added by Pérez–Huber, 2009, p. 721).

Yosso's work intersects gender, language, and culture to push research's goal of assets in communities and to the "uncovering of racism". Such is the framework of critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Critical race theory allows scholars to examine the dynamics of racial discrimination by interrogating social, educational, and political issues and prioritizing the voices of people of color (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Further, research from Bernal (2002) explained Latino critical theory (LatCrit) demonstrates how critical raced-gendered epistemologies recognize students of color as

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holders and creators of knowledge. Critical race theory (CRT) and LatCrit provide an appropriate lens for qualitative research in the field of education especially at the student experience level or unit of analysis. Exploring the contributions and cultural wealth inherent in undocumented students in their multiple environments is critical and has recently increased through research in both scale and prominence led by Muñoz and Maldonado (2011) and Pérez Huber (2009, 2010).

Muñoz and Maldonado (2011) interviewed 10 Mexicana undocumented students and explored their resilience factors through narrative inquiry. Some findings showed that students developed counter-stories, to influence and challenge mainstream opinions as it related to their academic potential and belonging in higher education. The narratives also intersected with their ways of knowing as women. Similarly, could the UndocuAlly Training Program serve as a space for development of student counter-stories? These intersections of belonging, race and gender were further explored by Pérez Huber (2010). In analysis of 10 narratives of Latina Undocumented students, Pérez Huber developed a theory of racist nativism as it intersects with gender, race, and class. Pérez Huber defined racist nativism as the assigning of values to (real or imagined) differences to justify the superiority of the 'native', who is perceived to be white [white European settlers] over the "non-native", who is perceived to be people and immigrants of color, which thereby defends their perceived right to dominance (2008, p. 43). In Figure 3 the intersections of these identities are visualized.
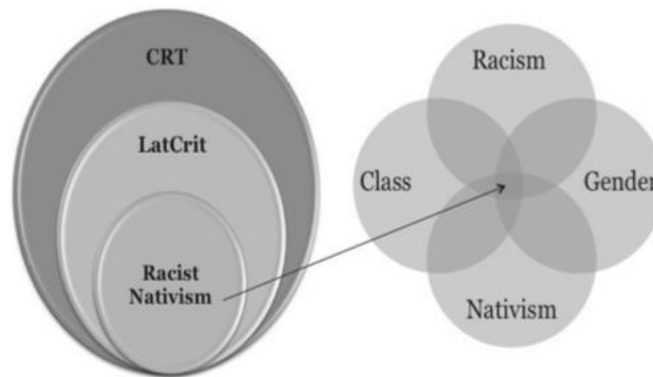
Figure 3.
Racist Nativism Framework derived from Latino and Critical Race Theories (2010)

In a study by Pérez Huber (2010) through the methodology of testimonio (narrative storytelling) a participant, Goreti, explained:

Back in high school, I didn't want to tell anyone because…some of my teachers were very hard-core republicans and so when we had discussions about immigration, they were like 'Oh, they should go back to their country, or they are taking our money', you know, all the usual ideas…and no one would speak up against that. *I wouldn't* because …they're gonna go and attack me about it. (p. 46).

Here the racist nativism is evident not only in belonging, put also in power and privilege within the classroom environment. The consequences of racist nativism, Pérez Huber theorized, is that of internalized racist nativism, and association with negative group identity. In the following excerpt, another participant, Martha, explained:

I think that it comes from the media, how they portray you, they categorize you

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and they label you and it keeps going…like they keep repeating it and repeating it and we *internalize* it. (p. 8)

Though Pérez Huber brings to light the challenges faced at the student level, in a 2009 study, Pérez Huber also revealed the assets and resilience of undocumented students. After 40 dreamer interviews and two focus groups, a positive analysis of Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth, were employed as *strengths* or resources to mitigate nativist racism. Undocumented students' testimonios, through Pérez Huber's methodology, reveal a wide range of adversity and barriers while navigating higher educational systems, and yet some undocumented students still found pathways towards higher education and academic achievement. Despite the academic success for some students, the outcomes for all students in this constant state of ambiguity and adversity effects wellbeing, as exemplified in the section that follows.

Student-level Outcomes

After reviewing the national, state, campus and student levels of the risk and resilience ecological framework (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015) we move now to student outcomes. In this section student outcomes will be described from findings in the key research with a focus on the risks of mental health and the academic resilience of undocumented students.

Anxiety. The term anxiety is an emotion texturized by sensations of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure. People with anxiety may experience recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns. They may avoid certain situations out of an inability to cope with the worry. Interestingly, in a survey of 909

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undocumented college students, Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015), utilized a seven-item

Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 Scale (GAD-7) with responses ranging from options 0

(not at all) to 3 (nearly every day). Results showed that 37% of the female participants

and 28% of male participants were above the clinical cut-off threshold for anxiety. For

perspective, a 'normative' college student sampling of the scale is 4% and 9%,

respectively. Researchers hypothesize that anxiety could be partly due to high reported

worry of deportation or deportation of a family member from fluctuating state and

national policies.

Similar results are supported in additional research by Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco

and Dedios-Sanguineti (2013). Their research involved 150 participants in semi-

structured interviews and focused on the effects that inclusion and exclusion have on the

mental and emotional health of undocumented students, as well as the protective factors

that fostered resilience. For some participants, their undocumented status was a fracture

in their developmental trajectories, forcing a different narrative of identity and altering

their way of connecting with others, which severely impacted wellbeing. Conversely,

protective factors were also identified as school institutional agents, friends and

community members willing to support the student (Gonzales et al., 2013).

In similar research, Siemons et al. (2016) conducted nine focus groups who also

reported that mental health and well-being were of the greatest concern to DACA-eligible

participants. Stressors reported included DACA status itself. Though DACA created an

opportunity, it also created greater self-reliance and adult level responsibilities within the

family. There was also the similar fear of deportation and desire for increased access and

navigation of services. In all three studies, counseling was desired; from process and navigational counseling to psychological counseling, for example "more help with psychological counseling instead of limiting the amount of time a student is allowed to go" (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015, p. 16). Ongoing, long-term support is needed as policies continue to stay in flux. Mental health providers may need to adapt hours and attention specific to understanding the needs of undocumented students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Noting the mental health concerns and protective factors revealed through this research, scholars point now to design culturally sensitive interventions that may mitigate this stress and support what is working, while comprehensive immigration reform continues to unfold.

Academic Resilience. What is paradoxical in some ways, is that despite reported high anxiety and mental health needs, most undocumented college participants revealed a high academic resilience. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015, 2018) utilized 11 academic resilience questions on a five-point Likert scale. The scale measured such strengths as resourcefulness, determination, and optimism as markers of psychological academic resilience. Participants yielded a mean score of 3.8, indicating a high level of academic resilience. Pérez et al. (2009) also found high academic resilience among undocumented, Latino/a/x students. In a quantitative study with 104 undocumented students, results showed that despite common risk factors, undocumented students who had higher levels of personal and environmental protective factors still report higher levels of academic success when compared to students with similar risk factors and low levels of personal and environmental resources. Risk factors mentioned in the study were the emotional impacts from societal rejection, low parent education, and hours working during school. Their protective supports were described as parents, friends, and school involvement. Multiple studies show school involvement as a protective factor.

As reported in Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) and supported by previous studies (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011; Nasir et al., 2015; Pérez Huber, 2009; Yosso, 2005) undocumented students' involvement specifically through civic engagement or resistance capital supported academic outcomes. Nine out of 10 students (92%) in Suárez-Orozco's study had been civically engaged in a least one activity within a month and 72% reported this involvement as motivation to continue studying in response to educational barriers and inequities of institutional practices, not only is engagement a protective factor to

attain academic resilience, but there is also an ideology of academic achievement as redemption and resistance (Aguilar, 2019, 2021; Carter, 2008). In the discussion that follows, underpinnings in this literature review point to this resistance to further make a case for this dissertation study.

Discussion

In this literature reviewed, studies were summarized by level of ecological unit of analysis: national, state, campus, and student. One level that is implied, but missing here, is *community*. Where does it begin and end? There is a level of support between campus and student responsibilities with the support of a social justice community made up of peers, families, educators, and community partners. Chen and Rhoads (2016) described the intersection of teacher and student affairs professionals as *transformative educators*; educators who "engage outside and within their institutions in order to challenge inequitable practices, policies and structures while at times facing significant risk" (p. 520). As resilient as undocumented students are evidenced to be in the face of tremendous risk, educators cannot rely on individual resilience frameworks alone, but their own contribution and responsibility towards resilience of students and that of their educational settings.

These integrated frameworks, ecological with risk and resilience, shed light to the mapping of undocumented students' landscapes and inform better practices and research (Suárez -Orozco et al., 2018). Further, within an ecological resilience framework social justice becomes foundational (Ungar, 2012). There also needs to be a critique of the

oppression and policies that surrounds it to become truly support students in coping with adversity.

As discussed in Chen and Rhoads (2016), educators and their institutions need to work on what Solórzano and Bernal (2001) described as *transformative resistance*. This is one of four responses at the intersections of oppression and social justice

(a) *reactionary behavior*, no critique of oppression and no commitment to social justice;

(b) *self-defeating resistance*, a critique of oppression but no commitment to social justice;

(c) *conformist resistance*, no critique of oppression but a commitment to social justice;

(d) *transformative resistance*, a critique of oppression and a commitment to social justice.

This case study requires this transformative resistance approach as it is evident in the setting of UndocuAlly Training Program. The culturally sensitive context of this study acknowledges the students risks (high levels of adversity) and builds on the ecological protective factors (resilience in response to this adversity) undocumented students may access through civic engagement with community. In this review of literature findings, I propose a step up from social justice to the integration of *transformative resistance* for this descriptive case study research.

Key findings suggest that, despite high level risk - resilience, cultural capitals and academic achievement are accessible and meaningful in the experiences of undocumented students. At the same time, managing finances, racist nativism, overwhelming responsibilities, fears of deportation, isolation and larger systemic unpredictability have all been shown to be risk factors for mental health and wellbeing. Given the following insights from the intersection of two frameworks, critical race theory

(and capital) with ecological frameworks on risk and resilience, this study design considers the depth and intersections of identity with the scope of the political climate and accountability to name it.

Within this liminal status, change in any one level directly affects students and their educational outcomes differently, unless equity and a pathway to full participation (permanent residency and citizenship, voting rights) is created (Aguilar, 2019; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) suggested that more research is needed in promising practices that may predict positive educational outcomes. Suárez-Orozco also recommends that more intervention research be done. Yet, Rodriguez & Morrobel (2004) argue that positive development of students is needed before intervention. Within the space of this tension, an argument for resilience structures is made. According to Ungar (2012, 2013), environmental resilience may *inform intervention* as "a greater emphasis on the social environment is merited when studying resilience among populations that are exposed to higher levels of adversity" (p. 257). Though not an intervention, this UndocuAlly program holds the dynamic, complex relationships undocumented student-trainers experience with the multiple ecological levels. It merits further understanding to support educational spaces, resilience structures, that both develop and intervene. The UndocuAlly program reveals a template for potential promising practices to create an environment of resilience. This environment of resilience to support transformative educators, institutions, while enhancing positive development and coping for undocumented students mitigating high levels of adversity.

Chapter Three

Boundaries of Case Study

Case study is an intensive study of an individual, institution, or a bounded group, set in a place over a period of time (Glesne, 2016). However, case study can vary extensively and hold different meanings if the unit of analysis is one person, a community or "an event, or the implementation of a particular program" (Glesne, 2016, p. 22).

Stake (2005) delineates the three types of case study to be intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. A collective case study usually entails a comparison of several instrumental case studies to illuminate aspects of a phenomenon, while an instrumental case study itself aims to build a nuanced understanding or insight of a person or group (Glesne, 2016). An intrinsic case study is an in-depth exploration to better understand on the interactions of a bounded group (Glesne, 2016). Whichever case study definition is used, it needs to be bounded by a defined and integrated system with moving parts to decide what is included in these boundaries of study and what is excluded (Stake, 2000).

To define the bounded contexts of this case study, first the student-trainer participants were visualized within their social-environmental contexts. What borders and pathways did the students experience? What were the pressures compressing them downwards or lifting them upwards? What should be included? What should be excluded and why? What follows here is the delineation within macrosystems to microsystems to create a concept map to determine the boundaries of this case study.

The national and state context has been well defined previously to describe the political topography regarding undocumented students including DACA, TPS and U-Visa processes and legislation (Hanson, 2010). Within this national and state context, the research site was a large VA university (VU) with 30,000-40,000 students. While it is unknown how many of these students identify as undocumented, the UndocuAlly Training Program started within this setting in 2014 and this study was conducted in 2019, the fifth year of the widely regarded program. There were approximately 16 student-trainers in the UndocuAlly program during this time period who ranged in documentation status, from fully undocumented to full U.S. citizenship. The goal of these student-trainers, through the UndocuAlly Training Program, was to create a more undocufriendly campus and transform racist nativist practices through the sharing of their lived realities and the human impacts of state and national policies. This case study focused on these student-trainer experiences and interactions, highlighting the undocumented and DACAmented student-trainers specifically, through in-depth examination (Glesne, 2016). While more details on participant selection follow, as a whole, this case study explored holistic experiences and interactions of these ecological levels acting upon each other and focused on the student-trainers' experiences within them. Figure 4 illustrates the boundaries of this context to visualize and describe the case study's bounded relationship between the units of analysis, the experiences of student-trainers, to the ecological framework, UndocuAlly (campus), VA (state), U.S.A. (nation).
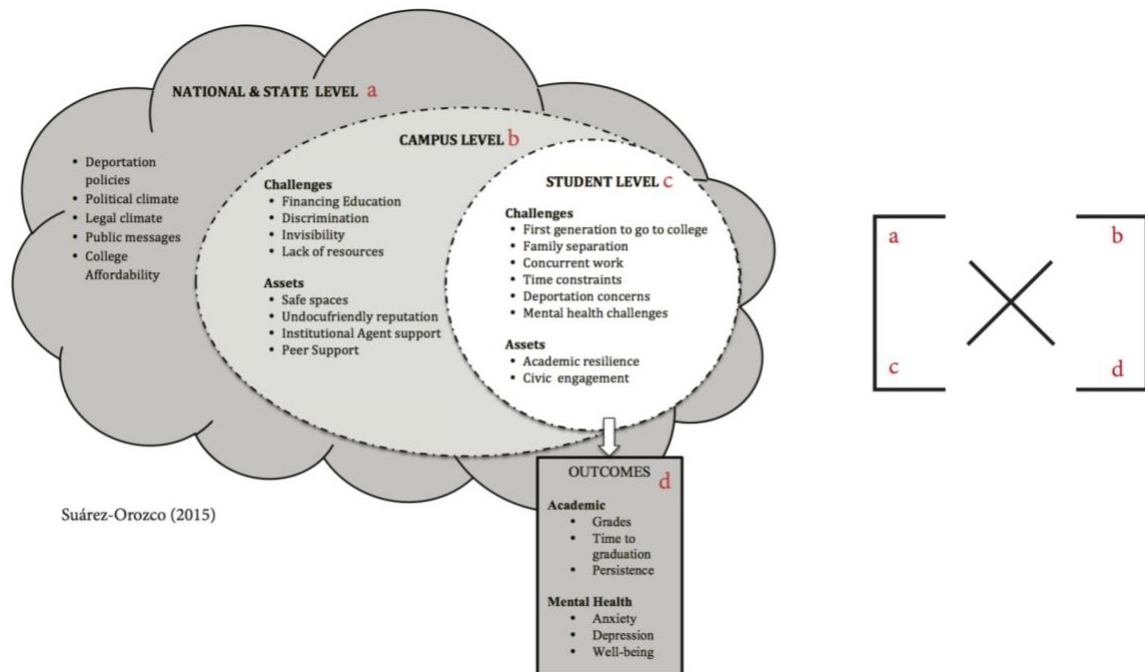
Figure 4.
Mapping the ecological framework onto the layered unit of analysis.

In figure 4, the ecological model of Suárez-Orozco (2015) is used to situate the

UndocuAlly student trainer within a holistic topography of borders and pathways, assets,

and challenges, and how their interactions within these levels, impacts their outcomes.

The case study boundaries here are (a) national and state; (b) campus; (c) student level or

personal level; (d) and possible outcomes. However, these boundaries were more easily

decided because of the lived realities expressed by the student-trainers. They were vocal

on the impacts of these systemic levels on them and undocumented families perhaps as

their higher-level training, awareness and practice developed. What was more

challenging was the participant selection, who to include in the study and who to exclude and why.

While more details on the actual 10 participants follows later, in general, the participant selection became just as meaningful to the study as the case study design, if not more. Reybold et al. (2013) noted this tension in participant selection decisions because of the opportunities or limitations each decision creates and how that reflects on the identities and criticality of the researcher. In this study, some of these decisions were within the control of the researcher, but most were not, given the nuances and limitations of participation from a vulnerable population. For example, all 16 student-trainers were invited to participate in this case study through an email from the umbrella organization, Undocumented and Unafraid. An assumption by this researcher was that these former and current student-trainers would still hold the same immigration status. However, due to fluctuations in policies, status and life changes, some students were now legal permanent residents or U.S. citizens. So, the boundary to include only *undocumented* student-trainers needed to be pushed out further to include the whole range of immigration statuses as it became apparent that undocumented experiences could exist within a U.S. citizen.

Given this, decisions were made to make no analytical comparisons between the groups of student-trainers (undocumented vs. citizen) or pursue any investigation of causality (participation as undocumented student-trainer *causes* student resilience). Another element that bounded this case study was to exclude the attendees of the UndocuAlly Trainings, even if they identified as undocumented. This decision was made

because it got into the borders of program evaluation, which was beyond the scope of this study. In this dissertation, these decisions were made about participants selection to explore and understand more deeply the experiences of students as UndocuAlly trainers.

To actualize this, the case study had to consist of (a) an systematic approach, for example through eco-mapping and semi structured interview questions that engaged the participants; (b) careful attention to procedures that were safer and culturally sensitive through best practices such as choice in pseudonyms, preferred locations for participants, and reporting the findings with close attention to intergroup and intragroup anonymity; (c) a responsive and flexible approach to refine case boundaries and procedures, as early data analysis inspired (Luttrell, 2000; Mills et al., 2010).

Through this approach, the case study revealed nuanced connections in relation to theoretical constructs of risk, resilience. and CRT. The importance of community cultural wealth capitals used to mitigate the risk (racist nativism) and the support assets that lead to greater resilience were also shared by student-trainers. Because of the level of student-trainer awareness, and the setting of UndocuAlly serving as a microcosm, insight on the interactions and tensions student-trainers held with their environments at the campus, state and national levels were gleaned.

Through case study the experiences of undocumented student-trainers were bounded, explored, and described within their current immigration statuses. The goal of defining these boundaries was to better understand student-trainer experiences, due to their heightened risk in facilitation and participation in the UndocuAlly Training

Program. What follows is a more detailed review of methods used to understand these student-trainer experiences through involvement in the UndocuAlly Training Program.

Researcher Positionality

In summary of the above, the design of this descriptive case study aimed both to (a) understand students' assets and challenges while participating in UndocuAlly Program;(b) explore student experiences to contribute to a further understanding of risk and cultural capitals that undocumented student-trainers may experience or develop through their participation in the program; (c) and learn how these experiences support the UndocuAlly Training Program as a resilience structure.

Within this context of UndocuAlly and campus, state, and national boundaries, it is a strength that I, as the researcher, have direct participant observer privilege. I have built trust with undocumented students and communities for over 11 years. Given the fluctuating climate for undocumented families, this trust becomes a necessity. In fieldwork, the trust that is built leads to nuanced understandings of connections and multiple meanings (Maxwell, 2012). A student-trainers' laugh while referring to everyone crying at a training, another's exhausted gaze, an inside joke or a sudden silence were some instantly understood nuances built from relationships and shared experiences, not often conveyed to outsiders.

Yet, within this trust, there is also the student-administrator relationship. It is the present, constant reality of power dynamics and values assigned to some privileged experiences, that I must always diligently check (Bhopal & Deuchar, 2016; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). Unchecked, it sometimes led to student-trainers performing of a reality in the

interviews, based on this power or assumptions of social code (Bhopal & Deuchar, 2016).

For example, when a participant expressed frustration at length about the university, they

suddenly became present again to the fact that I was an administrator. They met my gaze

for approval to go on or stop. As an activist, scholar and an institutional change agent, my

opinions on comprehensive immigration reform are strong and heavily informed by the

lived experiences of undocumented families, as well as research and politics. I have

supported student leadership on letter campaigns for institutional support, I have attended

rallies beside them, and I have held strong to opposition from administrators disinterested

in supporting undocumented students. Most UndocuAlly student-trainers from 2014-2019

are aware of these experiences, as well as my privileged identities. As an able-bodied,

white, Latina, cisgender female, heterosexual, living above the poverty line, I own how

my systemically dominant identities afford me the privileges to advocate in spaces. I also

know the privilege of speaking up and being heard. So, there were times I was

intentionally quiet where I would usually lead, to give space for a variety in perspectives

to surface or for students to move or shift the conversation. There was also room to sit in

silence together and pause.

Following Bhopal and Deuchar (2016) researchers committed to emancipatory

practices need to establish these asymmetrical power relations, rather than reproducing

symbolic violence through their unconscious bias. While this will be explored further in

the validity section, it is important to note here that asymmetrical power relations are also

positive ally practices. Where the marginalized, minoritized students lead, the allies as

researcher-administrators should support, navigate barriers, and follow. I committed to this conscious practice throughout the study.

This asymmetrical power is embedded in the structure of UndocuAlly being student-led, but also, I have been an administrator who acts on student-trainers' voiced needs, so trust as a conduit, has also been built over the years. For example, early UndocuAlly Trainings were introduced and led around the country by faculty and students leading the programs. At that time in VU, a faculty point person did not exist who could support these trainings, in addition to their jobs, so students decided to lead UndocuAlly Trainings with minimal institutional and community support. My energy became directed towards finding funding to hire such a full-time faculty member to support trainings and find additional funding to avoid the labor exploitation of students who were already stressed, financially limited, and overworked.

However, in closer examination, some student-trainers began to flourish, and the program evaluations consistently highlighted hallmark of the UndocuAlly trainings were the voices and passion of the student-trainers themselves. With support from both the student-trainers, and the Undocumented and Unafraid student organization, I redirected my energy to successfully find grant funding to support trainings and provide tuition assistance for each of the student-trainers who had unmet financial need. Given that undocumented students do not qualify for federal aid, most trainers were able to benefit from tuition assistance through their facilitation.

This is one example of a past emancipatory practice in this setting with some of the participants. According to Thomas (2003) to strive toward emancipatory research

practices, one must (a) avoid and challenge ethnocentric deficit discourse; (b) focus on differences within cultural context, always being sensitive of multiple and alternative meanings; (c) and be critical of the data and processes of how they are interpreted. For example, one student-trainer thrived in the role sharing her personal story and another student-trainer found the role at times burdensome but needed the tuition assistance and community support. To this end, my positionality as a researcher in this context, no matter how comfortable, was never neutral, as we become a part of the physical, symbolic, and emotional landscape with our students. While this level of involvement may offer threats to validity, it also offers an "opening of spaces" for more symmetrical relationships (Bhopal & Deuchar, 2016, p. 145). These relationships built over time and through risk and redemption also function to develop nuanced research designs and an interpretation of living data that perhaps points to a more truthful sense of social justice (Bhopal & Deuchar, 2016, p. 145).

Research Design

Thoughtful case study designs from prior studies (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011; Pérez Huber, 2009, 2010) focused on researcher positionality and authentic voice through LatCrit narrative-inquiry (i.e., *testimonios*) of undocumented students. As noted in the literature review, case study is a common study design for in depth examination of undocumented student experiences due to the trust and access issues with such a vulnerable population as well as opportunities for in depth, descriptive and holistic narratives that define case studies and further humanize marginalized populations (Bhopal & Deuchar 2016; Glesne, 2016). This case study follows these designs, with

both a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview with the questions informed by prior pilot study. This study differs in that it has elements of participatory observation, given my direct involvement with students as primary researcher, and as a professional working directly at the time with this population to support UndocuAlly training logistics.

Therefore, the need to ease the pressure to participate and protect this vulnerable population, participants were not invited through the UndocuAlly Training Program. Undocumented Student Organization (USO) is a pseudonym for the student-led organization whose mission it is to advocate for undocumented students. One of the educational outreach initiatives of the USO is leading these UndocuAlly Trainings. Therefore, the participants were invited through this umbrella student organization communication listserv, as trust had been established over the course of 10 years with them.

In reflection, it is an informed viewpoint that the researcher's relationships had significantly ease to access student participants, by perhaps offsetting the resistance that prevents most undocumented students' from accessing support, let alone in-depth interviewing. It is through trust and transparency in these relationships I minimized more validity risks than I created.

Research Setting and Participants

Suárez-Orozco (2015) indicated the need for further research into programs with promising practices that lead to positive outcomes for undocumented students. To examine programs that may have positive outcomes for undocumented students, it was necessary to explore programs undocumented students participated in that had a similar

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life context and influence of campus, state, and national levels. Thus, the purposeful

selection of the case study for UndocuAlly Training Program was selected. This case

study site combines some elements of the risk, resilience and resistance of other

programs, but emphasizes the shift in power dynamics to understand, through student-

trainers' lived realities, a complex relationship with fearful and abstract policies. Set

within VU, this selection therefore embodies a necessary CRT analytical approach and

maps onto the ecological framework Suárez-Orozco (2015) utilized.

More specifically, the setting for this study is a public, four-year university in

Virginia is where the primary researcher had worked (VU). This primary researcher

served as an unofficial advisor for the USO and support for UndocuAlly logistical and

institutional support. Since 2014, VU currently admits undocumented students and

supports eligibility for in-state tuition for undocumented students.

To develop a rich description for this case study, document collection and

analysis protocols were followed (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). According to Yin (2003), an

established protocol is important before data collection. Data collection consisted of (a)

10 eco-mapping/questionnaires; (b) 10 in person interviews;(c) one in person focus group

with five DACA recipients; (d) two participant observations of trainings; (e) document

review and physical artifact (student-made UndocuAlly Training Manual).

Relevant documentation was collected from the 2014-2019 archives. These

documents include a manual, a timeline of all preparation and activities, participation

observation notes from two trainings, preparation-meeting notes, and institutional

policies. A timeline was created for rich description to note trainers' change in objectives

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over the rapid climate shift from 2014-2019. For example, noting 2014 trainings were relatively unknown, to a jump in 2018 attendance and widely known. Changes in campus resources and state/national climate are also indicated on the timeline.

From the inception of the program in 2014 through 2019, there were 14-16 UndocuAlly student-trainers at VU. Ten of these student-trainers participated in this case study, through eco mapping, questionnaire, and in-person interviews. Five DACA recipients participated in the optional student-trainers' focus group. Rich demographic data resulted from the participants self-reported questionnaire and are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3.

Participant Demographics/Responses to Questionnaire

	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender Identity	Current Status	Birth Continent	Work Hr/Wk	Age	Driver's License	Access to car
Augustin	COH	Male	U.S. Citizen	North America	20	25-30	Yes	Sometimes
Ariel	Latina/White	Female	DACA	North America	0	18-25	Yes	Sometimes, rides
Arsala	COH	Female	DACA	Asia	10	18-25	Yes	Yes
Bob	Latinx	Cisgender Male	LPR	South America	40+	25-30	Yes	Yes
Camilla	Latinx Bolivian Argentine	Female	DACA	South America	63-65	18-25	Yes	Yes

Name	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Status	Region				
Elsa	Latina, COH	Cisgender Female	LPR	Central America	25-30	18-25	Yes	Yes
Louise	White Hispanic	Female	DACA	Central America	40+	18-25	Yes	Yes
MJ	White, Hispanic, COH	Male	DACA	South America	15	18-25	Yes	Yes
Selena	Latina	Female	U.S. Citizen	Central America	40-45	18-25	Yes	Yes
Tupac	Hispanic	Male	DACA	South America	35	18-25	Yes	Yes

	Year in College	College PT/FT	# of orgs involved	# of Exec. Bd. positions	Yrs. as UndocuAlly Trainer	Cum. GPA	$ of scholarships (SC)/tuition	# living family
Augustin	Graduated	FT	6	3	1	3.5	Full SC	-
Ariel	Senior	FT	2, bus commute	1	1.5	3.26	4.5k TA 1.5 yrs.	-
Arsala	Senior	FT	5	0	1.5	3.8	3 SC Full-TA	-
Bob	Graduated	FT	9	4	2	3.4	34k (4 yrs.)	4
Camilla	Senior	FT	4	4	2+	3.0	4 SC & TA	4
Elsa	Graduated	FT	3	0	4 months	3.85	0	3
Louise	Senior	FT	6	1	1.5	3.97	12k	-
MJ	Senior	FT	5	0	1	3.15	5.5k	5
Selena	Graduated	FT	5	6	3	3.95	25-30k	-
Tupac	Senior	FT	4	3	1.5	3.15	0	4

	Tuition/Expenses Self-pay	Perceived Family Income Surviving to Thriving	Income (Student + family)	Occupations of Households
Augustin	books ($2,000)	<mid-point	$80-100k	Restaurant & Cleaning
Ariel	parents paid for help with siblings	<mid-point	$40-60k	Construction & Restaurant
Arsala	$1k per semester	<mid-point	$20-40k	Clerical & Child Care (degrees)
Bob	$10k	Surviving	$60-80k	Server/Stylist

Camilla	$50k	Slightly>mid-point	$40-60k	Owners of Cleaning Business
Elsa	$2k	Almost mid-point	100k+	Restaurant & Cleaning Supervision
Louise	$1.5-1.8k	<mid-point	IDK	Transportation & Cleaning

	Tuition/Expenses Self-pay	Perceived Family Income Surviving to Thriving	Income (Student + family)	Occupations of Households
MJ	$3-5k	mid-point	$20-40k	Self-Emp, Food, & Business
Selena	SC/Work	>mid-point	$80-100k	Health & Service
Tupac	$7k	Slightly<mid-point	IDK	4 all working

Decisions to use ranges, instead of age and specific country of origin, were made to further protect participant identities. Participants predominately ranged in age from 18-25 at the time of the interviews and focus group. Six identified as female or cisgender female. Four identified as male or cisgender male. Though not attached to their pseudonyms, half of the student-trainers identified as LGBT or Questioning. Students self-reported their time facilitating UndocuAlly from 4 months to 2 years with an average of 1.5 years.

Students were predominately DACAmented (6/10) while some student-trainers had transitioned statuses from a liminal status to legal permanent resident (2/10) and/or citizens (2/10). Participants averaged 30+ hours a week working while studying fulltime. Participants had an average of a 3.5 GPA while being involved in an average of 5 student organizations. Family income ($20K-$100K) was a self-reported perception on a scale from surviving through thriving. While important to note financial concerns as a common risk factor for undocumented student, a deeper analysis on the measurements used and

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findings are needed and go beyond the scope of this study. In general, however, eight out of ten had some level of scholarship support ranging from $5,000 to fully funded tuition.

Data Collection

To increase trustworthiness, data was collected through multiple sources. As mentioned above, these sources included: a self-reported demographic questionnaire that include grouping ranges (four-year college student, UndocuAlly Trainer, undocumented, DACA, TPS, Permanent Residency, US Citizen liminal status or ally); socio-demographic questions (gender, scholarships, perceived SES); community cultural wealth (family, school involvement, eco-mapping of support); success measures (GPA, involvement) and in-person interview questions. Each participant was asked a set of semi structured questions, established from apriori codes based on literature and experiential knowledge of population and a pilot study.

All participants were fully informed of IRB approval for added safety and protection and provided a copy to confidentiality protocol to read. Participants agreed to confidentiality in four layers: (a) invention of their own pseudonym for verbal consent and questionnaire; (b) choices in preferred communication (in-person, email, phone, text) and choice of safe locations; (c) member checking through optional focus group after preliminary analysis to gain feedback and learn of alternative meanings; (d) flexible protocols as needed for protection and inclusion of each participant or as determined by committee. Document analysis of UndocuAlly manual, post evaluations, legislation, policy changes were conducted to corroborate student-trainer references to events, trainings or policy details, and their implementation. The flow of this process is detailed

as follows. Each participant met with the researcher in a place of safety, usually the researcher's office or home. The participant read and reviewed the confidentiality agreement and consent form for audio recording. The participant then filled out a demographic questionnaire with researcher there to answer questions. The eco-mapping and capital ranking were first done in silence and then the participant walked the researcher through assets, challenges, and capitals. Lastly, the semi structured interview questions were discussed, being flexible and nonlinear in approach as the mood dictated. From this rich data collection, an analysis, guided by prior research and member checking, was performed.

Data Analysis

A phased data analysis approach revealed insights for the three research questions explored in this descriptive case study:

1. What resources and challenges do UndocuAlly student-trainers experience at the student, campus, and state/national levels? [Eco-mapping Questionnaire, Interviews, Document Analysis]

2. What risks (Racist-Nativist) and resilience from protective factors (Community Cultural Wealth capitals) do student-trainers acknowledge and build upon, if any, through facilitating the UndocuAlly Program? [Focus Group, Interviews, participation observation field notes]

3. How does UndocuAlly serve as a model of a resilience structure*?* (a counterspace that support undocumented students to navigate, access resources and engage in transformative resistance to cope with adversity).

While the demographic data, assets and challenges were straightforward, multiple analytical decisions had to be made. For example, the interviews and capital rankings became much more complex in person. Stake (2005) argued that case study researchers need to adapt to the evolving data in the case to consider alternative sources of data that early analysis and experiences may suggest. Therefore, adjustments were made to the order of semi structured interview questions based on participants' flow of thoughts, moods, suggestions, or questions. Similarly, the questionnaire invited students to rank their perceived capitals in order of importance to them from 1-7. Eight of 10 student-trainers also self-reported if a capital had been bolstered by a life experience (*L*) and/or (*U*) UndocuAlly training facilitation experiences. This was added after discussion from the first two participants in the study. All modifications were within the bounds of my case study focus on the students' experience and complied with safety and confidentiality criteria of the IRB. Both edic and emic coding were necessary for analysis for interviews and focus group. A detailed account of the analysis follows.

A three-phased data analysis was used in this study to better understand the data in relation to these research questions. This was guided by Pérez Huber (2010) use of preliminary, collaborative, and final analysis coding stages for interviews and focus group derived from CRT approaches. The *preliminary coding stage* utilized initial and in vivo coding such as "los golpes" and "feeling content with where I am". In vivo coding uses the words of the participants in real time and centers their perspectives (Saldana, 2016). This centering of student-trainers' perspectives grounds the case study in the

meaning they make out of their lived realities and experiences, which is aligned with the prior CRT case studies (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011; Pérez Huber, 2009, 2010; Yosso, 2005). The *collaborative stage* involved a focus group to discuss the relevance, engagement and saliency of initial codes and categories. This group member checking, through the focus group, was also an important way to check for alternative meanings and build trustworthiness in analysis (Maxwell, 2012). This member checking often led to confirmation and elaboration of identified themes from initial coding. For example, in the focus group, student-trainers immediately engaged and spoke at length on the identified concept of ambiguous loss as a both a physical and psychological loss of their culture, identities and relationships (Boss, 2007; Falicov, 2012). Yet, another alternative was the presented as the opposite of ambiguous loss, in how life in liminal status also had moments of ambiguous gain. Thus, this member checking was important in analytic development. The *final analysis stage* consisted of revisiting initial coding and integrating them with the findings from the focus group to identify salient themes and discern what larger meanings were being shared.

The focus group conversation was also transcribed to connect back to broader theories. The transcription was focus coded through cultural wealth capitals and categorized as supportive of UndocuAlly, theories of ambiguous loss and counter-storytelling. Yosso (2005) six forms of capital, collectively called "community of cultural wealth" are aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant, and a seventh form, spiritual, added by Pérez Huber (2009). Though some capitals were relevant to UndocuAlly trainers' experiences at the personal and family level, the latter

wave were most salient by creating a community of cultural wealth for trainers through UndocuAlly trainings. Resilience is shown to exist not only as a personal trait but also as a form of cultural capital displayed within a community's cultural wealth (Aguilar, 2019, Pérez Huber, 2009, Yosso, 2005) within a larger ecological framework (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018).

The protocols allowed for the addition of any emergent themes within the boundaries of this study. For example, the immigration status of some student-trainers had changed over the course of their life, which indicated a tension between the fluidity of immigration status as well as its liminality. UndocuAlly trainer narratives revealed a wide range of adversity and barriers while still navigating the higher educational system successfully and finding achievement.

Authentic Quality, Trustworthiness and Validity

As mentioned earlier in this Methodology section, and expanded here, the validity concerns created through (a) small sample size is not generalizable and may be specific to VU contexts;(b) the influence of my long-term relationship with the UndocuAlly program and student-trainers was minimized through the triangulation of data (interviews, document analysis, focus group) to allow for the examination of competing explanations or alternative explanations to be examined (Maxwell, 2012).

Given my support role with the students and the student organization, it was imperative to transparently communicate in the interview flyer through USO, that their participation in an interview or focus group would have no influence on past or future support from me or that office. This was further explained through details in my official,

role at the time, in providing scholarships, emotional support, navigational support, access to legal support, etc.

Secondly, given my well known liberal and left leaning stance on comprehensive immigration reform, it was important to transparently acknowledge my biases and that participants should remain true to themselves and how they feel regarding the effects of campus, state, and national level impacts on their daily lives. For example, my leaning that DACA is a temporary protection and does not offer students long-term participation in their futures without a pathway to citizenship. However, an undocumented student-trainer was content with DACA being "enough protection", the identity was not as salient for them, and they did not want to heighten risk advocating for more. There was also a wide range of satisfaction levels that surfaced in the focus group. This range consisted of some student-trainers as overwhelmingly grateful for DACA and all the executive action allowed them to do, while some student-trainers felt their liminality underscored by DACA, incurring even more responsibilities at home due to the work permit, yet not enough documentation for future career goals. Some students eventually gained citizenship and spoke of the surprising sense of liminality in undocumented community belonging once they were able to access more privileges. While these stances and feelings were honored without influence, debate, or negation, it did mark for the researcher nuances for future study.

I was aware of my role as both integral to gathering and analyzing lived realities as well as problematic if I do so without recognition and inquiry about my own biases and privileges listed above. To address these issues, I relied on artifacts (UndocuAlly

manual and evaluations) and field notes to support coded text or understanding reflections on shared experiences. I also created audio memos to think through meanings assigned to themes and to limit my biases on this research. For example, the UndocuAlly student-trainers self-reported cultural wealth capitals followed a more straight forward coding process that was much more emic. However, the semi structured interviews allowed for more edic coding. Some new concepts emerged that fell under general themes of risks and resilience. They seemed related but also unique, so to minimize my bias of what I thought it could be, I created analytic audio memos to think out loud alternative possibilities to what was already known. These memos created possible connections and to understand the emotional tone underlying words and stories conveyed by participants. This led to finding the concept of ambiguous loss which is further discussed in findings. As I knew the students well, some of their marked inflections and intonations were revealing. However, a decision was made that a deeper level of discourse analysis was outside the scope of analysis within the timeframe of this study yet may be pursued in a future analysis.

Conclusion

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to better understand and analyze how undocumented student-trainers experience constructs of risk, resilience, and resistance through their involvement within the UndocuAlly program at VU as a microcosm of their lives. Many studies have detailed the experiences of undocumented students on the individual level, yet, not as many through interactions with systemic levels, which greatly impacts the wellbeing of this population in higher education.

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This invites the construct of ecological resilience to play a role in student resilience through this example of a promising practice, the UndocuAlly Training Program. The setting, participants and analysis were thoughtfully selected for the potential for theoretical advancement and its focus on understanding the complex interrelationships that contextualize the UndocuAlly student-trainer experiences at local and national levels (Mills et al., 2010).

Chapter Four

"There is a sense of courage that I believe we exhibit, and it highlights our contribution."
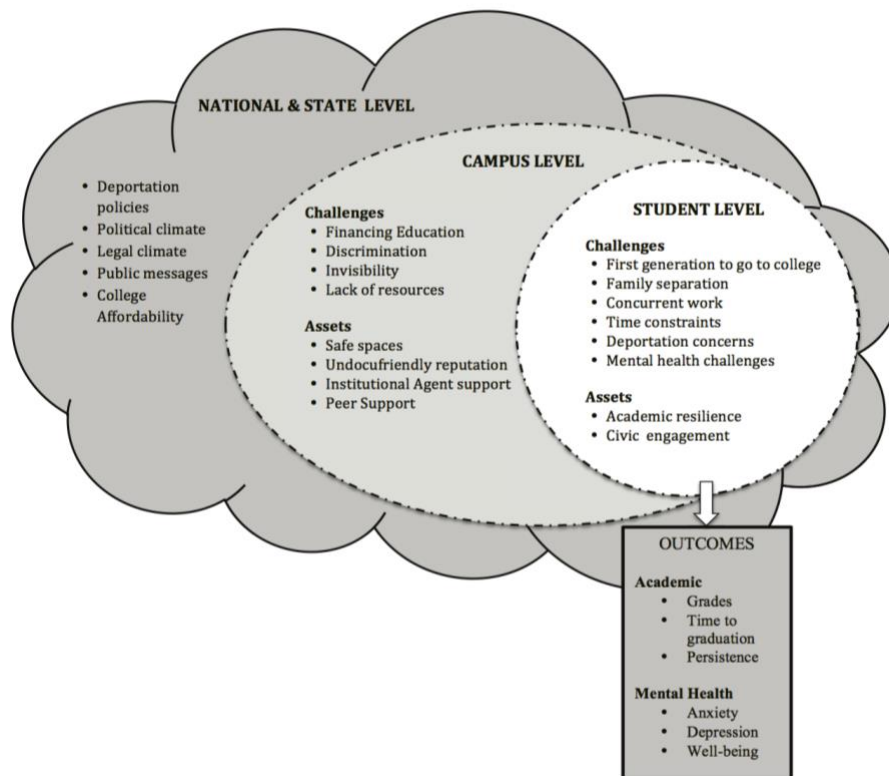-UndocuAlly student-trainer

Findings

This study fills a gap in undocumented student literature to describe a promising practice that yielded positive outcomes for undocumented students through a uniquely student-led shift in the education power dynamic, reflective of Suárez-Orozco (2015) and CRT. The importance of this study is to understand through this data collection and analysis, how 10 student-trainers involved an UndocuAlly program that prioritizes systemic awareness and transformative social change, may impact their own wellbeing and resilience in the face of risk. Some of this resilience may be better understood through the assets and protective factors, in the form of community cultural wealth capitals, that are enhanced by being a trainer in UndocuAlly. In final analysis, the last goal of this study was to describe how UndocuAlly serves student-trainers as a resilience structure, a counterspace that supports undocumented students to navigate, access resources and engage in transformative resistance to cope with adversity. What follows is the union of past research, data collection and analysis to present possible findings for these research questions.

Research Question 1

What resources and challenges do UndocuAlly student-trainers experience at the student, campus, and state/national levels? Data was collected from eco-mapping portion

of the questionnaire, interviews, with field notes and document analysis to corroborate findings as needed. Student-trainers' ecomaps were analyzed with support from the ecological theoretical framework provided by Suárez-Orozco (2015).

The reported lists in Figure 5 were aligned with findings from previous research and themes. For example, the assets and challenges revealed to be similar to, and supportive of, Suárez-Orozco's (2011, 2015, 2018) prior research. An overview of results shown from student-trainer eco-mapping in Table 4 is for comparison purposes.

Figure 5.

Review of Suárez-Orozco (2015) Conceptual framework of student and campus level

challenges and assets within an ambiguous policy context

Table 4.

Eco-mapping of UndocuAlly Student-Trainers' Self-reported Assets and Challenges at

Student, Campus, State/National Levels

	Student Level		Campus Level		State/National Level	
	Assets	Challenges	Assets	Challenges	Assets	Challenges
Augustin	friends, family, office/me, student org	VU administration	VU president, student office, leadership retreats	Systemic lack VU support, level, VU president, VP of support services	Pres. Obama, immigration reform debates	Pres. Obama, immigration reform debates, 2012 election, VU president
Ariel	family	family responsibilities	student org., VU overall, VU president, office UndocuAlly team	VU president university in general	United We DREAM, FWD.US, legislation	legislation fulfillment
Arsala	faith, family, me, teachers, friend	community from country of origin (judgmental)	office, honors college, research grant office, internship program	research grant less support,	DACA	[Pres.] Trump, Republicans, and "look busy doing nothing" politicians
Bob	best friend, family, community org., UU org., 2 offices, and point people	mental and physical health, family support and pressure to protect them	student organizing, scholarships	racists, tuition, student organizing, scholarships applications	U- Visa	VU administration board and Govt, Trump, Republicans
Camilla	family both immediate and distant friends UU org	family-immediate pressures	community students, faculty, staff, allies; office-the space, active engage. Opportunities; undoc. Student org	VU institution; undocumented student org		problematic state and national issues
Elsa	family, transition program, office, friends outside of school	depression, anxiety	transition program, commuting, professors, tuition, studying spaces, office, student staff of transition program	tuition, exclusion of peers, commuting		political climate

Table 4. (continued)

	Student Level		Campus Level		State/National Level	
	Assets	Challenges	Assets	Challenges	Assets	Challenges
Louise	best friends, parents, mentors, spirituality	trauma, parents	support services, scholarship, UndocuAlly	increasing tuition	DACA	family separations, trump admin., uncertainty
MJ	family, scholarships, happiness success	scholarships, family, personal doubt, anxiety, stress	resources, orgs, friends, colleagues, scholarships, academic work spaces	stress, scholarships, academics	DACA, driver's license	DACA, FASFA
Selena	boyfriend, family, peer	social events, peers, inter-personal pressure	transition program, UA, housing, societal pressures, my major dpt. Office/researcher	career services, housing, inv. Office, major dept	DACA, internship, citizenship	immigration reform, Trump, policies laws, citizen-ship test
Tupac	girlfriend family, friends, self-discovery	mental health, money	Involvement, student orgs., transition program	PWI, not enough support financially	opportunity	racist systems, broken legislation

Personal level student supports. Findings from self-reported paper and pencil eco-mapping revealed perceived supports and challenges at the personal, campus, and state/national levels. Students were instructed to list supports and challenges at each level with + or – to indicate a support or challenge. An audio taped discussion with student-trainer elaboration followed to better understand choices and tensions.

Participants identified family as the most prevalent response. Other key personal-level supports included faith/spirituality, institutional agents, teachers, friends, student organizations, community legal partners, campus offices, transition programs, undocumented student organization, mentors, scholarships, boyfriend/girlfriend, and self-discovery. In general findings were aligned with Suárez-Orozco (2015) study, yet

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comparative analysis revealed in this study that the institutional agents, key programs, & student affairs offices were listed more frequently at this *personal* level of support for student-trainers, rather than the campus level. This finding is interesting and could be due to the methodology of handwritten eco-mapping used in this study versus the modified instructor relationship Likert scale surveys in the Suárez-Orozco (2015) study.

Though beyond the scope of this study, it was interesting to note the college transition programs and offices were also mentioned under personal supports, which offers insight on the level of value these resources held for students. This points to the importance of institutional change agents and their offices in the student-trainer's ecology.

Personal level student challenges. Family was also reported as a frequent challenge for most participants who were juggling between the pressures of student life with family expectations and responsibilities. While most student-trainers shared family concerns, personal challenges with financial, physical, and mental health (depression, anxiety, trauma, stress) pressures were noted. Systemic issues such as navigating scholarships and university administrators were both noted here as a personal level challenge.

Campus level supports. Among the more frequently listed supports for student-trainers at the campus level, were the undocumented student organization (USO), president of university, student affairs and leadership offices, the UndocuAlly team, leadership opportunities, and offices with professional development opportunities (research grants, internship program). Multiple opportunities for scholarships and getting to know faculty allies were detailed here. Six out of the 10 participants also attended various transition programs that frequently occurred as a support at the both the personal and campus levels.

Campus level challenges. Similar to family, scholarships were listed as both a frequent asset and challenge for students-trainers. The university president and higher-level administrators were named frequently as challenging due to lack of to follow through on promised support. Students listed racist attitudes, exclusion from peers, increased tuition, long commutes and being in a predominately white institution as challenges.

State/National level support. UndocuAlly student-trainers listed DACA as a support even though most participants later elaborated that it was "only a band-aid". However, the specific eligibility for in-state tuition, a work permit and license were noted as supports. National organizations such as United We DREAM, FWD.US and legal services centers were mentioned as necessary supports. Some students felt optimistic about legislation and opportunities for pathways to citizenship. Some students expressed gratitude to then President Obama and his executive order for DACA while acknowledging its limitations as challenging.

State/National level challenges*.* Student-trainers frequently discussed state and national challenges as "yo-yo legislation". They elaborated on their eco-mapping by calling attention to some systems as racist. Many spoke of the disappointment of unfulfilled presidents promises to protect immigrant communities. President Obama and his deportations, Trump, Republicans and "look busy doing nothing" politicians were in vivo codes mentioned. The ironies within citizenship test and family separation policies were also noted.

Research Question 2

What risks (racist-nativist) and resilience from protective factors (community cultural wealth capitals) do student-trainers acknowledge and build upon, if any, through facilitating the UndocuAlly Program? Data collected from the questionnaire, focus group, interviews, and participation observation field notes for research question two were analyzed as planned through apriori and focused coding based on racist nativism (Pérez Huber, 2009, 2010) and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) frameworks.

The questionnaire invited students *to rank their perceived capitals* in order of importance

to them. They also self-reported if this capital was bolstered by life experiences (L)

and/or UndocuAlly training facilitation experiences (U). Findings are shown in Table 5.

Table 5.

UndocuAlly Student-Trainers' Self-Reported Capitals of Community Cultural Wealth

Participants	Aspirational	Linguistic	Familial	Social*	Navigational*	Resistant*	Spiritual
Augustin	2	6	1	3	4	5	7
Ariel*	2	3	2	1	2	3	1
Arsala	5	7	1	3	6	4	1
Bob	1	5	4	3	2	1	6
Camilla	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Elsa*	4	5	1	3	7	2	6
Louise	1	7	6	2	3	4	5
MJ	1	6	2.5	2.5	4	5	7
Selena	6	7	5	2	1	4	3
Tupac	1	7	4	2	3	5	6

Note: *Student reported community cultural wealth capitals enhanced by UndocuAlly Training role.*

Community Cultural Wealth as discussed in Yosso (2005), are explained through

forms of capitals acquired in community to serve as protective factors from high risk of

adversity. Student-trainers were asked to rank from 1-7 the importance of the capitals and

which, if any, of the seven forms they perceived they possess either through personal life

"L" and/or "U" UndocuAlly Training Program. This was a nonlinear ranking, so students could rank a form of capital the same number if they held it in the same importance (ex. Navigational capital UL3, resistant capital U3). Aspirational capital and familial capital were ranked evenly and most frequently as 1 in importance to student-trainers. Ironically, linguistic capital was ranked consistently low as 6 or 7, though all but one student-trainer reported being either bilingual or trilingual.

Navigational, resistant, and social capitals were reported to have been mostly improved or acquired through the UndocuAlly Training Program. Students also shared that *navigational, resistant capitals, social capital were consistently ranked higher* in importance to them. Here, student-trainer Ariel introduces this.

ARIEL: My grandfather says, 'What you need is a *palanca'*. [Discussion on what a palanca is in English] It is a tool you use to uh open something. Oh…It's a *crowbar*. You need someone to help open that door, it is about *who* you know.

It seems that navigational, resistant capitals, and social capitals were some of the valued resources gained from their participation in UndocuAlly, to help student-trainers cope with adversity. Additionally, this points to socioenvironmental resilience and shows support for UndocuAlly as a resilience structure.

Focus Group. The resources that UndocuAlly student-trainers received were easily understood through capitals in Community Cultural Wealth as much of the coding was emic. However, the semi structured interviews allowed for more edic coding. Some new concepts emerged that fell under themes of risks or resilience. They seemed related but also different, so as discussed in Chapter 3, analytic audio memos were created. Here

is an example of an audio memo to understand the emotional tone underlying words and stories conveyed:

> What do I call this [common] thread? There is something quieter here than the strength or …um…risk or resilience I am used to seeing. There is something in the tone (of these interviews) that I hear. Something sad? Sublime, or is it disappointment? Something below the stories of overt grief, loss of a family member (death) … like loss of… something else, 'fomo', 'parents' loss', ceremonies, like a heavy subtle grief, disappointment, loss… (Audio memo, Crewalk, 2019)

In further research to understand this, the host of a podcast interviewed Dr. Pauline Boss on immigration. She shared a term that fit the grouping of codes into a category, the concept of *ambiguous loss* (Boss, 2007). Further research on ambiguous loss in the context of risk and resilience of Latino immigrant families was expressed further by Falicov (2012). Ambiguous loss was therefore included as a potential theme to member check with the focus group. All definitions and themes were operationally defined for the focus group participants prior to the start of the conversation. The preliminary themes presented for member checking to the focus group were as follows:

1) Do you believe UndocuAlly serves as a counterspace/brave space/ safe space to humanize policy through counter-story telling?

2) What are the benefits and limitations of storytelling in this UndocuAlly Training space?

3) One definition of transformative experience is looking for the experiences that

rearrange yourself (Zukav, 2007).

    a. Has your UndocuAlly experience rearranged you?

    b. What were you intentionally looking for in this experience?

4) Ambiguous loss is a notion that immigrants and their families may feel loss,

despair, grief, etc. being between two or more worlds (Boss, 2007). Do you ever

feel or have felt the losses of your parents, dreams, culture, extended family as

your own? Do you ever feel this grief is stuck, in limbo, or unresolved in your

family or other immigrant families?

5) What is achievement to you and in what ways does it differ or is similar to

university definitions (Carter, 2008)?

Key Findings

Collaborative or second phase coding through the focus group with five DACA

recipients deepened initial coding themes and revealed more nuances. The comfort level

of the students between each other and this researcher allowed for a comfortable flow of

dialogue and divergence of experiences and opinions to easily surface. "I'd like to

challenge that" entered conversations easily and emphasized the distinct and variant

voices within the focus group. This showed these undocumented students as a nuanced

group and not monolithic, as often portrayed. According to Aguilar (2019) "different

experiences of liminality translate into different experiences of reality" (p. 2). A

consistent underpinning and overarching tone was this *liminality* and it manifested in the

tensions explored and held during this focus group, expanding the range of perceptions.

A decision was made to honor these tensions, this lived liminality. Incorporating the outlier perspectives expand the nuances of undocumented experiences shared honestly through the trust built from relationship. Another, more practical, rationale for grouping subthemes and categories into concept coded *ranges* was for the benefit of masking the identities of undocumented participants further. In vivo coding that may be more easily identifiable could easily be focus coded under this series of tensions that arose from discussions. The most salient concept coding ranges are listed in Table 6: Ambiguous Loss and Gain, Assets and Challenges, Structural and Symbolic Violence, Storytelling and Counter-storytelling, UndocuAlly as both a brave and safe space.

Table 6.

Salient concept coding ranges

Concept Coding	Sub themes from open coding	Example of coded text from data source	Data sources	Data Supporting Findings Research
Ambiguous Loss and Gain	Loss of self Lost culture Death of grandparent Grief Sacrifice Rites of passage FOMO Disconnected	ARIEL: What has *really* bothered me has been not being connected to my grandparents. There is a real sense of culture that I lost. My cousin… is the same age as my brother, but *he* missed out on the language, the occasions, the culture, and family just being *together*. He	Interviews, focus group	Boss, 2007 Falicov, 2012 Pérez Huber, 2009. 2010 (Nativist racism) Risk and Resilience literature

	Transformative experience as a gain You still get a gain	doesn't understand the significance of the dancing to the church. Was it really worth it?		
Assets and Challenges	Family Diversity Office Point people Mentors UU student org. Trump policies Family pressures	LOUISE: I know I could be myself with you or, um, [mentors] like I know I can be myself when talking about my ideas. [Mentor] she sent me her papers and I guess just reading all of that, I teared up with one… and I was like, wow, like you actually *care* about us.	Eco-mapping, Interviews	Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015
Structural and Symbolic Violence	Trauma No hope *Por los golpes* Fighting off assault Ignorance is bliss *Aprendes al golpes* Kids in cages Burn out Racists Assault So many killed Micro-aggressions	ARIEL: I saw this joke one day on twitter, 'Estoy gordita porque estoy hinchada por los golpes de la vida.' [Laughter-all]. I *mean eventually* the swelling will go down [Laughter]. But in the moment, you can only feel pain. That sounds so negative, but I think for some people, this experience [being undocumented] helps to be more positive and see the humanity in life. But for me, I only see the ugly stuff. On every single level. Kids in cages. Individuals taken by ICE. Students who cannot go to college. Even at the organizing level [for undocumented people] women fighting off assault.	Interviews Focus Group	Aguilar, 2019 Bhopal & Deuchar, 2016 Langhout & Vaccarino-Ruiz, 2020 Muñoz et al., 2018 Roth, 2018
Storytelling and	Being truthful to my story Vulnerability	TUPAC: The space would shift from safe to brave spaces depending what we did from storytelling to	Participant - observation notes	Community Cultural Wealth Yosso, 2005

Counter-storytelling	Revealing yourself Learning the counternarratives to combat negative True voice	legislation. The way to humanize it would be to make jokes or show emotions, for me that made it a brave space that I was in. The safe space was showing my vulnerability, through storytelling, through tears. Because [my friend] would be crying, then I'd cry. We were -all crying!	Focus group	Counter narratives Pérez Huber, 2009 Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011
UndocuAlly as both a Brave and Safe Space	I know you will become what you dream What you need is a *palanca* We would pray The networks that you make. Someone who's been *through* it	ARSALA: *Definitely,* because you are not giving into the negative media, you're giving a counternarrative and showing a different perspective. You are trying to educate the public to not believe everything that Trump says. There is a different side to the story not in the news. There is individual resistance but this is next level-- UndocuAlly is community wide resistance	Questionnaire Capital Ranking Interviews	Ecological resilience Ungar, 2012, 2013 Community Cultural Wealth Yosso, 2005

Reflecting on the thoughtful data in Table 6, a detailed exploration of each in relation to the research questions follows:

Ambiguous loss and UndocuAlly as a counter-storytelling space were the most salient themes in the focus group given the engagement from the student-trainer participants. I will explain them with more depth here and then again in Chapter 5 connecting this back to the research.

Student-trainers jumped directly into the concept of ambiguous loss at the start of the focus group, and this was a large part of our discussion in the focus group. The coding for this focus group transcript was developed into four main themes under the larger concept coding of Ambiguous Loss and Gain. They are *loss of culture*, *loss of a loved one*, *loss of relationship*, and *ambiguous gain*. An example of each follows for review and distinction.

Loss of Culture

> ARIEL: My uncle got married. The only way I could see it was on video when
> one of [my family members] came to visit. A home video of his marriage, but
> there is a real sense of grief that you cannot experience those things…uh what do
> you call them…rites of passage… alongside your other family members. There
> was a moment that I thought of that. My parents are the *padrinos*, the ones who
> paid for [some] of the wedding and their *names* are there, but they are not. They
> can't go…well they could…but then they could not come back.

Loss of a Loved One

Four out of the five students in the focus group had experienced the death of a close family member within the last few years, some within the last few months of the focus group meeting.

> ARSALA: A little over a month ago my grandfather passed away. He had six
> kids. He worked and raised his kids on his *own.* He sacrificed everything so his
> kids could have an education moving from the farming town to the city. He was a
> mom and dad for my father. Every day we would pray to get our paperwork in

order so we could see him and visit him and thank him…but that didn't work out and…there is no closure. My dad is not open with his family on why he could not go to visit, they assume he was too Americanized or the tickets were too expensive. I never got to see them or visit him after the age of 2. Once I asked my dad what his wishes would be and he said 'For you to meet your grandfather and the second one is for you to be successful'.

Loss of Relationship

Camilla reflected on liminal loss from both acculturation and lack of ability to travel back to home country:

> CAMILLA: My younger sister (a citizen) was able to travel back to [our home country] and when she came back, she started to integrate herself into [our parents'] conversations about family, and, I had this fear of missing out, of not knowing anybody. There were people who knew me, but I didn't know them. Ambiguous loss I think changes throughout your life, not just losing a family member [through death], but you might lose something *in relationships*. My Dad once said, 'I feel like I took your childhood away from you. You came when you were five and use to talk all the time and you wouldn't shut up…but learning English flipped your psyche. Now you are quiet.'

Tupac also shared the nuances of disconnect in relationship by grieving with his family, but for unknown family members.

> TUPAC: There were a lot of family members in [my home country] that have sadly passed away. But for me, I never met them. I can't feel something…the

sadness…over someone who passed away…who held me once when I was *two*. I know it feels like I'm…disconnected. I want to feel it though, I *want* to feel connected but I don't…because I left when I was 3 years old.

While the theme of loss resonated for the focus group, some participants also revealed the accumulation of surviving and striving through loss and through adversity also had some defining, transformative moments.

Ambiguous Gain

Ambiguous *gain* was a coded phrase, a concept that Arsala introduced to the group as the discussion continued on ambiguous loss.

> ARSALA: Yes, there is a lot of loss - but I just realized something. There is also an ambiguous *gain* from all this loss. What I mean by that is sometimes, sometimes I would think about what if I had lived [in my home country]. Here, going through the hardships of being a DREAMer, I gained the perspective of being more… more…humble and I'm not as impressed by material things [like family in my home country]. The other thing is religion, I am remembering God. Even my family prays, we all pray, now. [In] the struggle to pave something for yourself, *you still get a gain*. I would never have valued education. It's made me think more on life. Especially after my grandfather died, like, *what mark am I leaving*?

While Arsala focused here on the aspirational and spiritual capitals strengthened through loss and poverty, Ariel nuances her ambiguous gain within the inherent sacrifices of liminality and luxuries of privilege.

ARIEL: (Sigh) If I want to be in [government industry], I do not have the luxury

to get security clearances. I would have to take the exams in [my home country],

it's a gamble - you gamble your potential for happiness - or, you wind up

sacrificing your connection to the United States, like being with your family. It

goes back to ambiguous loss and gain, the transformative experience, itself, could

also be categorized as an ambiguous gain, we've learned these hard lessons that

people don't immediately learn - especially, honesty. When you disclose your

status to somebody, you learn a lesson in honesty and vulnerability, which are

very precious, because a lot of people don't have to put themselves out there like

that. They can just *exist*.

Arsala and Ariel note the *gains* through the constant hardships and sacrifices imposed by

their liminal statuses. Ambiguous loss and gain are examples of the underpinnings of

risks and resilience experienced by student-trainers. However, also noted here are the

inequities of power and privilege. Ambiguous gain does not seem to imply that systems

do not need to change because students found ways of coping through the strengthening

of their spiritual, navigational, and social capitals, displayed here. While resilience is

shown in this data, so is the high level of risk and nativist racism.

Structural Violence and Symbolic Violence

Focus group, interviews, and documents corroborated reoccurring themes on fear

of state violence, media violence, and the "Trump Effect", which have spiked nativist

racism in educational settings (Laghout & Vaccarino-Ruiz, 2020; Muñoz et al., 2018,

Roth, 2018). The students interviewed spoke about the "los golpes", the blows in life, the

fear and disappointments. Ariel introduced this through a joke she found on twitter stating "I am not fat. I'm just swollen from all the blows in this life".

> ARIEL: I saw this joke one day on twitter, 'Estoy gordita porque estoy hinchada por los golpes de la vida.' [Laughter-all]. I *mean eventually* the swelling will go down [Laughter-all]. But in the moment, you can only feel pain. That sounds so, so negative, but I think for some people, this experience [being undocumented] helps to be more positive and see the humanity in life. But for me, I only see the ugly stuff. On every single level. Kids in cages. Parents taken by ICE. Students who cannot go to college. Even at the organizing level [for undocumented people] women fighting off assault.

The students also reported that this climate impacted their mental health and wellness, which was a top concern noted in questionnaires. Half of the students directly shared their struggles to cope with mental health, naming anxiety, stress, and depression as personal challenges. Most shared related stress from pressures of family and intense internal pressures to succeed. Most faced this also in their work or organizing.

> ARIEL: In my [work], I see people having anxiety or panic attacks, because they have to relive [trauma]. They talk about it like its normal, but it is *not.* To have so many family members killed, or to have endured so much sexual abuse… You see these very vulnerable people being exploited. They want and need that legal help but the price of it…is too much. Then you wonder… is the justice system really justice?

In the spring of 2018, due to mental health concerns and pressures from negative climate with DACA recession, UndocuAlly Trainings (see timeline) were temporarily stopped so student-trainers could rest. Camilla shared how she, too, decided to take a break from activism work.

> CAMILLA: I've given myself some time off from immigration [activism]. I know that I want to come back to it, but not now. To be honest, you know how they say 'ignorance is bliss' it really is! [Sighs]. Since I put all of that away for a while, people don't really talk to me about it anymore. We talk about other things like, the man who just killed himself in jail, Jeffery Epstein [indicted for sex trafficking]. We talk about that kind of stuff. That isn't that heavy [all laughing] even though it *is*. You're just more distant from it though.

While UndocuAlly showed to be a promising practice to some extent, it was not always enough to prevent burnout due to the constant risk of exposure to negative climates and racist nativism which is shown to have a negative effect on undocumented students (Muñoz et al., 2018). However, the space created in UndocuAlly offered resources that buffered some of the compression from systemic stress, creating an example of environmental resilience (Ungar, 2013).

Storytelling and Counter-storytelling

Storytelling was an intentional way to build resistant, social, and navigational capital. It allowed for students to center their lives at the margins, while simultaneously offering a narrative that was counter to violence of mainstream media. Student-trainers consistently spoke about storytelling in their interviews and focus group. Some themes

included "revealing yourself", "being truthful to my story", "learning the counternarratives to combat the negative." Through storytelling and the human impacts of legislation, UndocuAlly was framed to be both a safe space and a brave space for student-trainers.

> TUPAC: The space would shift from safe to brave depending what we did. From storytelling to legislation …the way to humanize it would be to make jokes or show emotions, for me that made it a brave space that I was in. The safe space was [getting comfortable] showing my vulnerability, through storytelling, through tears. Because [my friend] would be crying, then I'd cry. We were…*all* crying! [Group laughter, reminiscing].

This theme of safe and brave spaces through storytelling is corroborated by document analysis. Tupac's passage is recalling an UndocuAlly training held the week following the rescinding of DACA. In spite of the impact of the rescission, students-trainers updated and practiced their slides for the upcoming training that was at full capacity. The notes explain a very emotional training day.

> Near the end of the training, the weight of the impact of this rescission was on the faces of the participants. Some seemed to be holding their breath, others expressed the sudden realization of their citizenship privileges. MJ, who had been practicing his storytelling with us during the week, was nervous but ready. His story illuminated the families targeted by the policies, his family. His voice cracked. Tears began falling down everyone's faces, even ours. (training notes, Fall 2017)

The UndocuAlly Program sets up a space of safety and community *within* risk. It also

created a dynamic environment for student-trainers to critique oppressions in telling their

stories and media counter-stories. This navigational capital is explained here by Arsala.

> ARSALA: UndocuAlly *is* a counter story or counterspace. There are a lot of
>
> negative connotations about DREAMers. A lot of people believe that people
>
> *choose* to be undocumented! But, this [training] really counters the narrative of
>
> that stuff in the media. Being a DREAMer isn't something you choose, it's
>
> something you are thrown into! Even if your parents *try* to earn citizenship and
>
> apply to many different things, it doesn't come. This type of training really
>
> illustrates and educates on that, that not only you do not choose, or that everything
>
> is for free—which is not true at all. Especially with the storytelling, DREAMers
>
> are Americans, too. We are more mature from the experience, but we just have to
>
> go through a lot of loopholes to get to where we need to be. I gave a speech, a
>
> man who was [from my country], he was in the audience…and came up to me,
>
> like an uncle, and kissed my forehead and said, *I know you will become what you*
>
> *dream*. Someone like that opens up everything in front of you, despite all the
>
> negativity around you. This program not only give us the network, but gives us
>
> the *hope…* from someone …other than our families. Someone from the system…
>
> pointing us in the directions, really means the world.

Research Question 3

How does UndocuAlly serve as a model of a resilience structure? (a counterspace

that support undocumented students to navigate, access resources and engage in

transformative resistance to cope with adversity). Some salient themes from the data

suggest that this concept of *resilience structures* is worth developing further. Students

revealed in interviews and focus group how UndocuAlly served as a counterspace and a

social space to connect with resources and others, especially through storytelling. Noting

that student-trainers also ranked social capital highly also suggests that resilience

structures should prioritize safe and brave spaces as a source of navigational support.

Arsala and Ariel also shared some transformative take-aways that suggest their capital

and resilience was built upon in this space, something that is usually in lack for

undocumented students (Bjorklund, 2018).

> ARSALA: *Definitely,* because you are not giving in to the negative media, you're
>
> giving a counternarrative and showing a different perspective. You are trying to
>
> educate the public to not believe everything that Trump says. There is a different
>
> side to the story not in the news. There is individual resistance, but this is next
>
> level--UndocuAlly is community wide resistance.
>
> ARIEL: I think not only does the audience change, but *we* have also changed too,
>
> significantly, I believe. Maybe because it's also that I'm older--I am now more
>
> comfortable saying now that I am DACAmented and being a little more honest
>
> with people whereas before it gave me a lot of anxiety. Now the new people I
>
> meet, I disclose it…by making it normal…like, 'oh, I have to go now and renew
>
> my DACA, sucks I have to pay $500'. Some may get uncomfortable at first, but it
>
> is not my problem if they are uncomfortable.
>
> ARSALA: Another thing with transformative experience is before when I use to

write essays or personal statements applying to college, I'd never mentioned that I was a DREAMer. I would read it and say this is not *me.* I'm not just first gen. That is not even close to what my experience encompasses. Now when I apply to internships or grad programs, I'm way more open. Now I read my personal statements and I'm like, this is me, this is everything, this is the true voice I wasn't able to express 3 or 4 years ago. Another thing [UndocuAlly] has done is given me some community. Even though I was not open in UndocuAlly with my story, I see which students attend, I see which professors attend and all of you. My community of people who *understand* has grown. I use[d] to think this was my biggest weakness, being a DREAMer, but now as I've gone through college, I'm starting to realize learn about life, growing up and maturity, even though this is difficult this is my biggest strength. There are some lessons I've learned at a younger age that most people learn in their 40s. You learn more sympathy for others… more humanity.

The passages selected above show UndocuAlly as an intentional counterspace to share stories that were not seen in news channels for mainstream viewers and for student-trainers to instead express and center perspectives of liminality. Student-trainers shared these counternarratives and the human impact of policies through jokes, lived realities of their parents, stories about navigating higher education as an undocumented student. Noting the program evaluations, this was impactful for the audience members. However, it also seemed to build a sense of agency and empowerment with the student-trainers. Arsala and Ariel seem to have grown over time more comfortable with their story.

Through the practice of these trainings, a way to navigate these landscapes and eventually find more acceptance of themselves was discovered. It seems that the social capital played a role for Arsala in that she experienced people supporting undocumented students before she was even able to share, she was one. The cultivation of such a space by the student-trainers through interactions and negotiations of the personal story with the political adversity seems to shift something. Lastly, these opportunities for engagement of both student-trainers to critique oppressions and commit allies to social justice seems to cultivate transformative resistance.

In conclusion findings align with prior research on risk and resilience, and critical race frameworks. The ecological frameworks integrated with risk and resilience are strengthened and nuanced by ambiguous loss and gain. Lastly resource rich counter-spaces like UndocuAlly act as both brave and safe spaces suggesting that perhaps resilience structures may support the hard-won ambiguous gains of life in a liminal status.

Chapter Five

Discussion

  The findings from this descriptive case study of risk, resilience, and resistance in UndocuAlly student-trainers experiences stress that navigation of liminality requires both a space of safety in community and a critique of racist nativism. These together build on resilience and create transformative movements in undocumented student development. This also supports further exploration of the developing concept of resilience structures and how they fit within the existing frameworks of critical race theory and risk and resilience. With further development this will the applicable to the creation and assessment of promising programs.

  While the findings revealed these strengths in research design, limitations were also revealed. This study has multiple important limitations. First, the experiences of these students cannot be generalized to any larger communities of undocumented students, as undocumented students are not a monolith. Generalizations may not be made about these findings nor the particularities of their experiences. Second, these undocumented students were already highly aware and resourceful university students excelling academically. The participants also held access to some privileges, such as of being able to access college, obtain a driver's license, have regular access to a car, as well as hard-won opportunities to go through a change of status, all which are scarce resources in some states and often limited to the broader undocumented populations. Third, students self-reported on the capitals developed in the program could be a true benefit of

the program and/or may reflect research bias due to their relationship with the researcher and the researcher's connection to the UndocuAlly program. Lastly, centering participants "true voices" about their experiences of this program was a central tenet of this study. It is not intended to be a case study that corroborates all their experiences with other forms of evidence, nor an evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. Despite these limitations, this descriptive study did thoughtfully explore and better understand nuanced experiences of the UndocuAlly student-trainers through the following research questions:

1) What resources and challenges do UndocuAlly student-trainers experience at the student, campus, and state/national levels?

2) What risks (Racist-Nativist) and resilience from protective factors (Community Cultural Wealth Capitals) do student-trainers acknowledge and build upon, if any, through facilitating the UndocuAlly Program?

3) How does UndocuAlly serve as a model of a resilience structure? (a counterspace that support undocumented students to navigate, access resources and engage in transformative resistance to cope with adversity).

Integrating research findings

In final analysis stage, concept mapping was utilized to condense themes and discern what salience and connections do the findings to these three research questions have: to each other, to extend prior research, and to suggest future research.

RQ 1

The resources and challenges UndocuAlly student-trainers experienced aligned with the major findings of Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) ecological framework. For example, student-trainers listed state and national violence as a source of stress and challenge at the state and national level as well as this impact on mental health, depression and anxiety all listed as person challenges. However, student-trainers listed multiple institutional change agents as assets at the *personal* level, suggesting that change agents have an impact and a larger role to play in supporting undocumented students' resilience. More importantly, the use of an ecological framework illuminates the *compression* of undocumented students between the state and national levels of racist nativism and the ambiguous loss experienced by their families. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2018) in integrating an ecological model with risk and resilience theory aligns in that environments-of-adversity may be mitigated by personal assets and environmental resilience (Ungar, 2013). An illustration of this can be seen as Pérez Huber (2009) showed the interaction of critical race theories to both expose and challenge racist nativism. This is further supported by Muñoz et al. (2018) whose findings show how colleges and universities "need to reconceptualize the notion of resilience by addressing systemic racist nativism in higher education" (p. 49). It is visualized here again in Figure 6 to build upon further.
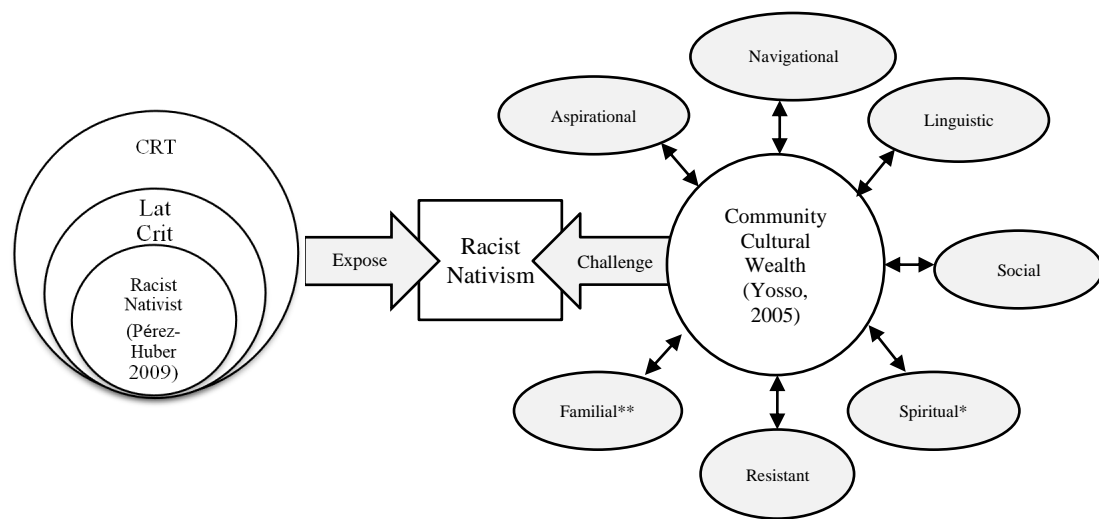
Figure 6.

Review of Challenging Racist Nativism Pérez Huber (2009).

The UndocuAlly Training Program is centered in CRT using the training platform to expose racist nativist policies through debunking myths, "yo-yo legislation" and personal counter-storytelling. Through the student-trainer rankings we learned of the importance of the navigational capital, social capital and resistant capital most attributed to their UndocuAlly experiences. They co-created a braver and safer space to challenge the racist nativism present in their lived realities and centering the liminality of their experiences. This in turn supported some student-trainers in receiving the social support to navigate their own relationships to their stories, finding some acceptance and emotional release in the process.

RQ2

The resilience from protective factors (Community Cultural Wealth capitals) the student-trainers acknowledge and build upon through facilitating the UndocuAlly Training Program centered on navigational, social, and resistant capitals. The building up of these capitals was best exemplified through their practices of counter-storytelling. Storytelling seemed to surface as a tool for confidence and empowerment, that their realities, though contrary to mainstream media, mattered. To master their own story for themselves (and not for the audience) was a lesson in acceptance or control. Storytelling was a resource to help navigate or even mitigate some of the racist nativist risks experienced as a student-trainer. Spaces that build upon resilience with resources to cope with adversity is a signifier of environmental resilience (Ungar, 2013).

The UndocuAlly Program addresses this as seen through the narratives of the student-trainers. While the findings from this study align with seminal works cited and presents UndocuAlly as a promising program, the findings ultimately support and potentially advance environmental risk and resilience frameworks. The goal here is to visualize a practical landscape model of CRT and capitals to explore the environmental resiliency UndocuAlly creates and situate it as a model of a resilience structure.

UndocuAlly as a Resilience Structure

As the advocacy for comprehensive immigration reform intensifies and the needs of undocumented students are surfaced in colleges and universities, there is a greater need for integrated ecological and risk and resilience models that can describe the nuance of life as an undocumented person (González-Torres & Artuch-Garde, 2014). Secondly,

there need to be models of promising programs that can create but safe and brave spaces for undocumented students to utilize their resilience and capitals. And lastly, their ambiguous gains cannot be sustained without transformative resistance against nativist racism.

In conclusion this case study: (a) filled a gap in undocumented student literature describing a promising practice that may yield positive outcomes for undocumented students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015); (b) focused on a university program that is uniquely *student-led* and requires participation from faculty, staff, and administrators, thus shifting the education power dynamics, reflective of CRT tenets. This context also served as a counterspace that speaks directly to critical race theory framework and LatCrit, centering the voices of students of color as holders, creators, and disseminators of knowledge--creators of communities that give back (Pérez Huber, 2010; Yosso, 2005); (c) explored capital of student-trainers through their experiences as UndocuAlly Trainers and the impacts of policies at state and national levels in a transformative resistant way. Together these reflect an aspect of the landscape of undocumented student-trainers. In this environment, the UndocuAlly Training Program utilizes the capitals and resilience for student agency. The support for the program - the university and institutional agents' –take responsibility to also facilitate the navigations and negotiations of these individuals for the resources they need to cope with adversity (Ungar, 2013). Such a space has been referred to in this study as a *resilience structure*.

A resilience structure is a new concept developed from this study and is defined as a counterspace that supports undocumented students to navigate, access resources and

engage in transformative resistance to cope with adversity. Resilience structures are an interplay of sociological and ecological concepts formed from an educational setting's *opportunity structures and environmental resilience* (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Engbersen, & van der Leun, 1998; Ungar, 2012). A resilience structure co-creates an environmental space that is constructed to increase resilience by creating resources with and for students to cope with adversity; and go beyond social justice, they take on the advocacy required for *transformative resistance*, exposing, and critiquing the oppressive forces and committing, through tangible actions, to social justice. This study's findings explore how the UndocuAlly Training Program serves as a resilience structure.

The UndocuAlly Training Program is a co-created environmental university space that has shown to resource the student-trainers. Through eco-mapping, capital ranking, interviews, and focus group participation, the program has influenced students-trainers' navigation, social and resistant capitals. The UndocuAlly Training Program also provided a safer space for student-trainers to tell their stories and counter-stories, discuss the impacts of policy in their own lives, to build relationships that resourced them emotionally and intellectually. The student-trainer educate others to learn about, engage with and critique the policies at the campus, state and national levels and learn about the impact on undocumented families. This program also commits to social justice through community building of allies to act and lean into their privileges to advocate for more equitable opportunities for undocumented students and families. Figure 7 illustrates the integration of this UndocuAlly research and resilience structure, within the larger theoretical frameworks of racist nativism and community cultural wealth. This shows an

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idea that the pressure created from exposing racist nativism and challenging racist nativism allows resilience structures and those that participate in them the capacity to transform it.
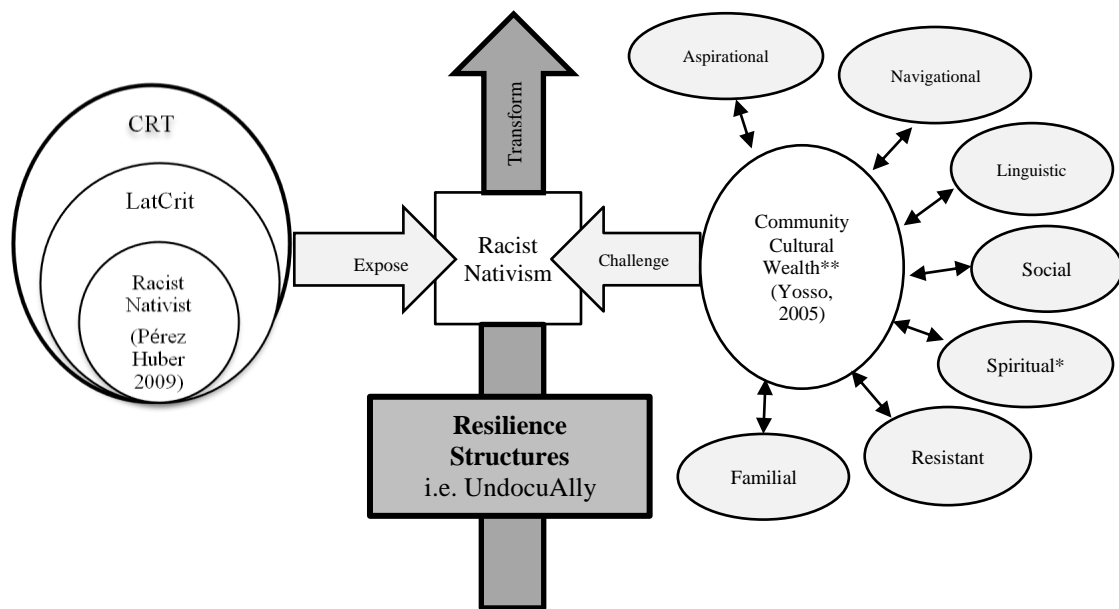
Figure 7.

Concept of resilience structure

Cross over: Future Research

Understanding some of the interrelationships of these findings with critical race theories and resilience frameworks, map new research possibilities that continue to amplify experiences of undocumented people. Future research on ambiguous loss and gains in undocumented communities could provide insights into ecological supports and

resources to mitigate mental and emotional health concerns as well as to bolster protective factors and meaningful community healing practices. Institutional agents, transition programs and student affairs offices shown as personal level assets point to such resources as valued and meaningful for students. Co-creating resilience structures that intentionally build navigational social and resistance capital may increase student and institutional resilience. Lastly, the resilience structures concept could be utilized as a model, with further research, for building promising practices, as an assessment tool for university DREAM Centers, educational programs, student organizations, and activist organizations for accountability to both wellness *and* transformative resistance outcomes.

In a paper on Ambiguous Loss: Risk and Resilience in Latino families, Falicov (2012) shared that "migration represents what Boss (2007) calls a "crossover" in that the families may experience both types of loss" (p. 3). This means that families may have both physical losses from migration, as well as emotional and psychological losses. For students in liminal statuses, this may be further compounded and may deeply drain their hard-won cultural capital. Many educational settings underutilize the capital undocumented students bring with them (Bjorklund, 2018). Educational settings and universities also need to understand and apply another type of "crossover", away from repeating histories of oppression and violence to a landscape of environmental resilience and transformative resistance. This study supports the creation of promising practices and spaces for minoritized students and institutional agents to access culturally relevant and meaningful resources building together the resilience to cope with adversity *outside* the institution rather than fighting within it.

The ambiguous gains of undocumented students may not be sustainable without the protective factors of resilience structures, as they support the hard-won, ambiguous gains of life in a liminal status. As a former UndocuAlly student-trainer and working graduate, Camilla concluded:

> I think that is what we do with these trainings, I think that that is the purpose of them. To show that it is possible to get through. That you can make it through [college] with a supportive group of people that help. We look for that reflection in hardship and hope and strive to come out and - if not fully assembled - try to, the best we can.

Appendix A

IRB Approval 1395528-1

Office of Research Development, Integrity, and Assurance Research Hall, 4400 University Drive, MS 6D5, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx; Fax: xxx-xxx-xxxx

DATE: May 16, 2019

TO: Kimberly Sheridan, PhD

FROM: George Mason University IRB Project Title: [1395528-1] UNDOCUALLY TRAINERS' RISK, RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE: A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED APPROVAL DATE: May 16, 2019

EXPIRATION DATE: May 15, 2020

REVIEW TYPE: Full Committee Review Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The George Mason University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This submission has received Full Committee Review based on applicable federal regulations. Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form unless the IRB has waived the requirement for a signature on the consent form or has waived the requirement for a consent process. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document. Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure. All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the IRB office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed (if applicable). All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB. The anniversary date of this study is May 15, 2020. This project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. You may not collect

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data beyond this date without prior IRB approval. - 2 - Generated on IRBNet A continuing review form must be completed and submitted to the IRB at least 30 days prior to the anniversary date or upon completion of this project. Prior to the anniversary date, IRBNet will send you a reminder regarding continuing review procedures. Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of five years, or as described in your submission, after the completion of the project. Please note that department or other approvals may be required to conduct your research in addition to IRB approval. If you have any questions, please contact Kim Paul at (703) 993-4208 or kpaul4@gmu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee. GMU IRB Standard Operating Procedures can be found here: https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/ human-or-animal-subjects/human-subjects/human-subjects-sops/

Kimberly Sheridan
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Recruitment Letter

UNDOCUALLY TRAINERS' RISK, RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE: A

DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

Dear Past and Present UndocuAlly Trainers,

As some of you may know, in addition to my work responsibilities in [OFFICE] and

[STUDENT ORGANIZATION], I am also a Mason doctoral student in Educational

Psychology. I am excited to report that I am starting my dissertation study this semester.

Much of my research has been to explore how students with liminal statuses

(undocumented, DACA, between visas, etc.) navigate higher education. I am

(speaking/emailing) to you today to ask for your individual participation in my

dissertation study on your UndocuAlly Training experiences. I would like to interview

about 8-12 past and present trainers no matter your immigration status (citizen to

undocumented). Your identity and identifying details will be protected and you get to

make up your own pseudonym (name).

I will conduct all the interviews in person, myself, at a location and time that is ideal for

you. The study involves a demographic questionnaire (30 minutes), an individual in-

person interview (approximately 1 hour1.5 hours) and an optional focus group (1-2

hours) for a total time of 1.5 to 4 hours. Your participation in this study may help others to (1) better humanize and understand the diversity of experiences of [STUDENT ORGANIZATION] and Allies in college, as "there is no one story of a Dreamer" (2) may help improve promising practices for serving undocumented students in the future, and (3) may aid in advocating for education and training resources for such programs (4) may help build foundation for emerging theories specific to undocumented students. For ethical reasons and to ease any potential awkwardness, your decision to participate or not participate in this study and sharing the range of your positive and negative experiences will not have any influence on past, present or future support from me, the office, or the university, for example: advising, access to personal or emotional support, scholarships, recommendations, or student organization support.

I recognize my dual roles and long-term relationship with you add weight to the study but I feel the benefit of trust and good intentions for the community will increase the quality of participation and minimize risks to you.

The benefits to participation include the opportunity to share your own story as a trainer and reflect on your experiences during UndocuAlly preparation and workshops. Participants in prior interviews experienced the space and safety to express their personal story as having a cathartic effect. If you are interested in participating, please call or email me. If you are interested, but have any questions or hesitation regarding your rights

as a study participant, time or scheduling, please let me know directly so I can work hard

to resolve any of your concerns.

Thank you for considering,

Jennifer A. Crewalk Doctoral Candidate –Educational Psychology

[email]

[phone number]

IRB #1395528

<center>**Participant Forms**</center>

Demographic Questionnaire
Your chosen pseudonym: Confidentiality
Race/Ethnicity: Open as Latino is often conflated with Race/ Ethnicity is more of marker for identity versus Race and undocumented students are of many races and ethnicities.
Gender Identity: To note the spectrum of gender identity
Current Status: VISA TPS   Undocumented DACAmented Resident U.S.A. Citizen Between/Out of Status Other To note spectrum and fluctuation of immigration statuses
Place you were born:
If you work, how many hours per week on average:
Age Now: Date of Birth:
License? Yes/Sometimes/No   Access to a Car?   Yes/Sometimes/No
To note fluctuations in license and car privileges
Year in College:
In college FT/PT:
To note variability
List organizations you belong/ed to in university:
To note involvement which is related to retention
List e-board positions (if applicable):
To note involvement which is related to retention
Length serving as an UndocuAlly Trainer:
Criteria of inclusion to participate in study
Cumulative GPA:
High GPAs correlated with retention, resiliency, involvement and resistance
List Scholarships or Tuition Assistance:
Financial Support
How much do you/did you pay for tuition and expenses?
Financial Burden
Major, Minor
Curious to see across participants if there were common interests
Why did you choose this?
Choice in study
List family members (2 brothers, father, 1 sister, two cousins) currently living with you (or lived with you during your university time). Family size in relation to income.
With an "X" describe your family's income as ___surviving ___thriving
Perception relative to actual income
Family income per year (if known):
To describe participates range of family incomes
If working, Guardian/Parent/Household Occupations:
To note variability in jobs

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Eco-mapping: With arrows, please share your perceived supports and pressures at the personal, campus and state/national levels. Support may be general (family, friends, professor) or specific ("Tia Bani"; "my bff Katia", "Ms. Flores from the Financial Aid Office", "DACA", etc.). Eco mapping participants supports and pressures to map onto Suárez- Orozco's (2015) ecological map of assets and challenges.

National/State Level   Campus Level   Personal Level
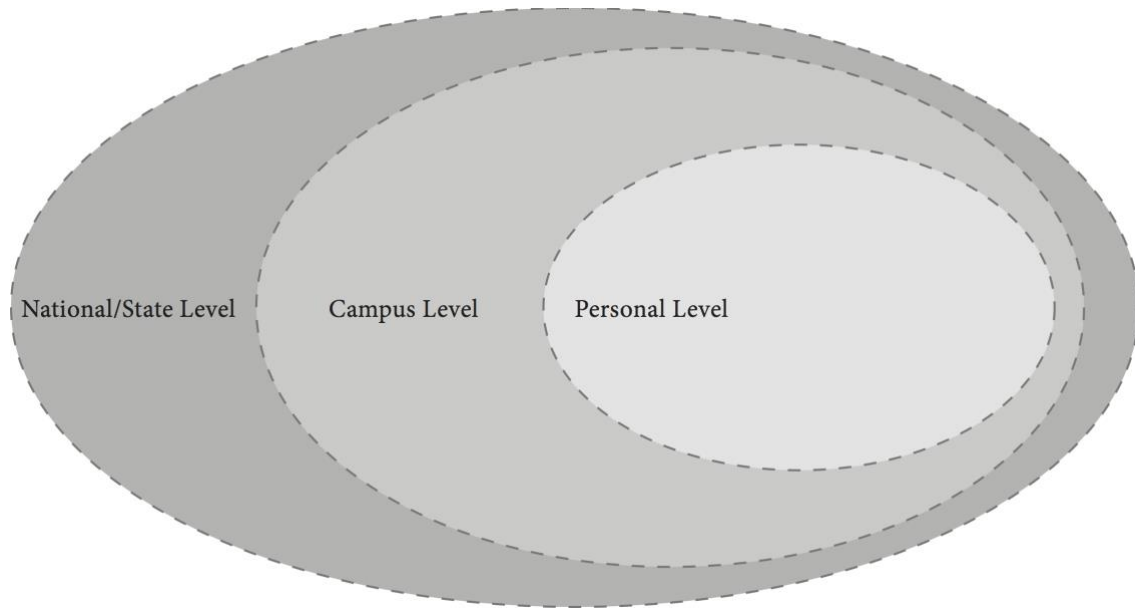
Semi- Structured Interview Questions

(Audio record verbal consent if authorized in consent form)

1. Tell me about you and your involvement here in college within student registered organization and community work. Why do/did you choose to be involved?

2. How long have you been an UndocuAlly Trainer? Share what led you to become an UndocuAlly Trainer.

3. What do you think are the assets (supports) and challenges (pressures) of being an UndocuAlly Trainer?

4. What is the importance (if any) of the UndocuAlly Training Program?

5. The next question is about your immigration status. On this timeline, show how your status has changed (if at all) over your time in the U.S.A?

   VISA   Undocumented   DACAmented   TPS   *   Resident   Citizen

6. Share with me the circumstances of the timeline above in your own words.

7. Who do you trust with this information about yourself? Why?

8. What do you look for in someone (student/ faculty) who is trustworthy?

9. What are/were "safer/braver spaces" for you, spaces where you can be more of your whole self? Has this changed for you over your time here? How could we create more safer/braver spaces?

10. What challenges have you faced at the personal, campus, and state/national levels? Which ones most relate to your immigration identity? Which ones relate to aspects of any of your identities (gender, income, first gen., orientation, language, ethnicity, etc.)

11. What assets have you noticed personally, campus, state/national levels? Which

ones most relate to your immigration identity? Which ones relate to other aspects of your identities (gender, income, first gen., orientation, language, ethnicity, etc.)

12. Looking within all areas of your life (looking at circles of support drawing), where do you find the most support personally, campus, state or nationally?

13. Are there any areas of your life that you have found to be pressured in positive or negative ways? Please describe.

14. Do you consider yourself to be an activist, advocate, and ally for Undocumented students or not? Why? [I am curious about how you came to be an activist/advocate. Describe a what this means to you].

Community of cultural wealth

The following are forms of cultural capital. Please read thoroughly and ask me any questions for clarification. Next, mark the cultural capitals that you most experienced as an UndocuAlly Trainer (**U**) or in life (**L**). Make an X or leave bank if not at all. Next, rank in order of importance to you. [Researcher will note participants verbal questions and/or rationale for choices in audio recording]

1. Aspirational capital: The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite real and perceived barriers.

2. Linguistic capital: Skills learned through more than one language and through visual art, music, and poetry.

3. Familial capital: Forms of knowledge developed through kin relations and hold oneself in a space of community knowing, history, and memory.

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4. Social capital: The connections to people and community knowing of resources that help students navigate through social institutions.

5. Navigational capital: The set of knowledge and skills developed moving through barriers through the support of social networks.

6. Resistant capital: "Guided by a motivation to change and transform oppressive institutions and structures, this cultivates skills and attitudes to challenge inequities".

7. Spiritual capital (added by Pérez Huber, 2009): A set of resources and skills rooted in a spiritual connection to a greater reality than oneself and can provide a sense of hope and faith (p. 721).

15. This concludes my prepared questions. Do you have any questions for me?

16. What do you think is the next best question to ask participants in this study? Why?

17. Thank you for your participation in this study. I will transcribe this interview and make some preliminary coding of themes [Member Checking]. Would you like me to share this with you to make sure I interpreted your interview correctly?

18. If applicable, would you also like to be contacted to participate in a focus group on this topic with other UndocuAlly trainers? (If yes, please share your preferred date, time and location).

Protocol coding (a priori) and focused coding for data analysis
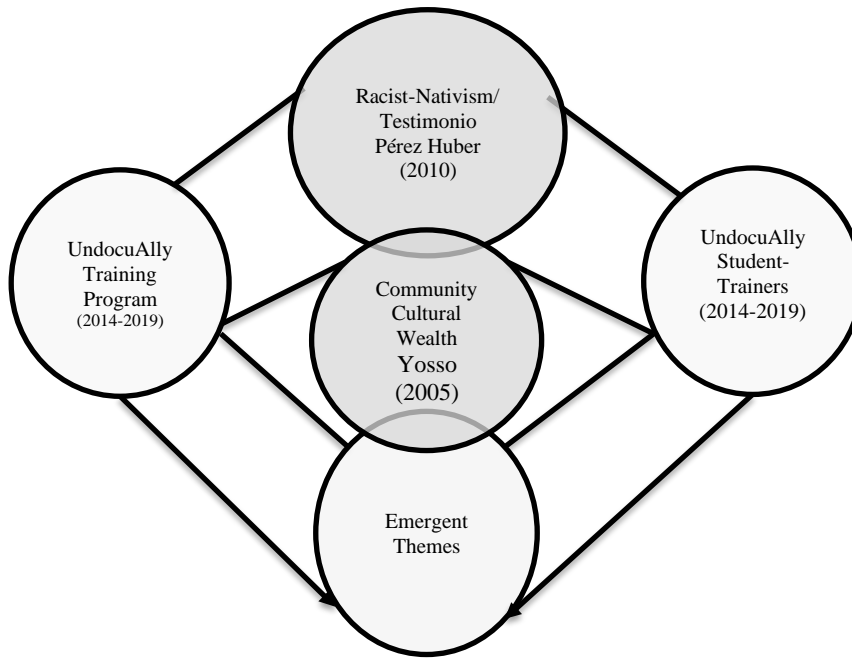
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Biography

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