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DePaul University
College of Education

JOVENES INDOCUMENTADOS

**EXPLORING THE EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF UNDOCUMENTED, LATINO
STUDENTS IN THE U.S.A.**

A Thesis in
Social and Cultural Foundations in Education

by

Katherine Moone

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

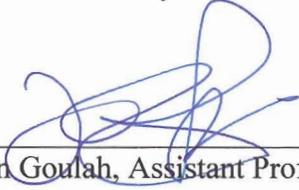
November 2010

The Thesis of Katherine Moone, in the Masters of Arts Program in Social and Cultural Foundations at DePaul University's School of Education, is hereby approved.



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Abstract

With 1.8 million undocumented students under the age of 18 living in the shadows in the United States, it is indisputably clear that teachers, administrators, and policy makers must pay attention to their educational needs and aspirations. As the undocumented population disperses across more states in the U.S., it is imperative that people who work with undocumented students know their stories, issues, complexities, and difficulties.

This ethnographic case study follows two students who are in their first and second years of community college. Through extensive interviews, the students share who they are, issues of power, concerns for the future, and ideas of agency and revolution. Looking through a theoretical framework based on ideas of James Gee and Paulo Freire, the two students' educational aspirations, contextualized through their experiences as undocumented students, are explored.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

It is hard being a youth. It is even harder being a youth in an urban, low-income area. It is hard attending a public school with one guidance counselor who works half a day at two schools with 3,000 students each. It is hard being a youth whose parents do not understand the public school system because they do not speak English and grew up in a different country. It is hard getting a job when people judge character based on an accent and the color of skin. It is even harder being an undocumented youth.¹

In addition to the typical pubescent complexities, many youth are facing situations similar to the one described above. With so many daunting factors, what keeps undocumented youth motivated academically? According to current policies, undocumented youth in only ten states throughout the nation can pay in-state tuition to attend a public university in their corresponding state if they meet the qualifications of the university. But what happens to the youth in the other forty states who either are denied entrance due to their legal status or are denied in-state tuition and who do not qualify for financial aid to cover the astronomically high out-of-state tuition costs? And for those students who do manage to attend college, what happens to them after graduation? Current policies dictate that without a social security number, undocumented youth cannot be hired. Thus, even for the undocumented youth who succeed in obtaining a college degree, career options are extremely limited.

¹ In this paper I have chosen to use the term undocumented. However, the Pew Hispanic Center (Passel, 2006) uses the terms 'unauthorized' and 'undocumented' interchangeably. Passel states, "This report uses the term 'unauthorized migrant' to mean a person who *resides* in the United States but who is *not* a U.S. citizen, has *not* been admitted for permanent residence, and is *not* in a set of specific authorized temporary statuses permitting longer-term residence and work" (p.2, emphasis in original). Almost all undocumented migrants fall into two categories: those who overstayed their visas or those classified by the government as "entries without inspection," or EWIs. Visa overstayers generally represent between 25 to 40 percent of the undocumented population (Passel, 2006).

How do these issues frame undocumented students' expectations and perspectives about education and their futures? Undocumented students comprise about 16 percent of the total undocumented population, with the number standing close to 1.8 million under the age of eighteen year old (Passel, 2006). These children are typical of all children: some are highly motivated, some are extremely academically inclined, and some are the class clowns. With limited options, what will happen to these 1.8 million youth when they grow up? This is a significant portion of our next generation, the future of the United States. In the past, undocumented migrants settled primarily in ten states, but the numbers of undocumented immigrants are dispersing throughout the United States (Passel, 2005). The percentage of undocumented immigrants entering the U.S. has steadily increased since 1991, and in recent years, the absolute number of immigrants included more undocumented than documented (Passel and Suro, 2005).

For this research, I have chosen to explore the educational aspirations of undocumented, Latino students, specifically contextualized within their life experiences as undocumented immigrants. This research documenting their stories is glaringly important. There are growing numbers of undocumented students graduating from or nearing the age of graduation from high school. In 17 new settlement states² in the U.S., 40 percent of the foreign-born population is undocumented (Passel, 2005). The social implications of these facts beg us to consider that soon every state, along with the nation at large, will be working with greater numbers of undocumented students. I was

² The term "settlement state" refers to the U.S. state where the foreign born or undocumented population decides to settle. In 1990, 45 percent of the undocumented population, or 1.6 million people, lived in California. By 2004, only 24 percent lived in California (although the actual number of undocumented immigrants in California had increased). The six large settlement states of the 1990s were Texas, California, Illinois, Florida, New York, and New Jersey. A "new" settlement state is a state outside of these six in which the undocumented population previously did not comprise a large population.

interested in exploring how undocumented students' aspirations and goals, particularly in relation to education, changed or remained the same as the students became more cognizant of the educational implications of their undocumented status. I wished to explore how being undocumented in the country where these students have grown up contributes to their notion of what and where home is. I wanted to discover their understanding of themselves in society and how that understanding informs their attitudes and actions towards their studies, their teachers, and their friends. Working with the complex issues that undocumented students bring to the table is already a reality for a large number of schools in the United States, and until the nation decides to move forward with immigration reform, it will become a reality for an increasing number of teachers and schools. It is imperative for all stakeholders to realize that undocumented students' presence in schools and their subsequent experiences will transform the individual students, the classroom dynamics, the schools, and the U.S. school system at large.

By not bringing this relevant topic to life, educators are complicit in the silence of the discourse regarding the educational implications of one's undocumented status. In my review of literature (Chapter 2), I will show there are ample statistics and information regarding immigrant and Latino students, statistics and information about socioeconomic disparities in public education, and facts about immigration and its waves in the United States. There is a plethora of information about immigration policy and bills that are currently pending. There is a good deal of information in the literature about immigrant students and their educational aspirations, and in particular, there is much research about Latino students' motivations and aspirations. There is, however, a dearth in the literature

related to how undocumented students' experiences inform their educational aspirations and decisions and the subsequent implications for the school system and the nation.

In this study, I have undertaken an interview-based ethnographic case study through a critical research methodology, discussed in detail in Chapter 4. I have gathered data through in-depth, qualitative interviews with two undocumented, Latino students, one who was completing high school during our first few interviews, and one who was attending college. I chose to work with these students because they represent the range of age of youth who are considering attending or who are currently attending college. Because of the sensitive nature of the study, I chose to work with students with whom I held a work-related relationship. At the time of the study, both students were participating in at least one of Reach High's³ after-school, tutoring, or college-readiness programs. The goal of my study was to understand how my informants construct and make sense of their educational goals, contextualized within their knowledge, understanding, and experiences as undocumented youth in a large city in the United States.

In my research, several major themes arose. Issues of power, a concern for the future, and discussions of personal agency and revolution came to the forefront. In this paper I have discussed how these students identify themselves and where they are now. I also have presented their conflicts between being practical and following their dreams. I have documented their sense of how being undocumented disallows them from working and attending school in a manner that corresponds with their preferred pathway of mobility. Through this research, it has been my intention to hear my participants' voices and to be a catalyst of change. As educators, we must become more aware of the

³ Not the actual name. All personal and institutional names are pseudonyms.

complexities that undocumented students bring into our classrooms. In addition to becoming aware, we must *create change*—on a personal level, in the classroom, in the school, on an administrative level, and on a national level in policy and practice.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Latinos in the U.S.

No one can deny that the issue of immigration in the United States is a contentious one right now. Despite the fact that the U.S. identifies itself as being a nation of immigrants, the question of *who is welcome* is as old as our founding fathers.

Immigrants do and have come to the U.S. in a variety of ways. Those who are welcome come to the United States through legally constructed pathways, while those who are not welcome find other means to enter. Often, children come, too. Immigrants without proper U.S. documentation are called undocumented immigrants. The current estimated number of undocumented immigrants in the United States is just over 11 million (Passel, 2006). The number of Latinos in the United States has been increasing for years. We hear about the increases all the time: more Latinos in schools, in college, in the job force, in professions, in lines at the polls; the list goes on. And rightly so: between 2004 and 2005, Latinos accounted for 49 percent of the nation's population growth (Hardy, 2007).

Historical context and legislation of undocumented immigrants.

The interest in policies regarding immigration and undocumented students has increased with the growing numbers of students coming from Latin America, most commonly Mexico. Currently, nearly 60 percent of all undocumented immigrants are Mexican (Passel, 2005). Policies in both the U.S. and Mexico indubitably hold great responsibility for this high percentage. Unarguably, there are numerous push-pull factors, but for the sake of brevity and focus, this paper will focus on (greatly abridged) U.S. policies and the U.S.'s role only.

One of the first United States immigration policies that directly targeted Mexico was the *bracero* program, enacted in 1942. A mobilization of industry during World War II created agricultural labor shortages, so the U.S. turned to Mexico for help in their agriculture sector. Once the war ended, native U.S. workers could have returned to the fields and performed the work. However, after years of agricultural labor having been almost completely operated by Mexicans, socially, the work had become stigmatized as “foreign” and thus unacceptable to U.S. citizens. The U.S. labor market had, in effect, created a structural demand for immigrant workers. Thus, the *bracero* program continued through 1964 (Bohning, 1972 and Piore, 1979 as cited in Massey et al, 2003). Inevitably, consequences of a 22 year build-up of labor were bound to arise.

One consequence was the generation of social capital in hundreds of Mexican communities in the U.S. *Braceros* had become familiar with U.S. employment practices, ways of life, and speaking English. They also developed social circles of friends and relatives within the communities where they lived and worked. Therefore, some costs and risks of migrating to the U.S. from Mexico lessened and benefits rose (Massey et al, 2003).

A second consequence involved an increased demand for visas. Simultaneously, ideological undertones in the U.S. brought attention to immigration policy. During the 1960s, a powerful civil rights movement in the U.S. was in full swing, and new ideological undertones—which indisputably inform policy as greatly as economic or other needs—translated into a demand for immigration policies to be amended. The National Origins Act, in place since 1924, had strict quotas on immigrants and mandated that new arrivals from any country could not exceed three percent of the people from that

country who currently lived in the U.S. at that time. Its purpose was to limit arrivals with the objective of “preserving the character of the U.S. as a predominantly Anglo-Saxon, Protestant community” (Zolbert, 1999, p.73, as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2008). The Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 ended the National Origins Act, and Congress ensuingly passed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, creating a new visa allocation system for the Eastern Hemisphere. Each country from this region was granted up to 20,000 visas annually. However, the Western Hemisphere—which included Mexico—was granted an overall quota of only 120,000 visas (Massey et al, 2003). This number of visas for the Western Hemisphere was extremely inadequate due to the previous 22 years of U.S. agricultural growers’ dependence on Mexican labor through the *bracero* program.

The combination of increased social capital and the historic and systematic recruitment of Mexican labor led to a backlog of visa applications during this time (Bean et al, 1997). In 1977, in response to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service’s (now the Department of Homeland Security or DHS) recognition that most of the 120,000 visas allocated for the Western Hemisphere were going to Cuban refugees, the Silva program added an additional 145,000 visas solely for Mexicans. By this point, legal Mexican migration to the U.S. had fallen by 40 percent. In 1978, Congress eliminated the hemispheric ceilings completely, and a single capacity of 290,000 visas worldwide was created in 1978, and then reduced to 270,000 in 1980. This sharp decrease in accessibility of legal visas juxtaposed the steadily increasing numbers of social capital networks and the Mexican labor systems built into the U.S. agricultural system. The foreseeable outcome: an explosion of undocumented immigration (Massey et al, 2003).

Between 1965 and 1986, close to 28 million undocumented Mexicans entered the U.S, with 23.4 million returning to Mexico, yielding an increase of 4.6 million permanent undocumented Mexican laborers (Massey and Singer, 1995 as cited in Massey et al., 2003). As evidenced, the Mexican migration movement was primarily circular. In 1986, the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) ushered in a new era of Mexico/U.S. migration which granted amnesty and legalization for undocumented migrants. This was the first U.S. policy addressing the U.S.'s demand for immigrants while also appeasing those wanting greater (albeit arguably symbolic) border protection (Bean et al, 1997). An unintended result of IRCA was the even more expanded social capital networks of the newly legalized Mexican population in the U.S. The 2.3 million Mexicans who were legalized under IRCA had relations in Mexico, and the probability that their relatives would now cross the border increased significantly.

Since 1986, the U.S. has initiated a determined effort to restrict the Mexican labor market and tighten border enforcement. Simultaneously, the U.S. attempts to integrate most other markets through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). These dual, competing policies are contradictory, insisting on separation while promoting integration (Massey et al., 2003). Andreas (2000, p.11, emphasis in original as cited in Massey et al., 2003, p.103) explains the reasoning behind tightened border enforcement:

The popularity of the border as a political stage is based as much on the *expressive role* of law enforcement (reaffirming moral boundaries) as it is on the *instrumental goal* of law enforcement (effective defense of physical boundaries)...Border control efforts are not only *actions* (a means to a stated instrumental end) but also *gestures* that communicate meaning. Even as the enforcement performance has failed to deter illegal border crossings significantly, it has nevertheless succeeded in reaffirming the importance of the border.

Through its border enforcement policies, the U.S. reaffirms its expressive role that neither undocumented people nor Mexicans are welcome. Concurrently, the U.S. reaffirms its commitment to globalization and cooperation with Mexico through NAFTA. The U.S. is thus able to have and express its own most desirable and beneficial relationship with Mexico: authorized goods, unauthorized people.

With both legal and unauthorized immigration on the rise once again, Congress passed the 1990 Immigration Act focusing more strongly on border control, reducing the number of legal immigrants permitted annually, and in 1996, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (Massey et al, 2003). As of March 2004, about two thirds of undocumented immigrants in the United States had arrived in the U.S. within just the past 10 years. Currently, nearly 60 percent of the 11 million undocumented immigrants are Mexican (Passel, 2005).

Legislative and contemporary interpretations of immigration policies with regards to the undocumented in education.

In spite of the fact that U.S. citizens in general have taken pride in calling their country a nation of immigrants, Kumaravadivelu (2008) argues that U.S. society at large has not fully believed that immigrants become integrated into society, and many have long been apprehensive about immigrants' ability and willingness to adopt the cultural values of mainstream U.S.A. This apprehension is termed nativism. Nativistic antipathy was expressed towards German and Irish immigrants in the eighteenth century, towards southern and eastern European immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and towards Latin American, African, and Asian immigrants in the late twentieth century to the present. The immigration policies since the 1960s have allowed new types of immigrants to come to the U.S., and they have quickly diversified the U.S.

ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and religiously. Kumaravadivelu (2008) argues that these differences have inspired a renewed nativism in the U.S., which plays a significant role in the current legislation and interest in this newer wave of immigrants.

Consistent with Kumaravadivelu's (2008) perspective of nativistic antipathy towards Latinos, Annand (2008) sees the increasingly common view of criminalizing immigration as a factor in the increased interest in policy regarding the undocumented. This "crimmigration" has caused much of the public to see undocumented immigrants as "dangerous illegals" or criminals who do not deserve to be in the U.S. One such very vocal voice spewing anti-immigration rhetoric is Kobach (2005), who sees the link between immigration and criminality as unmistakably entwined. He states, "The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 underscored for all Americans the link between immigration law enforcement and terrorism" (p.179). Views such as his encourage the idea that all undocumented immigrants are criminals and must be treated accordingly. This sentiment is echoed by the Coalition for Immigration Reform, a group that advocates for stricter immigration laws (Johnston, 2000, p.6). "Illegal aliens are criminals. They remain in this country illegally. Here we are harboring criminals."

Others, including the U.S. Supreme Court, view the situation of undocumented *children* differently. Beginning in 1982, and especially since 1996, there has been a relatively large amount of litigation and legislation on this issue (Olivas, 2008). In 1982, in *Phyller v. Doe*, the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated a Texas law which barred undocumented students from attending public school. The Court decided that education, while not a fundamental right in the U.S., is a means to provide tools for "maintaining the fabric of our society" (Annand, 2008, p.691). The Court invalidated the Texas statute on

the grounds that the statute imposed “a lifetime of hardship on a discrete class of children not accountable for their disabling status.” The Court continued further saying that while undocumented adult immigrants may intentionally enter the country in violation of the law and should, therefore, face the consequences imposed by the law, undocumented children were not considered to be “comparably situated.” The Court noted, "By denying these children a basic education, we deny them the ability to live within the structure of our civic institutions, and foreclose any realistic possibility that they will contribute in even the smallest way to the progress of our Nation" (p.692). This case, however, did not explicitly address post-secondary education (Annand, 2008). As Olivas (2008) traces the federal rules put in place for undocumented students since *Phyller v. Doe*, he asks the unresolved question of what will happen to these estimated 1.8 million (Passel, 2006) students when they graduate from high school and want to attend college.

Consistent with the growing numbers of Mexican and other Latino immigrants, greater percentages of Latinos than ever before are entering and graduating from college (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008), but the numbers are still small. While *Phyller v. Doe* affirmed that all students, regardless of status, are guaranteed the right to a K-12 education (Olivas, 2008), current policies in the U.S. give the states the ability to decide whether or not undocumented students can be admitted into state-run, post-secondary institutions. Only seven percent of college freshmen are Latino, even though they make up 17 percent of the 18-year old population (Hardy, 2007). And of the numbers who enter college, less than half complete college within six years, compared to 60 percent of the white population.

One setback for undocumented students who aspire to enroll in college is the cost of tuition. Currently, only 10⁴ of 50 states have laws allowing undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at public universities (National Immigration Law Center, 2010). Six additional states have proposed legislation that would grant in-state tuition to undocumented students (Connecticut, Missouri, North Carolina, New Jersey, Oregon, and Rhode Island) (Jobs for the Future, 2007). However, legislative decisions have not all been as hopeful for college-aspiring, undocumented students. For example, Oklahoma previously offered in-state tuition to undocumented students, but the state has repealed its decision (Hebel, 2007). In Kansas, a group challenged Kansas' current law granting in-state tuition, but a federal court dismissed the case (Joaquin, 2005), and in Utah there have been several attempts to repeal its existing in-state tuition statues (Robinson, 2007). Massachusetts and Maryland have had pro-immigrant bills vetoed by their governors, and Wyoming has enacted a bill that limits state scholarships to legal permanent residents and citizens (Olivas, 2007). Six states, Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, North Carolina, Utah, and Virginia, have tried to pass legislation that would restrict undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition (Robinson, 2007). Finally, college presidents in Georgia are granted the ability to offer waivers for in-state tuition for up to two percent of their freshmen enrollment, but the state's Board of Regents has advised them not to grant these waivers to students who are undocumented (Russell, 2007). Clearly, this issue of whether or not to grant in-state tuition to undocumented students is a contentious and confusing one.

⁴ The states currently offering in-state tuition at their post-secondary institutions are California, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin (National Immigration Law Center, 2010).

Previous to the any state's granting of in-state tuition to undocumented students, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996, prohibiting undocumented immigrants from accessing postsecondary benefits *unless* U.S. citizens or nationals are also eligible for the same benefits. In this way, undocumented students are not privileged with benefits that citizens cannot access. Section 505 states:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible on the basis of residence within a state for any post-secondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such benefit (in no less amount, duration or scope) without regard to whether the citizen or national is such a resident. (Annand, 2008)

In response to a backlash of states worried about losing their federal funding, many states have interpreted this law to mean that offering in-state tuition to undocumented students, signifies unfair privileging of undocumented students over documented residents and citizens; undocumented students would be given financial resources from the state that could (and should) otherwise go to documented students. Thus, the majority of states charge out-of-state tuition to undocumented students because they are deemed to not qualify as in-state residents, even if they have lived within one state in the U.S. for the majority of their lives. The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), a nonprofit group that seeks stronger enforcement of immigration laws, advocates this position (Johnston, 2000). Jack Martin, FAIR project director, states, "There are presumably other bright students who would believe the benefit should not be going to that illegal alien. It becomes a question of who's not getting the benefit" (Johnston, 2000, p.3).

The federal government has rejected the position that the IIRIRA prevents states from extended in-state tuition to undocumented students. In July of 2008, U.S.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Sheriff Jim Pendergraph (2008) wrote:

Please note that admission to public post-secondary educational institutions is not one of the benefits regulated by the [IIRIRA] and is not a public benefit under the [Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA)]. In this respect, Section 411 of PRWORA . . . addresses benefits 'for which payments or assistance are provided' . . . such as monetary assistance for post-secondary education. (Pendergraph, 2008, p.1, emphasis in original)

He then states that, thus, individual states have the ability to decide for themselves whether or not and how to *admit* undocumented students into their post-secondary institutions. He also clarifies that, along with this ruling, states have the ability to ban undocumented students from enrolling, but then they must use federal immigration standards to identify which applicants are, indeed, undocumented.

In spite of IIRIRA, Pendergraph's clarification, and the guaranteed right to a K-12 education, undocumented students who enroll in and graduate from college still do not have any way of legally and gainfully obtaining employment once they have received their degree. In response to this predicament, pro-immigrant legislators introduced the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act in the U.S. Senate⁵. If passed into law, the DREAM Act would permit a student to apply for conditional status once he or she has graduated from high school, authorizing up to six years of legal residence. During the six year period, the student would be required to graduate from a two-year college, complete at least two years towards a bachelor's degree, or serve in the U.S. military for at least two years. Permanent residence would be granted at the end of

⁵ The Senate's DREAM Act counterpart in the House of Representatives is called the American Dream Act. The text of the American Dream Act reads similarly to that of the DREAM Act (U.S. Library of Congress, 2010).

the six year period if the student has fulfilled these requirements and has continued to maintain good moral character (National Immigration Law Center, 2007). Since November 2005, the DREAM Act has been introduced in both the House and the Senate at various times. Those opposed to the DREAM Act argue that this type of pathway to legalization would only encourage further undocumented immigration. Others believe that the DREAM Act should be enacted as part of a comprehensive immigration reform bill. It was re-introduced in the House of Representatives in October 2008, only to fall short by 8 votes to move forward from its tabled status. It was most recently reintroduced in both chambers on March 26, 2009 and referred to committees in both parts of Congress (U.S. Library of Congress, 2009).

Economic Impact of Educating Undocumented Students

The Migration Policy Institute estimates that the DREAM Act would make upwards of 360,000 undocumented high school graduates ages 18-24 eligible for conditional legal status. If one includes current and former students older than 24 years old who would be enticed by the DREAM Act to attend post-secondary schooling and/or earn their GED, then the DREAM Act could potentially put more than one million high school graduates on a pathway to legal status (Hermes, 2008). There are approximately 25,000 undocumented students currently enrolled in public universities, 200 enrolled in private institutions, and an additional 50,000-75,000 qualified students who want to attend college but are discouraged for financial and immigration related reasons (Olivas, 2007, as cited in Pham, 2008). Why would this large number of potentially college bound and college educated students be of any benefit to the U.S.? DREAM Act advocates argue that in order to improve our nation's workforce and to become

competitive, we should be looking at the potential workforce we already have at our fingertips (Hermes, 2008). Rather than looking for skilled workers abroad, we would have skilled, legal workers here in the United States. Senator Durbin (D-IL) has stated,

Do not come back to me and tell me that we need a bigger labor pool and more talent in America. Do not tell me you need H2-B and H2-A [visas] and all of the rest of them if you are going to turn away these children, if you are going to say: America doesn't need you; go about your business; find someplace in the world. (Hermes, 2008, p.2)

Annand (2008) also argues in favor of undocumented students' need for access to higher education both for personal sake and for the ensuing beneficial effect it would have on the United States. She asks, "Why suffocate a vibrant, talented, motivated group in society who will be an integral part of the country's future?" (p.709). She argues that by supporting the educational and professional achievements of undocumented students, the country can only benefit. Johnston (2000) agrees, explaining that some educators are beginning to question the wisdom of squandering undocumented students' talent, particularly at a time when concern about the continuing poor achievement among Hispanic and other non-white students is high, and when colleges and universities are scrambling to attract qualified students from diverse backgrounds.

Of course, there is work for undocumented students without a college degree—not a professional occupation, but definitely work. As an example, we can look to what happened in Arkansas between 2000 and 2005. During these years Arkansas had the fastest-growing Hispanic population, both native and foreign-born, of any state. Sixty percent of immigrants in Arizona are between the ages of 20 to 45. Their lack of higher education (or their ability to continue their education) keeps them from other jobs; (*The Economist*, 2007) only 10 percent of the entire undocumented population is employed in

management, business, or professional occupations (Passel, 2005). According to a Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation report, however, this statistic is not bad for the economy. A recent report estimates that without immigrant labor, Arkansas's manufacturing industry would have \$1.4 billion less revenue (*The Economist*, 2007). Everything considered, low-wage, unskilled labor opportunities are definitely available to our primarily U.S.-educated, undocumented students.

Another argument is that offering higher-educational opportunities to undocumented youth is not in the U.S.'s best interest. Kobach (2005) believes there are two flaws in the argument that educating undocumented youth through college would be good for the economy. Firstly, according to the law, undocumented students can be removed from the U.S. at any time. They have no legal recourse to stay in the United States. Secondly, and consequently, what professional business or organization will hire undocumented college graduates without social security numbers? Few businesses are willing to break the law in order to employ a college-educated undocumented worker. (Of course, the passage of the DREAM Act would nullify both of these arguments.) Furthermore, Kobach argues against the DREAM Act on the premise that it essentially rewards bad behavior. He states that undocumented children are "illegal" even if they did not make the decision to come to the United States on their own. Thus, he asks, why should U.S. taxpayers give benefits to undocumented students when there are plenty of other U.S. students who could benefit from funding and who are entitled to it as U.S. citizens?

Schooling and Education

In addition to legislative difficulties, immigrant children often encounter social and cultural difficulties, regardless of legal status. Social institutions can greatly influence their adopted roles of participation and senses of inclusion in the U.S. Portes and Rumbaut (2006) argue that immigrants encounter one of three modes of incorporation in the receiving country (in this case, the U.S.): the availability of official resettlement assistance programs, legal entry without additional assistance, or high levels of racial prejudice combined with governmental hostility. Portes and Rumbaut (2006) also argue that children of immigrants face three major challenges to educational attainment and career success: racial discrimination, diversification of the job market and its growing inequality, and the presence of an alternative lifestyle of drug use and street gangs within cities. Because the mode of incorporation for Latino youth often involves high levels of racial prejudice and government hostility, they are susceptible to join the most disadvantaged classes of society. Social capital, grounded intact family and community networks, and school based social networks provide important resources in confronting these obstacles (Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

Adaptation patterns.

Numerous immigrants come to the United States with the hope to improve their children's opportunities in life; many see education as the means to attaining success. Numerous studies have focused on the academic aspirations of immigrants, and in light of the increasing numbers of Latino immigrants in the U.S., recent scholarship has focused on Latinos, specifically. With regards to schooling, researchers studying immigrant adaptation have identified three major patterns (Rivas-Drake and Mooney,

2008). The first is how children of immigrant families benefit from their parents' optimism and determination—probable characteristics that impelled the family to move to a new country—to make a better life for their family. This pattern tends to manifest through higher school engagement and performance (Fuligni and Witkow, 2004; Gibson, 1988; Kao and Tienda, 1993; Padilla, 2006; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995 as cited in Rivas-Drake and Mooney, 2008). The second pattern is for children of immigrants to experience racial or ethnic stratification and, thus, adopt a resistant disposition towards schooling (Gibson et al., 2004; Lee, 1996 as cited in Rivas-Drake and Mooney, 2008). This orientation is generally associated with lower achievement and disengagement from school, although some students develop and demonstrate motivational buffers to deal with the negative psychosocial pressures (Bernal et al. 1991; Cooper, 1999 as cited in Rivas-Drake and Mooney, 2008). The third pattern is linear assimilation, in which youth release their ethnic or non-white identity in favor of the mainstream identity. Historically, this identity was viewed as a positive step towards academic and occupational success (Rivas-Drake and Mooney, 2008). However, this theory has also been refuted by findings that length of residence in the U.S. is associated with declines in grades and effort in school among immigrant children, due to a loss of identity and the associated social links with one's family, friends, community, and the home country (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006).

Specifically, studies about educational aspiration related to Latino immigrants have proven to be fairly inconclusive. A former director for MALDEF (the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund) has stated that undocumented children perform better in school than low-income second or third generation immigrants. He

says that undocumented students still believe in the idea of the American Dream, which corresponds with the first major pattern of immigration adaptation (Karlin, 2007).

However, Suarez-Orozco (as cited in Karlin, 2007) warns against blanket statements and beliefs such as this one. He has found that the educational achievements of undocumented immigrants are mixed.

Social positioning.

Fischer (2006) notes that in low-income urban centers across the U.S., many high school students are hindered by poor-performing public schools and drop out before earning their high school diploma. Approximately 40 percent of Latino children live in poverty, which decreases the probability of students attending and graduating from institutions of higher learning (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, as cited in Aldous, 2006). As an example, only seven of UCLA's nearly 25,000 undergraduates are from Compton, a low-income, overwhelmingly Latino neighborhood located outside of Los Angeles. Only one-third of Compton's residents have a high school diploma, and fewer than seven percent have a bachelor's degree. Nationwide, 84 percent of U.S. citizens possess a high school diploma and 27 percent are four-year college graduates. The per capita income of Compton is \$12,617. The small number of students who do enroll in college often struggle to succeed, battling poor preparation and juggling work and family responsibilities (Fischer, 2006). As Portes and Rumbaut (2006) note, because of this ethnic group's predominant mode of incorporation into U.S. society, Latino youth are highly susceptible to circumstances such as these aforementioned.

Another theory that helps to explain the depressed scholastic achievement of Latino youth is that of social and cultural capital. Bourdieu (2006) defines *social capital*

as the connections one has in society and *cultural* capital as the forms of knowledge, skills, and education that can provide advantages to a person, thus granting him/her a higher status in society and setting higher expectations for him/her. Because parents provide children with a large bulk of their social and cultural capital, children of parents with low social and cultural capital also often lack sufficient capital. Bourdieu (1973, p.487) describes social capital as the “hereditary transmission of power and privilege,” or, in other words, the framework of social structures that work together to transmit a cultural heritage. The inheritance of cultural wealth that has been accumulated and bequeathed by previous generations is passed down only to those whose position in the social network affords them access to that wealth. Thus, these unequally distributed cultural tools come with family and class positioning (Bourdieu, 1973). Thus, many Latino students in the United States fail to possess sufficient social and cultural capital to gain the educational, social, and economic benefits associated with schooling.

Chiswick (1978, as cited in Portes and Rumbaut, 2006) calls these unequally distributed cultural tools the “ethnic-group effect” (p.90). Chiswick analyzed male immigrant earnings in 1970 on the basis of education, work experience, and time since immigration. His findings demonstrated a positive effect on earnings among immigrants, but not as high as the native born. For natives, every year of education increased earnings about seven percent; for foreign-born, 5.5 percent. More significantly, the earnings gap for Mexicans did not decline significantly with time in the United States (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006). Subsequent studies (Reimers, 1985, Bean and Stevens, 2003 as cited in Portes and Rumbaut, 2006) have generally confirmed this finding. These dynamics help to explain the self-perpetuating character of working-class immigrant

communities and the idea that “making it” is a complex process, with factors such as motivation and ability only minutely responsible for immigrants’ movement up the hierarchical ladder (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006).

Bourdieu (2006) also discusses symbolic violence and its effects on people. Symbolic violence is an implied and accepted form of power relations among social agents enacting a social practice. It is recognized as a normal, natural, and daily occurrence. It imposes and reproduces symbolic hierarchies, meanings, and values that produce invisibility, discrimination, differentiation, devaluation, delegitimization, and symbolic subordination (Jenkins, 1992). Symbolic violence is demonstrated in the way Latino, low-income (and immigrant) students are (in general) negatively treated, looked at, and identified by others, and how those views are normalized in society. Prejudice and discrimination differs from symbolic violence as they generally are regarded as unacceptable in society. Symbolic violence is unique in that it is hidden, unrecognized, and normalized. The combination of normalized symbolic violence against Latino students and their low cultural and social capital present bona fide roadblocks for an upward move in U.S. society. Symbolic violence and cultural capital tend to be reproduced—not negated—within schools (Jenkins, 1992).

Social mirroring is another social positioning theory. Taylor (1994) argues that identity is subjective and based on relationships with others. He believes that the projection of a demeaning image on another person can cause distortion and oppression when that image is internalized. He calls this social mirroring. Therefore, if Latino students are internalizing the negative views that U.S. society bestows upon them through symbolic violence, then their expectations of self achievement, upward movement, goals,

and aspirations could be very negatively impacted. Rivas-Drake and Mooney (2008) concur that immigrant students' perceptions are malleable; a student's aspirations intermingles with others' expectations of her, and her perceptions of personal attainment are thereafter altered. Hanson (1994, as cited in Rivas-Drake and Mooney, 2008) agrees with these theories of social and cultural capital and social mirroring, and reiterates that while all immigrants may want to succeed, different social classes hold different expectations of success.

Response to barriers.

How do some immigrant students push past these structural and societal barriers? Blom and Severiens (2008) seek to identify the strategies that "successful" immigrant students employ. They describe two strategies of successful immigrants: self-regulation and deep learning. Self regulation involves the active and appropriate uses of learning strategies, such as organization, planning, and regulating. Deep learning involves strategies requiring more than rehearsal and repetition. A self-regulated and deep learner keeps his motivation high and manages his learning environment. This type of learning leads to good grades, a motivating factor. Blom and Severiens (2008) found in their results that immigrant background and socio-economic status do not make a difference for self-regulated and deep learning. In other words, immigrants who have used these strategies have found success regardless of the mode of incorporation into U.S. culture which helps establish socioeconomic status and placement in society. In addition, they also found that there are positive effects of being among less well-performing peers (the "big fish in a little pond" effect) and of being among peers with similar immigrant backgrounds who recognize the tensions between family values and achievement goals.

The reality of being undocumented sometimes hits students in very real ways. Hardy (2007) describes how an immigration raid during a school day had a devastating effect on the town and the close-knit school district. When the school day ended, two middle schools were designated as emergency shelters for students whose parents had been detained. More than 60 teachers were enlisted to take students home with them. A principal later noted how a first grader went home after the raid and asked her mother if she had papers. Through all of this, and regardless of the turmoil that legal strife may cause on an undocumented student and their family, teachers within a public school are still expected to make AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress as defined by No Child Left Behind), teach immigrant children English, and prevent them from dropping out. These raids underscored how seemingly far-removed issues such as immigration, employment, finances, housing, health, and even foreign policy are relative and significant to undocumented students. Events such as raids inevitably influence undocumented students' performance in school and consequently classrooms, entire school communities, and school districts.

Despite obstacles, undocumented students still make it to college. Dozier (2001) conducted a study the spring semester of 1999 at an urban community college in New York that had increased its "international" student enrollment by 32 percent within a five year period in the mid-1990s. Unlike most international students who hold an F1 student immigration visa, this New York college found a subgroup of "international" students without visas, designated as international based on the country of origin marked on their demographic records. As the college began to enroll increasing numbers of international students, Dozier sought to investigate how many of these "international" students were

documented. She found the number almost split down the middle, with 46 percent of the population undocumented. Thirty-two percent of the undocumented were from the Caribbean, 27 percent from Central and South America, and 27 percent from Asia. Dozier (2001) found that 48 percent of these undocumented students had mixed patterns of attendance, and 27 percent were exclusively part-time students. Seventy-six percent of the undocumented students in a study received their high school diploma in the United States, suggesting that they had lived in the U.S. for at least one year, and more likely, longer.

These findings demonstrate that in spite of financial and other difficulties, undocumented students may still be motivated to attend college. However, they also most likely work long hours with little time for studying, potentially have little access to computers, and have great difficulty obtaining textbooks and school supplies due to prohibitively high costs. Furthermore, Dozier (1999) found through her experience working with undocumented students in community colleges that often students feel discouraged and wonder if they will be able to find employment in their field of study. It is not surprising that some students experience moments of hopelessness or discouragement with no guarantee of obtaining a job in the field that corresponds to their studies because of a lack of legal residency or citizenship, combined with a myriad of other complications.

Johnston (2000) reports hearing feelings of despair when speaking with undocumented students who are seniors in high school. One student told him, "I feel so low. I'm proud of what I do. So proud that I study and am supposed to be one of the best students in the school. But it's falling apart. I feel like it wasn't worth it" (p.2). She also

reports, speaking of her undocumented status, “My friends don’t know about this. It’s so embarrassing” (p.6). Another student expresses concern, “At first, I was glad I was accepted [to college]. Now I get worried about it every day and get really stressed. For a while, I couldn’t eat and I was sleeping in class” (p.9). A final student says, “Success is not a destination, but a journey. Maybe the obstacles are getting harder, but they’re making me a better person” (p.10). Intermingled voices of despair and hope regarding their status and their educational aspirations are vocalized from these 18-year-old undocumented students.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

As I worked through my research, I found that Gee (2008) and Freire (2003) have greatly influenced my way of thinking about and engaging in the research. Gee's description and use of D/discourse and its power has greatly resonated with me as a student, teacher, and particularly now as a researcher; he explains how those without access to or knowledge of particular Discourses are at great disadvantage in society. Freire's understanding of oppression and liberation has given me tools to understand and contextualize the stories and perspectives that I have heard from the students with whom I worked in this research.

James Gee

Gee distinguishes between discourse (with a lower case "d") and Discourse (with an upper case "D"). The term *discourse* refers to our language in-use. Gee uses *Discourse* when discussing the specific language we learn within a specific group particular to the social practice of the group. Social practices can include behavior, values, clothes, food, customs, perspectives, ways of thinking, etc. Individuals are often part of various Discourse communities. For example, an individual may be a teacher during the work day, a mother at home, and a party-girl on Saturday nights with her girlfriends. Each situated context calls for the protocol language, dress, attitude, etc. For Gee, language is always contextualized; "neutral" language does not exist. Meaning is socially constructed within Discourse communities.

Furthermore, being able to function within a Discourse may carry advantages in different situations. For example, if a person is raised in a family of lawyers, the Discourses of politics or business may come very easily to that person. Another person

raised in a very different Discourse community might find himself or herself at a disadvantage when trying to move within the Discourse of business, trying to get a loan, for instance. One Discourse community is not inherently better than another; however, power within a society may be unequally represented within different Discourses.

Gee (2008) states that many students with different Discourses gain “just enough mastery to ensure that they continually mark themselves as ‘outsiders’ while using [the new Discourses] and are, at best, colonized by them” (p.179). However, the advantage to being socially maladapted, Gee points out, is when a student becomes consciously aware of these differences. This insight, or “meta-knowledge” can help one to better manipulate the society of the dominant Discourse, as long as one has a “a theory of the society and one’s position in it, that is, a base for resistance to oppression and inequality” (Gee, 2008, p.180).

Gee also states, “When we unconsciously and uncritically act within our Discourses, we are complicit with their values, and thus can, unwittingly, become party to very real damage done to others” (2008, p.221). This is a crucial concept. By partaking in the Discourses that we know and accept as *the truth* in the world around us, if we do not break down the messages, symbols, and meanings that we pass to others through our actions, words, etc., then we continue to perpetuate very real inequities. As I will explore further in Chapters 5 and 6, the two students with whom I worked, Marco and Juan, are both cognizant from their own experiences of the very real ways in which their Discourses are discounted.

Paulo Freire

An important notion of Freire's is his view of the oppressed. Oppression, for Freire, happens when people fail to recognize others as people but view them rather as unrecognizable and non-important beings that can be exploited. Any situation in which a person objectively exploits another person or hinders his or her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. It is the imposition of one (person, state, community, etc.) over another. Freire would use the terminology of "those who are oppressed" to describe the undocumented through their inability to fully participate in society.

Freire's overall belief in humanity lies in the idea that our human ontological vocation is to become; "To call us out of and beyond ourselves" (Freire, 1998, p.25), and he distinguishes between the concept of being and becoming. Humans have an awareness of their activities and the world in which they are situated and, therefore, have the ability to reflect upon experiences and transform them. Freire sees education as an ethical human practice because it provides the possibility for growing and becoming. Our *awareness* and ability to grow makes us both educable and human. Freire states that once the oppressed perceive "situations as the frontier between being and being more human rather than the frontier between being and nothingness, they begin to direct their increasingly critical actions towards achieving the untested feasibility implicit in that perception" (Freire, 2003, p. 102).

For Freire, praxis—action and reflection of oppression and its causes—drives the oppressed to be engaged in their struggle for liberation. He says of the oppressed, "who can better understand the necessity of liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the

necessity to fight for it” (Freire, 2003, p.45). Through praxis, the oppressed can acquire a critical awareness of their own condition, and with their allies, struggle for liberation. He continues, “The pedagogy of the oppressed is the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation” (Freire, 2003, p.53). Freire (2003) argues that there is a difference between *political power* creating change and change that is carried out *alongside of the oppressed*. The fight must be “forged *with* and not *for* the oppressed in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity” (Freire, 2003, p.48).

In Chapter 6 I will explore how both students have demonstrated an engagement and struggle for liberation from oppression. One student in particular (Marco) references various notions of Freire’s regarding dehumanization and schooling. Both students demonstrate an awareness of wanting to become more. I will also explore how both students feel suppressed by and exercise power through Discourses different than their own. Their ideas will be explored in Chapter 6. But first, Chapter 4 will detail the critical research methodology that I used in this ethnographic case study.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

To explore this issue of undocumented Latino high school and college students' perspectives about education, specifically situated and contextualized within their life experiences as undocumented immigrants, I have undertaken an interview-based ethnographic case study through a critical research methodology. Rubin and Rubin (2005) define critical research as a means of empowering the oppressed. They state, "Critical researchers explicitly take sides by studying underdog groups, those facing oppression, suppression, and powerlessness, in order to give [them a] voice . . . Research is about documenting how that oppression has been experienced . . . Research should lead to action to reduce the problems caused by oppression" (p.25). Youth who are undocumented are an example of an oppressed, voiceless group. It is my intention to hear and present my participants' voices and to be a catalyst of change.

A case study is that which involves the exploration of a "bounded" system, something set within time and circumstance (Schram, 2006). Data collection in case study research is typically extensive, and a common method is interviewing (Creswell, 2007). I have gathered data through in-depth, qualitative interviews with two students with whom I asked primarily open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview format that evolved as I learned more from the students (see Appendix A). Questions included queries regarding experiences in and feelings about school; academic, personal, and professional goals; a connection between school and goals; and the future. I asked questions about if and how immigration affected their lives, what experiences they have had with immigration, and how they think being undocumented affects people's lives. In addition, I presented political cartoons related to immigration (Alcaraz, 2004) and asked

the students to express what they saw in the cartoons and how the images and pictures made them feel. One of the students with whom I worked had participated in a previous research project with me earlier in the year. As he met the same criteria as my other participant, I included the previous data and built upon it with a follow-up interview. (See Appendix B, IRB Approval.)

Interviewing is a classic form of gathering information about a specific case study because it allows for the interviewer to collect details from the informant's perspective. Through interviews with my informants, I was attempting to learn how they see and interpret the world. Because I am most interested in learning how my students make sense of their experiences and what kind of meaning systems they possess, interviews were the most appropriate method of data collection. Participant observation was not relevant for this research because it would reflect my observations as a researcher rather than reflecting my participants' thoughts and experiences from their own perspectives. An ethnographic case study assumes that "ethnographic research . . . describe[s] what the people in some particular place or status ordinarily do, and the meanings they ascribe to what they do" (Wolcott, 1999 as cited in Schram, 2006, p.95). Ethnographic research is concerned with how my informants specifically construct and make sense of their lives. These constructions are highly variable and locally specific. Ethnographic research does not assume that it can provide an exhaustive, absolute description of anything. Rather, it is bounded by time, circumstance, and perspective (Schram, 2006).

The goal of my research was to understand how my informants construct and make sense of their educational goals, contextualized within their knowledge, understanding, and experiences as undocumented youth in the United States. I conducted

five 30-40 minute interviews and collected data primarily during one month of the summer, with the exception of the previously collected data from one of the students, which was collected during his second semester in high school a few months prior. I chose to work with students in the beginning stages of their college career because they are mature enough to see college and career as a pending reality. As undocumented students, their voices are missing in the discourse about college-bound youth, and they are needed in order to create change in our current policies regarding undocumented students.

The students with whom I worked attended a program called Reach High. A non-profit, community organization, Reach High is located in a large, midwestern city with a decent sized population of documented and undocumented Latino immigrants. While the nature and intent of this after-school program focuses on helping low-income, primarily Latino, students attend college, the students who participated in this research face the difficulty of being a minority among their peers in the program by having limited access to things such as funding for college and out-of state options, which could inform their perspectives about education, regardless of their participation in the college readiness program. Many of the students in the program have grown up in this city, many were born outside of the United States, many have parents who speak only Spanish, and many attend public schools. Almost all receive free or reduced lunch. Some are undocumented.

Because of my position at Reach High, I knew which of our students were undocumented from self-disclosure by parents or the students themselves. I recruited my participants by asking them to participate in this study and telling them that I was doing

research on high school and college students' thoughts on immigration and schooling, and I was interested in their thoughts and perspectives. Because I had a pre-established, trusting relationship with them, I approached this research with the expectation that they might feel more comfortable talking with me than students with whom I did not have a previous relationship. As one of only five staff members at this college readiness organization, I had been working indirectly with these students on a regular basis, and I had known both of them for at least four years. I have played various roles with these students; I was one of the student's direct, after-school program coordinator for some years in high school. For both, I was the coordinator of their mentor/mentee program. As the coordinator of the parent program, I had relationships with both of the students' parents. During the time of the interviews, I was not the students' direct supervisor, coordinator, or teacher. Because I had a relationship with the students' parents, I was hoping my relationship with them would also alleviate any concerns they may have had with regards to their children's participation in the study.

The two students with whom I worked were Juan and Marco who were entering their first and second years of college, at eighteen and nineteen years old, respectively. As high school graduates and official alumni of Reach High, both students were awarded small, private scholarships to college from this organization. Because of the sensitive nature of the study, I chose to work with students with whom I had a previous relationship. These students are a vulnerable population; being undocumented in a world increasingly hyper-sensitized to issues of immigration puts them in an increasingly delicate and sensitive position. It was vitally important for me to be absolutely certain that my students would be protected in every possible way as participants in this study.

In order to give the students an outlet to express their feelings about immigration status without having to personally identify as being undocumented, the students were given the opportunity to discuss their experiences, thoughts and feelings about immigration and undocumented status in a more generalized way through the use of the political cartoons. Because both students did volunteer their status to me during the course of the interviews, I was able to ask more personal questions pertaining to what being undocumented means to them and how they came to know they were undocumented, which allowed for more in-depth self-reflection on their part.

Throughout my data collecting process I maintained accuracy and confidentiality. I recorded and transcribed the interviews myself, and I have used pseudonyms in any and all transcriptions, notes, and other written materials. I have not revealed any personally identifying information to anyone so as to maintain the utmost confidentiality of my students. All hard data has been kept in a locked cabinet, and all data on my computer has been locked and saved with password protected computer files. My data will be deleted and destroyed within one year of publication of this research.

The methods I have used to analyze my data consisted of an in-depth and appropriate coding system. After transcribing my recordings, I combed through the data and coded it. I also coded memos that I wrote within the transcripts. Memos are a reflective space for me to jot down analytical or theoretical thoughts that occur to me during the transcription process. They are a space to make connections across codes and themes and a space for me to comment on the data. After I initially coded the data, I looked for patterns (repeated ideas or themes) and inconsistencies (events or manners in which the informants' data or statements did not match with other previous thoughts). I

then categorized the data under the appropriate, emergent themes. I reviewed my data at least twice to ensure that the codes that I initially assigned were appropriate. In addition, I used peer review on some occasions so as to have another pair of eyes look at the data in order to compare and contrast the codes and themes that I had assigned. My peer reviewer was a classmate in my master's program cohort who was also trained on human subjects' research and coding.

After collecting, coding, thematising, and interpreting the data, I then reflected on the analysis on a grander scale so as to examine how my students' insights reflect inadequacies both within the school system as well as within the political structures of our nation. As Schram (2006) states, critical ethnography "means engaging in a kind of scholarship/action that places [the researcher] in a participatory framework of researching with and for individuals and groups in the interest of social justice" (p.98). It also involves bringing a framed, political intent to change people's consciousness (Schram 2006). I was particularly interested in this research because, as an educator, I am complicit in the silence of the discourse regarding the educational implications of undocumented students by not bringing this important topic to light. It is simply imperative for a discourse to be created that will provide the necessary tools to undocumented students to maneuver through their lives in the United States, with specific attention paid to education.

In addition to my desire to bring truth to power and affect change in the educational discourse of undocumented students, I am also extremely interested in creating a space for positive change within my students. This study will not cause immediate, direct change by opening doors to universities, creating scholarships for

students, or changing their undocumented status. What this study can do for my students, however, is give them a chance to be heard. Undocumented students are silenced in the fact that they cannot tell people their stories for fear of deportation. Telling one's story and knowing that it is important enough to be written down is something that, I hope, will give my students a (potentially renewed) sense of voice and of importance. This internal sense of satisfaction, meaning, and importance can positively play a role in students' perspectives about how they interpret, engage in, and understand the world, which *does* cause change. By using an ethnographic case study, critical research methodology, I am using their voices and speaking *for* a disenfranchised group—undocumented youth—rather than *about* them (Schram, 2006). It is my hope to take this research completion and present it at a conference or within a journal so that these students' voices can be heard on a larger scale.

Because I conducted fieldwork (interviews) as the form of data collection for my case study, I drew upon my own values, ethics, feelings, and understandings, and it is important that the perspectives that I bring to my research are evident to the reader, while not diverting or deflecting the findings of my research. After graduating from college, I moved to Mexico City to be a teacher, where socio-economic disparities became painfully apparent to me. After two years, I moved back to the United States and began to work for an organization that would empower youth and work towards breaking down the racial, economic, classist, and social barriers of power that our world perpetuates. This positionality impels me to create a real change in the current discourse regarding undocumented students by providing my students an opportunity to have their voices count and be heard. Moreover, my hope is that this study will cause educators,

administrators, political figures, and policy analysts to think about the needs, experiences, and lives of undocumented youth in a nuanced way. Schools need to know that undocumented students are among their school population. They need to know that students' experiences as undocumented youth *will affect* performance in school. With undocumented students in a classroom realizing that post-secondary education is an extremely difficult option due to financial constraints, and a professional career is not an option because of the need for a social security number, undocumented students' engagement in school *will be affected*. Teachers know how greatly a few disengaged students in a class can affect a classroom. Taken at a larger level, disengaged undocumented youth in different classrooms across the nation *will affect* our school system. In an era of high stakes standardized testing, schools are concerned about numbers. Numbers *will be* impacted by these students. These students are not invisible, and they are not silent. My interest in using a critical advocacy framework revolves around this desire to hear their thoughts so we can learn from them and improve our policies, schools, and understanding of undocumented students' needs.

A possible concern about the credibility of the data could be voiced regarding my previously established relationship with the students. As a staff member at the students' college readiness program Reach High, the students came into the study with certain expectations and notions about *me*, which inevitably played a role in our interviews. The categories they may have situated me in may relate to me both as a person of authority and as someone who wants to hear certain viewpoints about education, goals, attitudes, etc. Schram (2006, p.133) states, "They're going to say things because they think that's what I want or need to hear." This type of influence, called reactivity or consequential

presence, assumes that my presence in this specific location could cause certain information given by the students to be misconstrued or even omitted. This was a very legitimate reality for me, one that I kept in mind through my research. On the other hand, one's relationship with one's informants inevitably affects the interview regardless of a previously existing relationship, simply because it *is* a relationship, a conversation between two people. My relationship with the students is positive, but what they chose to tell me (or not to tell me) because of our relationship could have negatively or positively influenced my data. In any case, I remained aware of this concern throughout the interviews.

Chapter 5: Who Are They?

In order to answer the question of how perspectives about education are contextualized within life experiences as an undocumented immigrant, we must start by looking at Juan and Marco's life experiences and identities.

Marco

Marco is a 19-year-old student in his second year of community college. He describes himself as “very peace and love” and laid back. He began attending Reach High at the earliest possible age of enrollment in sixth grade and continued participating until he graduated from high school, earning a scholarship to college. Marco identified himself first as Mexican but then as Chicano as our conversation progressed. He explained that he considers himself a Chicano because he doesn't know Mexico. When I pressed him to explain what exactly Chicano means to him, he said:

Mexican-American. That's what I am. You know? I was born in Mexico and I was raised here. And I still have all those Mexican cultures in me, but also the American culture, so yeah. I mean, now I guess if I go anywhere, anywhere in the world, I'll be more diverse than if I were raised somewhere else.

Marco was born in Guerrero, Mexico and moved to the United States on his fourth birthday. “So that was my birthday, one big birthday gift.” He has lived in the same large, midwestern city since his arrival, moving only from one end of a neighborhood to another once the former began to gentrify. Marco has attended public school his entire life. His school ranks among the lowest-rated high schools in the state based on NCLB's adequate yearly progress.⁶ Marco speaks both English and Spanish perfectly, and he desires the same for his U.S.-born, younger sister.

⁶ Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), as defined by the federal education program No Child Left Behind, mandates that all public schools must have 100 percent of tested students meet state standards in reading and math by 2014. In the 08-09 school year, Marco's high school had less than 12 percent of all students

Marco aspires to become a professional musician, but from a practical standpoint he hopes to become a nurse. He has begun his college career as a student at Everett Community College, but he strives to attend a four-year university, namely DePauw University or Columbia College. Marco visited DePauw University, located in Greencastle, IN, when he went on a college visit with Reach High during his junior year of high school. While visiting, he was told that the school has a good music program. He also visited downtown Chicago's Columbia College with a class while in seventh grade. He has been told Columbia also has a good music program. Marco grappled with his decision of which school to attend, ultimately weighing practicality over interest. When I asked him how he chose Everett Community College over other schools, he responded:

Uh, I guess they [Everett] came to the (high) school as a, uh, open house, basically. And I saw them, and I guess I was already knowing about nursing. I'm like oh, that's creative, that's money, I really want to go into it. So I did!

When I asked if he had looked into any other schools as viable possibilities, he responded that he was thinking about another community college, "just because most of my friends were going there," but that his first choice "would have been DePauw in Greencastle." When I asked why he had decided against DePauw, he said:

I don't know, for some reason I guess Everett was more of what I was looking for? As far as, uh, Everett, like, I guess I really didn't mind as long, as long as I got my general courses out of the way.

When I pressed him to be more specific, he said, "I guess, not enough money was, uh, earned for me to go over there [to DePauw]. And I was working. [And] I guess my mom,

meeting or exceeding state reading standards and less than 10 percent meeting or exceeding state math standards. About 50 percent of all students were graduating in five years. This information came from a school report card published by the state. The references to the local newspaper and school district have been eliminated from this paper in order to keep the school name and location private and to protect the student.

she was gonna miss me, so.” He then admitted that he hadn’t even applied to DePauw “because I knew my financial status, you know, was really not gonna happen. So I was, man, whatever. I’ll, I’ll get to it in the future.”

As noted, Marco narrowed his college options himself based on what he honestly thought that he and his family would be able to afford. Practical financial issues influenced his college decision. He also made his decision about both which community college to attend and which dream school he would attend (if finances were not an issue) based on what people told him either during campus visits to his high school or on visits he took to colleges, not based on any other research. He ruled out DePauw and Columbia, I believe, because the cost of tuition was prohibitive. Additionally, he did not think that the program he would pursue at both schools—music—would be lucrative enough upon graduation. Those two financial constraints—his current lack of funds and anticipated future earnings—prevented him from even applying to his “dream” schools. On the other hand, he could also have decided not to apply simply as a way to protect himself; if he had been accepted to the school(s) and then not been able to attend either due to finances or documentation status, he could potentially feel a more powerful disappointment and/or meaning to his undocumented status. Therefore, ultimately, he decided only to apply to and attend Everett Community College and to major in nursing, a creative, lucrative field that interests him to a certain extent.

Work has also encompassed much of Marco’s time, especially in the more recent years. He works at what he calls a “Mexican job,” working as a line cook at a chain, buffet restaurant. Using a fake social security number, Marco works with a number of other undocumented people from Mexico and other parts of Latin America. He explains:

It's one of those uh, I guess people call 'em Mexican jobs, because you really, really, really work your butt off there. [And], well, because there's nothing but Mexicans working in the back. There's a lot of immigrant Mexicans working there. So, yeah, I guess that's why they call it [a Mexican job]. Basically all the dishwashers—well, I guess I would say that everyone that's good—excluding me, I guess, because I don't want to say, I can't say that I'm very good at my job—'cause there's two guys that work there and both of them are illegal and they're really good.

Essentially, Marco is saying that everyone who is “good” at their job is illegal. I asked how he started working there, and he said:

I just went in to eat there once. And I applied. It was in December, and I didn't get called 'til like, like months after. 'Til like February. I was still 17 at the time. Yeah. I was a senior. And with my fake social it said that I was 18 already, so they hired me and just they asked if I was out of high school and I said, yes, yes I am.

Thus, Marco entered the working world, and as we will examine more in future sections, his experiences working have definitely colored and changed his perspectives.

Juan

Juan is an 18-year-old, first-year college student attending two community colleges. He participated in Reach High during all four years of high school, graduated, and received a college scholarship from the organization. Juan has attended public schools his entire life. He identifies himself as hyperactive, spontaneous, opinionated, smart, and not a nice person. He sees himself as multi-race (black, Mexican, and Puerto Rican), and he call himself “a black, Spanish-speaking person.” He has lived within the area of the same large, midwestern city as Marco since leaving Mexico. During our interviews, he never referred to himself as undocumented, unauthorized, or illegal, but rather perpetually referred to his status as having no papers. He came to the U.S. when he was three years old with his father, both carrying valid visas. As Passel (2006) states, visa overstayers generally represent between 25 and 40 percent of the undocumented

population. When I asked why, in response to me using the terminology

“undocumented,” he chooses to describe his status as not having papers, he explains in the following way:

Well, because I don't have papers. Undocumented is like you are illegal or something like that. And in a way I am illegal. But I didn't come here illegally. So, I'm not an illegal person in the United States. I came here legally, but I just didn't go back to where I came from. But I entered here legally so I'm not just an illegal alien. I'm a legal, didn't-go-back alien.”

From this conversation, one can see that the power of the verbiage, the discourse, is extremely important to Juan, as well as the importance of how words define how he sees himself. “Undocumented” or “illegal” connote different meanings to Juan, meanings with which he doesn't identify himself, even if others identify him in that way. For Juan, this theme of identity—his self identity, his view of how others see and identify him, and his views of how he identifies and categorizes others—is notably significant in his perspectives towards education. Portes and Rumbaut (2006) argue that because Latino youth, specifically undocumented youth, are more susceptible of joining the most disadvantaged at the bottom of society because their incorporation into the United States consisted of high levels of racial prejudice and government hostility. In this way, Juan finds it fundamentally important to identify himself in a manner that both empowers and disengages him from the expectations and attitudes that he sees U.S. society expressing toward undocumented Latinos.

Regardless of status, Juan spoke of his desire to attend a four year college. When we first sat down for an interview during his final semester of high school, his top college choice was Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI. He visited Marquette on a trip with

Reach High during his junior year of high school. I asked him what about Marquette appealed to him, and he responded:

I liked, like, the programs that they have. They have, like, African dance, they have psychology, well I didn't like psychology back then, but they had it—like, they explained it to us. And then they had on the campus like a diversity of people, a diversity of everything. So it was like, I want that school.

I asked if Marquette had more diversity than other schools he had visited. He responded:

Yeah, the other ones were mainly white. Like at Marquette it's mainly white too, but there's more, more cultures there. I saw, I saw diversity. And then the way that they talked, 'cause one of the girls, she was white, and she said she was, she was doing African dance. And I was like, wow, a white girl doing African dance, that's, that's weird. Weird, yeah. It was unique; it was out of the ordinary. Like, you wouldn't actually see, uh, well, no yeah, not weird, but like strange. 'Cause you know how white people like doing things from other cultures, like, (with an accent) I went to Puerto Rico, I went to whatever, I can do the hula hula (end accent), or whatever, so. It wasn't strange like that, but I don't see a lot of white people that do that [African dance]. Like I don't associate with that type of stuff, so I was like, interesting.

The idea of being around people who were interested in people and cultures outside of their own, particularly a white person being interested in what Juan may consider a more authentic encounter with another culture, resonated strongly with Juan. For Juan, many of his stories and responses were contextualized within a framework of race and power. During our interviews he seemed extremely cognizant of his identity as black, Puerto Rican, and Spanish-speaking, and he commented on the ways that he viewed himself being treated or mistreated because of these markers. Therefore, to encounter a college that attracted students who did not fit into or see the world within his general understanding of race and power relations was extremely attractive to him.

However, Juan was not accepted to Marquette, and he decided to enroll at Lincoln Community College and take a few classes at Everett Community College. Now, after spending his first few months in community college, he speaks of wanting to attend

Northern Illinois University (NIU) in DeKalb, IL, which he had also visited with Reach High. When he and I met for an interview once he had begun attending community college, I asked his feelings about how the whole situation had transpired. He said, “I’m alright; it’s okay. Everything happens for a reason. I’m just that type of a person.” I then asked him if he had any other school-related plans at this point, and he said,

Um, I’m thinking I’m trying to find more scholarships. Well, at least like one scholarship that will pay for my tuition, in- ‘cause I wanna go to NIU. If I get, if—‘cause I already got accepted to NIU, and they said that they keep your transcript for a whole year. So, you don’t have to do the whole thing over again. So, I’m like, okay, if I can find another scholarship or something that will pay for it, then I’ll go to NIU. I got accepted to UIC, but I heard that UIC is not that very good. It’s like a whole bunch of people and all different stuff. So then, like, NIU, well, especially because I heard NIU has a very good psychology [program], so I was like, okay.

Juan’s reasons for wanting to attend certain colleges have definitely changed.

Originally he wanted to attend Marquette mainly for the reason that he sought change from his experiences in high school and the city where he lives. He sought diversity and freedom from the narrow categorizations of the possibilities he understood to be available to him, contextualized within his place in society, and he believed that Marquette represented this opportunity. However, once Juan realized that Marquette was no longer an option (financially and/or because he wasn’t accepted), he changed his goals. I believe his desire to attend NIU stems from his comfort level with the school; he has visited NIU’s campus, but he has not visited UIC. Juan has heard about NIU’s psychology program, but he has not heard about the program at UIC. Interestingly, UIC is a more competitive school than NIU, yet he sees NIU as a better school. He originally resisted attending community college so strongly, I think, because he expected it to be the same as high school in terms of an overall repressive atmosphere. While Juan has been

pleasantly surprised to find that community college has not met those expectations, I speculate that he has similar worries about UIC falling into that category of repressiveness as well because a number of his classmates attend UIC, and he sees various similarities between his high school and this large, public, university.

When discussing college and career options with Juan during his first three years in high school, he always expressed interest in becoming a lawyer. However, during our interviews when I asked him what his career goals were, he said, “I wanna be a psychiatrist or a psychologist. I’m still trying to figure out which one.” I asked him what caused this shift in interest, and he responded:

I just, I like being a lawyer. It was just that—it was something that was put in my mind. I wanted; well, I wanted to do it, but when I was little, that was *expected* of me, because I was questioning things, and it was just my dad’s dream that everyone be a lawyer in our family. (Pause). So. But it was barely recently I wanted [to be a psychologist], because like last year I wanted to be a lawyer, because *I* wanted to, not because my dad wanted me to, but then, I don’t know, I like to know how the mind works, like *why* you lie. It’s not if you’re lying, it’s why are you lying. Like, deception, sociopaths, psychopaths, it’s just, I don’t know, amazing to me.

His shift from wanting to be a lawyer because his father expected it, to wanting to be a lawyer from his own desire and accord is interesting and demonstrative of both his relationship with his father as well as his own maturation, but I am even more interested in why psychology suddenly grabbed hold of him. He mentioned he was in a psychology class his final semester in high school, so I asked if the class had any impact on this new interest. He explained:

No, it was just, ok, wait, wait. I liked, like all the challenging things, like murder as a crime, *CSI Miami* and all that. But I wasn’t into like the forensics of *CSI*. I was into the why, the where, the when, type of part, like the psychologist stuff. It’s not about, like, strength and brutality and physical power. It’s about the weaknesses that a person has that you can take them down, like, mentally, not just physically, but the story behind what you do and why you do it. That’s why.

And then this year was when I was introduced to the title of psychology, I already knew it? And I knew like, what it was, and I was like ok, it was interesting, and I was like that's basically what I already do. So then this year, I was like, ok, I think I finally found my topic. I finally found the place I want to be in! A psychologist or psychiatrist. I don't really know the basic differences, but I'm trying to find them.

I find it very intriguing that Juan is so interested in the “the story behind what you do and why you do it,” and I suspect it has something to do with his own experiences, which we will explore in further sections.

An aspect of concern that Juan alluded to during his discussion about NIU is finances. Financial considerations have become more important to Juan, and he has begun considering the feasibility and importance of finding a job. Thus far, he has been unsuccessful in seeking or obtaining a job. Unlike Marco, he is unwilling to produce and use a fake social security card. The reasoning behind wanting a job becomes apparent through our conversations. Before we had begun recording during one of our interviews, Juan had mentioned to me that he was thinking about not attending school in the fall as previously planned. I revisited his statement during our interview, and these were his comments:

Ok, I didn't want to start my school year, uh, in the fall, because I wanted, I wanted to get some more money, so I could at least try, 'cause I want to be going to NIU, so I was like, oh, if I could get some more money, or if I don't end up going to NIU anyways, I could get some more money then I can pay for my classes at Everett or at Lincoln. Um, basically I didn't want to go because, just, it was a choice I wanted to make, that I wanted to start in, uh, spring, because I wanted to establish some fundamentals of my cash. Like, I wanted to start a base of cash so that I won't have to ask for my mom for the money, for the extra money for my books, 'cause books are expensive. So, I got the books, but they were expensive, but I didn't buy them at, at the full price, I was like, oh no. So, I got, I got two new ones at, like, half the price, and then, it was only two hundred dollars. I didn't mind spending those hundred dollars, because those books are expensive, so I didn't want to ask my mom for that.

Clearly, Juan does not want to have to ask for large amounts of money from his mother. He knows that amount of money would be a financial burden on her, so he's happy to pay for his books without telling his mom. However, paying high prices for books now puts him in a precarious position because he doesn't have a source of income, which Juan refers to as "fundamentals of cash." I asked him what he was thinking of doing to make some money. He responded:

I do not know. Oh, I don't know, 'cause, if there, if I can work, then I'd have to do it illegally, 'cause there's no way I could do it legally. Um, and probably [I will] end up doing that—off the record. No I'm playing around. No, I'm playing around. I'm just joking. You take everything seriously. Um. No, basically I just want to get some cash so I don't have to rely on my mom so much so much. Which I always do, but in case, just in case something happens, just in case, I don't know, it was just, I want my own money. And I think the reason is, it's my mom's money; it's not my money. But yeah, I didn't want to feel like I'm losing her, even though I am losing her.

I'm not completely sure what Juan was referring to when he said he's "losing her" because I didn't press the issue. Regardless, it is apparent that the stress of finding a place to work is weighing upon him. Another revelation in this dialogue is Juan's evaluation of his relationship with me. Without me even saying anything about him working under the table he infers that I will not approve. I know that Juan respects me, so this internal conflict of needing to find a job in order to continue attending school and making himself and his mother proud and wanting to find a job that is something he feels he could tell me about (something legal) is an additional burden to bear.

As demonstrated, both Marco and Juan have clear career goals and an evident need and/or desire to attend college. Both Marco and Juan have set their sights on their "dream" four-year school to attend after community college, with their school decision based on a college visit and hearsay. In addition, both have expressed the need and desire

to work in order to support these goals. We will examine how this desire to attend college and the need to work strongly conflict in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Findings and Discussion

Juan and Marco's testimonies speak to the struggles they have experienced as undocumented youth navigating their pathways into adulthood. Throughout our conversations, there were three main themes that emerged: their relationship with power, a concern for the future, and agency and revolution. In this section, I will attempt to elucidate their experiences, struggles, emotions, fears, and other sentiments related to these themes. I will conclude by looking at where the students are now that the study is completed and summarizing all findings and discussion.

Power

Marco and Juan's status as undocumented students contributes greatly to the choices (or lack thereof) they have regarding the continuation of their education. On a larger level, their status intensely colors the way they see and interpret the world. Inherently, a principal aspect of being undocumented involves withheld power. People in the U.S. in general like to think that they are egalitarian in assigning value to all human lives, but the current stance of our policies towards undocumented immigrants, and specifically towards undocumented children, nullifies this claim. Undocumented students, those who had no choice in the decision to live the majority of their lives in the United States, are not only voiceless but also powerless. In general, they are stripped of their ability to find humanizing work, to vote, to drive, to pay in-state tuition (in most states), to receive health insurance—the list goes on and on. Yet they are not stripped of their ability to do the dirtiest, most exploitable work. Marco speaks to this idea:

I guess it's, it's just as far as my dad goes, and my mom, it's just, uh, the job. That's the only reason they came to the United States for. I don't think they have another reason they came here, and if they do I don't know about it. But, yeah, that's just the job- you're trying to get a good job, you're trying to get a good raise, you know, I mean, if you don't have a good social security number and your managers know about it, you can't get a good raise. They'll probably be cool about it and not fire you or anything like that, but yeah.

Marco speaks of his parents' vulnerability due to their undocumented status.

Luckily, the human spirit can find ways to rise above difficulties to maintain some semblance of hope. It is my purpose, in this section, to explore and contextualize Marco's and Juan's complicated relationships with power. Both Marco and Juan shared personal experiences with me depicting times when their power was suppressed. Conversely, both Marco and Juan have managed to exercise and execute power over their lives in differing circumstances and in diverse ways. Finally, both students have found different mediums through which they have learned to understand power and relationships, through which both have benefited greatly. We will explore their relationships with power.

Suppressed power.

Both Marco and Juan described how their power was suppressed in a variety of stories, particularly related to school or society. For Marco, experiences in school seemed more authoritarian than encouraging. He repeatedly referred to himself as "not a good student" and said that "school is not for everyone." When I pressed him to explain these statements, he struggled quite a bit, seeming unsure how he knew it himself. I echoed back to him some of the things he had described to me: that school didn't match his personality (he was laidback and "they" told him what to do) and that he didn't have much of a say. He explained:

Yeah, in a way, yeah. Because I mean, in an argument, the teacher always was right. So I was like, (sigh), f-you, man. Forget you—this is not, this is not for me. This is not, this is not right to being with... I think yeah, that's why. 'Cause it was more of a dictator kind of ship. There were many dictators in the school and you know, and just the fact, just the simple fact that you were a student, in that, in that certain school that I went to, um, you walk around, and you had no bad intention. Like me, when I used to go from the class to the washroom. I had no bad intentions whatsoever, you know and they would, they would, the security would stop me. Hey! Where's your pass? I was like oh, like, I didn't get one. The teacher just told me to come. Well, you need one, you gotta go back. I was like, dude, I'm a couple feet from the washroom, the classroom's really far. Just let me use the washroom, and I'll go back. I mean, you can walk me, you can be in the washroom when I'm doing my business, I'm like, I don't have any bad intentions, I just wanna go pee, and go back. Like, no you need one. Like, come on. You know? It's just like pigs outside in the--in the world, you know? They, they, they're not the law- they just enforce it. And, they think they're the law, and it's kind of messed up, but yeah, I guess now that you bring it up, that's how I saw school, you know? Just like the outside world. They thought they were the big stuff and whatnot.

I then asked him if this kind of thing happens just at his school. He responded:

Maybe, maybe at other schools too. I just, I can only relate it to my school. But probably in other schools, you know? I have a friend, she went to the same high school as me and I guess she'd say the same thing. She never really liked the security there, the whole way everything worked. Like, I didn't like it, but since I was really laidback, and she was really laidback, like, we didn't care. Like, ah, whatever, you know? And, like, there was an assignment, and we didn't want to do it. Like, the body, the student body didn't want to do it. Like, you know what, we're not gonna do it, no, no, no, everyone would argue. The teacher would end up saying, yes, you're gonna do it, and I wouldn't do it.

I asked Marco why he chose not to do it and what he was trying to demonstrate. He responded:

It was just my, my way of rebelling, you know? It was just, oh you know, hey, you, I'm not gonna do whatever *you* wanted 'cause I am, I am a human being! I know my rights.

In my discussions with Marco, this idea of him being a human being was mentioned a couple of times. I definitely see Marco struggling against what he sees as oppressive and suppressive structures in school and in society. For Freire (2003),

oppression prevents a person from becoming fully human. Marco's declaration of his humanness is an expression of how he sees his relationship with school, how he sees teachers and security, and how he feels dehumanized through the suppression of his self.

Feelings of power suppression for Juan were contextualized heavily within his experiences as an undocumented immigrant through a lens heavily colored with understandings of race and its relationship with power. During four of the five extensive interviews in which he shared so much of his life history and his perspectives, issues and concerns about race and power were strongly present. Stories involved references of power suppression directed either towards someone else or towards himself.

In this example, Juan discusses his thoughts on power suppression due to race. He was telling me a story about how he was teasing a classmate by shouting at him to run like he ran across the border. I asked him if it was alright for him to make that statement because they were friends. Here is part of his response:

Juan: Yeah, yeah, if I weren't his associate, he'd probably take it to heart. Especially because I'm black. If he didn't know that I was Mexican or more Hispanic, then he would take it more deeper...

KM: Yeah. You said he would take it to heart even harder if it was a black person. What about for a white person?

Juan: Oh [yes], for a black person that he didn't know.

KM: What if it were a white person he didn't know?

Juan: Even worse I guess.

KM: Worse than a black person?

Juan: Yeah worse than a black person. 'Cause it'd be like, a black person, I don't know you, you're also illegal, well, no, you weren't illegal, but you weren't, you weren't from this place, you also migrated here, so I will take it like whatever, ok. He would still be mad obviously he would get mad, but he, I think he would get

madder if it was a white person because white people have that, that background, that um, long, long tail to step on.

KM: That long tail to step on? What's that?

Juan: Yeah like, 'cause in Spanish, you know, it's '*cola para pisar*.' You have, like, you see, in the front, you see the other person, but there's this long, long tail, like, this big facts, this history that you have...

I understand the "*cola para pisar*" as white people's history of oppression and superiority over those deemed less valuable or less important by white people, particularly people of color. The "*cola*," literally meaning tail in Spanish, is white people's train of oppression. Whether or not I, as a white person, contributed to this oppression in the past or currently contribute to it today, because I am a white person, the tail, the history, of my white ancestors hangs from me. My skin color is my marker. Therefore, Juan says that his Mexican friend would have been offended if a black person who he didn't know had disrespected him—for the reason that the black person is a race different than his own. But a white person disrespecting him is reminiscent of so much history of oppression against those who are not like them (white), that disrespect from a white person would be barely tolerable, the ultimate disrespect. In essence, as a non-white person, Juan feels his power is threatened or has the potential to be suppressed simply because the color of his skin can be seen by whites as a marker, as a symbol of one who can be stepped upon.

The same idea of a "*cola para pisar*" comes up with Marco as well. This conversation is in reference to when I asked him how he personally would feel if someone were to call him a *mojado* (wetback). I did not preface the comment by saying *who* would be calling him a *mojado*, but he brought up the same point that his reaction might differ depending on who is doing the name-calling.

Like if someone called me a *mojado*, uh, well, you know me, I'm not really, I don't get angry and stuff like that. I would take that like, I don't know, I guess it all depends how I'm feeling. If I'm feeling just in a normal mood that I am like right now, I would just smile, be like, thank you, you know? That's what I, I'm not wet, you know? I didn't cross the river. We came in through another way, but thank you, you know? I'm not gonna sit there and fight about it, but I guess if, if someone else, just like if I'm kind of mad, if someone of another race calls me a *mojado*, I'll probably just like, burst out and tell him something about his race, you know?

I pressed him to continue by asking him what he might say in response. He explained:

Well, it depends. Who calls me a *mojado*, you know? Yeah, I guess it all depends on how I'm feeling. Honestly, just looking at it, it's just like, I don't think much about it. I know some people, they get really angry when, like if I call them a *mojado* instead of Mexican, we just start going back and forth at each other, but I guess, if like a black person or a white person, majority, most of the time it's if a white person does it, they get really angry, they get really, um, how do you call it? They feel like they're, the white people are being prejudiced against them or they're being really racist against him or her in that situation. I really don't think about it much you know.

Marco emphasizes the same idea of the "*cola para pisar*"—this idea of race superiority and oppressor history that white people carry around with them that both Marco and Juan recognize. When I pushed him a bit more to elaborate upon *who* calling him a *mojado* would make the most difference, he gave the example of his boss.

Like, if I'm working and let's say my manager, I'm working really hard I'm really frustrated with the work. There's a lot of work as it is, and she says, like, oh you *mojados* can't work hard enough, I would definitely just, for especially if it's at work, I would probably go up to her and tell her something to her face, um, I won't quit 'cause I need the job, but I'd definitely make a report because that's, it's just not something you--especially not, not working-- I think, I think that's illegal? Yeah, it is illegal. To be racist on the job. So, I mean, that's a basic, basically, in general, that's a racist remark.

I do not know the race of his boss, but I do know that she is in a position of power over him, so the idea of her speaking these words elicited a stronger response from Marco; Marco seems to be struggling with how to express the outrage of being demeaned and belittled, *especially* as an employee, a person who works and contributes to a

business. Regardless of what race she is, however, by demeaning those with less power than her—particularly those she knows will not quit (the undocumented)—she would be contributing to and following the same pattern of oppressing those with less power than herself, something that white people in the United States (in general) have a history of doing.

The idea of race superiority and suppression due to race came up often with Juan.

His theories also help him to categorize people. He explains:

Juan: Some races are louder than others, and some are more calmer but think they're better than the other ones. Like, . . . you be going down a street or something, like [on the train], so, like, if a person is black, then you see people around you commenting and stuff like it's a bad thing that you're loud just because, or whatever. You see a white person just walking down and everything and talking on their phone and they're like dadada, you can see, they're just like, calm. Like, it's okay to be that way, but not being more outgoing, and more louder than the other people are which is usually black people [doing the former] and white people [doing the latter].

KM: Okay, so you're saying it seems more acceptable in society for—

Juan: For white people to be . . . calmer, and not accepted for black people to be more louder.

This race superiority is another example of suppressed power simply by being black (or Latino). Juan recognizes that people of different backgrounds, of different races use different Discourses, and that some are acceptable in mainstream society and some, particularly the ones that he uses, are not. Juan recognizes Gee's (2008) concept of acting within different Discourses. Juan, in particular, is cognizant from his own experiences of the very real ways in which his Discourses are discounted. Therefore, if Juan internalizes the negative views that U.S. society bestows upon him through Bourdieu's (2006) concept of symbolic violence, then his expectations of self achievement, upward movement, goals, and aspirations could be very negatively

impacted. Rivas-Drake and Mooney (2008) concur how malleable immigrant students' perceptions are and how an individual's aspirations and others' expectations of them intermingle with their own perceptions of personal attainment.

Power exercised and executed.

In spite of the difficulties related to their situations, both Marco and Juan have found very real ways to enact the power that they do have within themselves and society. Juan uses a more internal approach, taking power back through his use of language, while Marco adopts more subversive and overt acts of resistance. For Juan, language plays the role of both protection and disassociation. We have already seen one example of how he describes himself as a “legal, didn't-go-back alien,” someone who does not have papers, but not someone who is necessarily illegal. Another example is Juan's use of the word *associate* in place of the word *friend*. Juan does not refer to people as his friends, but rather calls them his associates. When speaking with him, if I used the word “friend” with regards to peers at school, he repeatedly would either correct me and say, “I don't have friends, I have associates” or simply model back to me the language he chooses to use, namely replacing the word friend with associate. I asked him if he has always seen people in this manner—for example, if he recognized in second grade that he had associates and not friends. He responded:

Juan: Oh yeah, I thought I considered them friends, not, not, not associates. I thought of them like close people. Like family and stuff, more. But not friends.

KM: What's the difference?

Juan: Like 'cause you know, you might have cousins but you don't talk to them? Like that? But you might be okay with them? That's what I thought about them. Like, now that I think of it, it's more of associates. I would have considered them like associate people.

Juan describes various stories of betrayal by his associates when he was younger. By implementing a new word in his discourse, Juan has found a way to keep relationships with people at arm's length; he is not as close with associates as he might be with friends. Through this choice of language, he neither feels particularly responsible for them nor unavoidably receptive to their feedback, comments, or judgments. I see Juan's use of the word associate as a way for him to maintain some semblance of power; Juan is disempowered by so many things in society that choosing to keep distance between himself and others is one thing he can control. By not letting people in, people cannot hurt him.

While Juan wields power through the language that he chooses to use and the way that he chooses to let people into his life, Marco takes a more subversive route of resistance through his use of graffiti. Marco is less concerned with what authority figures might say and more concerned with the respect that he might receive from fellow classmates. He explains:

So, doing graffiti, I was basically focused on, oh man, that wall; it would be so nice if I get my name on there. I don't mind if I get in trouble, but I'd get, you know, props [respect] from people around . . . I've always liked art, I've always been a rebel, so it's kind of a mix of both. I'm like, oh let's go for it! You know? It was the perfect thing to do you know? To stick it to the man in a way and still uh, develop and express my art in the way I could.

Juan and Marco both follow patterns that children of immigrant families have taken in previous studies with regards to schooling (Rivas-Drake and Mooney, 2008). In spite of Juan's disengagement from his peers, Juan has excelled throughout his years in school, explaining, "Everything below an 'A' is an 'F' to me." Notwithstanding the barriers he has encountered along the way, he has adopted the first immigrant adaptation pattern of high school engagement and performance (Fuligni and Witkow, 2004; Gibson,

1988; Kao and Tienda, 1993; Padilla, 2006; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995 as cited in Rivas-Drake and Mooney, 2008). Marco, conversely, has assumed the second pattern in which children of immigrants adopt a resistant disposition towards schooling (Gibson et al., 2004; Lee, 1996 as cited in Rivas-Drake and Mooney, 2008). This orientation is generally associated with lower achievement and disengagement from school, which Marco demonstrates through his engagement with the graffiti culture in his school. Through his overt resistance to the negative psychosocial pressures he has encountered in school, Marco has developed and demonstrated buffers that pad the way for his participation in and consequent graduation from high school (Bernal et al. 1991; Cooper, 1999 as cited in Rivas-Drake and Mooney, 2008).

Marco's chosen manner of rebelling and resisting fell to graffiti because of his own interest in art. One can hear the pride in Marco's voice as he talks about his art, where he chooses to display it, how it differs from gangbanging graffiti, and the notoriety he has received because of his art. After getting the response that he liked to tag, "anywhere possible . . . especially where people could see it," I asked him for specific examples of where these visible places could be found.

Uh, there's this one part on the escalators, uh, one's going up obviously and the other one's going down, and they're crossed like that, and then there's one, like big silver thing on the escalators, and we would write either the crew [group] name or the, my personal name, you know? In the washroom, the white walls are on the sides. So, on these two walls there was always graffiti. Most of the- I noticed that most of the gangbanging graffiti was in the stalls, you know. It was never out there. Like, we, what we did was, we were trying to get our names up, get respect in a way, so, we would tag, we would try to get the fattest marker we could get, and tag on those walls from the floor up. Most people would just like tag where their- as soon as where they see their eye . . . And I guess I was, I'm a legend at Vargas High School, as far as tagging goes, because I never got caught, and nobody really knows who I am except close friends. Except like now, Facebook, I guess, since I have, on like, on Facebook, I used to cover my face so nobody would know, 'cause I have, my name would be Wicked Cactus. C-A-C-

T-U-S. And I just put, Wicked Cactus, you know? 'Cause it was, it sounded cool you know? Not Cactus One, not—it's just Wicked Cactus - I [am]! (laughing) So, um, yeah, and as far, uh, as now, some kids are like, I guess through my cousin's Facebook page they, they've heard about me, they've see like some of my artwork. And then since my cousin has me on his friend's list, they will get to me from him, you know? They'll be like, oh you're the, you're the Cactus that came, graduated in 08? I'm like yeah, yeah, that's me. Haha.

Marco uses the term “wicked” in the colloquial sense of being awesome. In addition to the respect from classmates, he has also developed a positive self-image and belief in his abilities. One can clearly hear the pride in his voice. Here is another example of the power that Marco would take back through his graffiti:

And another thing we learned is never carry markers or stuff that would, what we called, would be a send out to people like, they wouldn't suspect from us. So all my book bags, they were always clean. They would have like writing, or like I would, that's where I would try my markers on, you know? Just give 'em a stroke or whatnot. But we would never have anything tagged on or anything like that because yeah, that was a send-out, you know? People would know that, oh he's tagging, and this, this, and that. So we just looked like normal school kids. But in reality, we were, we were destroying the school. Inside out.

In addition to becoming extremely proud of his art and his ability to not get caught, Marco's graffiti crew (group) took ownership of an old crew name. When Marco began at Vargas High School and joined this group, they decided to bring back an old crew name, DNSV.⁷ While keeping the letters because of the recognized respect it brought them, they changed the meaning to be their own, to reflect their own culture.

DNSV means uh, Down No Sudden Valleys. Uh, but then we changed it to Spanish, which means *Demonstrando Nuestra Simple Vida*. Or we, we called it *Desmadres No Somos Vatos*.

Now that Marco is no longer in high school, he no longer tags to the extent that he did. In addition to the possibility of a night in jail that he mentions below, Marco has a real knowledge that anything he might do now could potentially affect his ability to get

⁷ Not the actual name. All personal and institutional names are pseudonyms, as are the names they created with relation to the crew name.

residency or citizenship if there is any immigration reform. “Sticking it to the man” was more effective within the confines of the high school world as it was a relatively protected environment. I asked him where he did most of his graffiti. He responded:

I did it everywhere I could. And I really wasn't scared of what would happen. Now I am. I, I could always say that I wasn't scared of anything. But yes, I am. Back then, because I'm telling you, I was 17, 16, it was a slap on the wrist. Now, 18, and you're considered as a war draft basically, you know? So, there you go. If you can fight a war, you can vote and you can smoke, you can spend a night in jail.

Thus, both Marco and Juan have demonstrated different ways of taking back power, exercising, and executing it in manners that affect their own selves, like Juan's personal use of language and Marco's subversive acts of tagging the school that “stick it to the man.” Now, we will examine some specific mediums through which they have come to understand power and develop feelings of agency along the way.

Mediums to understanding power.

Both Marco and Juan have found specific mediums through which they have been able to see and understand power. Marco has had a very profound relationship with music (therefore making it unsurprising that he would choose to study music and become a musician if his status were not restraining him). In Juan's deliberate attempts to keep people at arm's length, television has taken up a bigger space. Juan contextualizes much of his understanding of power through the power plays that he has seen and interpreted on television.

Marco: Music as a vessel to power.

Marco constantly referenced music throughout my conversations with him. Music, for Marco, has played several powerful roles. It has been a way to way for him to learn about events of importance to his background and culture that were not taught as

part of the curriculum in school. In addition, Marco heard music name and blame society's ills and faults rather than simply condoning and following them. Marco understood music's reprimand of society as a green light for him to also question the norm, question the structures, and rebel against society. In addition to music's emancipatory content for Marco, the people involved with the introduction of it and its subsequent use by him have played significant roles in his life; through them, he has felt valued and validated, something he has not often felt elsewhere, particularly in school. And through these feelings of value, a love of music grew, consequently allowing his biggest goals to revolve around "making it with the band."

Unlike his experiences in school, music has had the ability to pique Marco's interest in reading and research. Marco says his interest in reading "definitely has something to do with the music." While listening to music in Spanish, Marco became particularly interested in songs and groups that were Mexican or that spoke of political situations happening in Mexico. This interest triggered his thirst to learn more about the content of the songs, and he consequently became a researcher of subjects that he had never heard about in school, prior. He explains:

Listening to Spanish rock, I remember I just started listening to the tapes my dad had. And I heard the first song that I have ever heard that really got my attention, was uh, Tlatelolco.⁸ There's an actual song they made for that, for that special massacre... Then I asked my dad, I'm like, hey, what's Tlatelolco? And the song basically explains everything and they have, um, all these meanings you know? Some of them are double meanings, but some of them are what really happened at Tlatelolco, and my dad started telling me about it, so I started looking it up, and I guess it's- when I, when I started looking it up, I started looking at more, like, uh,

⁸ The Tlatelolco massacre was a government massacre of student and civilian protesters and bystanders that took place on October 2, 1968, in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in the Tlatelolco section of Mexico City. Controversy has surrounded the entire event including the official events leading up to the shootings and the death toll (official government estimates place the death toll at thirty, some estimates place it in the thousands, but most sources report between 200 and 300 deaths). The exact number of protestors arrested is also disputed but commonly estimated at over 1,000 (Doyle, 2010).

bands like Three Souls in My Mind, which now they're called El Tri, and they have a lot of songs that sang against the government. Like they had, they have a song called *Abuso de Autoridad* [Abuse of Authority], *Nuestros Impuestos* [Our Taxes], *La Devaluacion* [The Devaluation of the Peso] which is a real big thing over there. And um, there's also a song they sing about all these kids who were, their parents work for the government, so they thought they could do whatever they want. You know, like, these rich, snotty kids. So I started listening to more music, and as I heard every different song, I started reading and researching more about it, especially nowadays, you have the internet, right?

Marco also views music as a permission to rebel against school. Before he “knew” music, his previous experiences in school evolved around the structural inequalities that they promoted and certain ideologies and knowledges that they dictated. When he discovered music, everything seemed to make sense. Music put into words what he didn't know how to express. Music expressed Marco's discontentment with his repressive school environment. Music rejected society's ills, so Marco could too. Music gave him permission to decide that he didn't like school, as he explains:

Honestly, I never really liked school. I hate, I hate waking up early, I hate people telling me what to do. I mean, I guess it's still one of those things that I had before—I, I still don't like when people tell me what to do . . . And as far as, um, music, the punk music, it was more of a, oh I don't give a crap about the world, f the government, you know, stuff like that, and I got really into that.

As Marco spoke with me, he seamlessly wove his thoughts about music, its meaning to him, and his discontentment with school all together. This response above was in answer to my question of why he was “not good at school,” as he explains it. As one can hear, his thoughts on music and schooling roll together. Music's ability to put his feelings about school into words gave him permission, I believe, to not feel like a failure in school, but rather to see school as failing him. This perspective, in turn, gave him permission to be angry about his school experience and, subsequently, to reject it. He goes on to explain that rock and roll helped to fuel what he calls his stupidity.

And yeah. I guess, um, I, I, I call it stupidity, you know; just thinking of the world should be the punk way, or whatnot. Punk was a way of life, or—I just didn't care about the world; I didn't care about basically me. In a way.

When I pressed him to explain how exactly he did not care about himself, he said:

I just didn't care about what was going on, you know? I would walk down the street and think I was hard, you know? I would walk down the street and, what are, what are you lookin' at? You know? And that's not really me, you know? And the whole anger problem. And then I guess I grew out of it. Um, but I really grew out of it when I graduated, when like, almost by the end of my senior year. I noticed, I'm like, ah stupidity man. I'm going to college pretty soon. What, what am I gonna do, you know? So yeah. I, I guess that's why I really wasn't good at school. I ditched a lot, very, very much. I would say that I was, sophomore year I was just half [there]: 50 percent attendance.

It seems to me that music was an outlet that allowed Marco to express and feel his discontentment with school and, consequently, society. However, those feelings began to change when he was on the verge of graduating from high school. Marco now espouses the belief that “school is not for everyone, but everyone should try it,” which I believe comes from his experiences of working in the kitchen at the restaurant, which also began close to the time he started thinking that this rock and roll lifestyle was just “stupidity” near the end of his high school career. In his mind, school may not be the most accommodating place, but the pathway of mobility requires an education. Therefore, while music was able to pinpoint for Marco the actual reason to dislike school, Marco ultimately realized that he had to be a participant in the game in order to play. His connection with music may have allowed him to feel power over his repressive school experience by rejecting it.

But Marco's devotion towards the need for education may also have originated from the same place where he learned to reject school. Interestingly, because of his invested interest in music and the consequent learning and research that he did on his

own, he made the decision that he needed to take on a new attitude towards school. He explains, “Che [Guevara] said a *pueblo* that does not know how to read or write can never move forward. And that is very true. And, if you do not have education, where are you gonna go? There’s always gonna be that block.” Had Marco not listened to music, not connected with the lyrics, not researched revolutionary figures and historical notions, and not exerted resistance to oppressive structures like schooling, would he have arrived at the same place to determine that education does not inherently have to be repressive but can also be emancipatory? I am sure that his experiences working in the back of the restaurant with other undocumented co-workers contextualized some of his reading for him, particularly statements like Che Guevara’s above. Regardless, music played a pivotal role in his view of and attitude towards emancipatory education and a pathway of mobility.

Another reason why Marco latched onto music—aside from its “f the government” rejection of society and education—was that he was recognized for his successes in it, particularly in comparison to school, where he did not feel success. He began his musical career as a guitarist and transitioned over to the drums while in high school. Knowing that Marco liked music, an older leader from his youth group asked him to take a look at an old drum set the church had, and Marco tuned it to the man’s liking. Marco consequently was invited to play the drums with the youth group’s band. This band traveled around to other churches and played at various youth conventions. At the end of one of these events, a woman approached him. Marco explains the story:

So, at the time I was 15 when I was doing this with the church, 15, 16, so playing, playing, playing, this lady saw us once. She’s like, oh I want to donate 500 hundred dollars to you guys. And we’re like, that’s awesome, and one of the girls I used to play, at the, she was like the youth, youth choir leader, she used to play

guitar and sing, she's like, you know what Marco, we're gonna give you a drum set. I was like, for the church, right? She was like, no, for you. I was like, that's crazy. Like, the drum set that they bought, it was, it's the one I currently have right now. So they bought it, I fixed it, um, and over the time, I just saved money and there were still people who donated money, so I picked that up, and moved my equipment for the drums, and for the rest of the, um, choir, you know? And eventually, uh, I started working, started going more into a, a band thing you know?

Marco went on to tell me about how one of the people that he met through the youth choir was a man who invited him to play in a Mexican band playing *cumbia* and *nortena* music. While he prefers rock and roll, these are his thoughts:

It doesn't matter which way I played- I guess I preferred rock better, 'cause that's really what I'm into, but if I could play again—live—with these people, *cumbia* people, it's cool, you know? Because there's just this feeling being up there, and all the sound, and all that noise you can make, you know? It's awesome. So yeah, I guess that's my music career up to now. Oh, so going back to your goals [referring to my original question to him]. That's one of my things- one of my goals, well, becoming a nurse, um, after becoming a nurse, going into my music, music major I guess in school, but I'm working really, really hard with the band, and I really, that's one of, that's my *biggest* goals right now. Just make it big with the band. I guess it's every rock and roll kid's dream. But, I dream it every day. I guess that's what I live and breathe for, you know? Just for that.

Clearly, music has had a powerful influence over Marco, and it has become a true passion of his. Music's influence on both his way of seeing the world along with the successes that he has found as a musician have led him to want to devote his life to this thing that gives him joy, makes him feel success, and helps him find deeper purpose. As a final thought, the contradiction of his practical desire for a stable job (becoming a nurse) and his less practical desire to utilize a talent (being a musician) has emerged fairly often in his speech. This concept will be explored more in another section.

Juan: Television as a vessel to power.

While music is Marco's power source, Juan has found television to be a powerful tool that can speak to the challenges of the day, if one knows how to look and listen for

the messages. Juan has found the power of television from the amount of time that he spends in front of it rather than with people (consistent with his desire to keep real people at a relative distance). When Juan and I had our conversations, initially I thought that Juan liked to watch television a fair amount, like many teenagers. But after several conversations with him, I began to see that television plays a particular role for him. In this example, Juan directly speaks about the role that television plays in his life, about the way that he is able to see power through the characters.

It's just the way how I process things that gets me open to all these different types of things. Especially all these TV shows. My mom thinks that, you know, it's TV and everything—but it talks about serious stuff like about how, how being different, like the blacks and stuff, you're gonna be hunted down, because, not because of a physical defect or a mental (defect), but the opportunity of being different. The opportunity of being black, the ability of being black, not knowing how to read. Um, white people thought that was bad, it was a threat to the white people, so they had to hunt them down, kick them, kick them under the mat so they won't emerge, or succeed in what they thought they wanted to succeed.

Here, Juan is again contextualizing his observations and lens through which he sees within race and power relationships. He doesn't stop seeing and analyzing these relationships when he watches television. In this conversation, even though he was talking about the characters of *Heroes*, he was speaking through his lens of seeing white people's *colas para pisar* and how he sees relationships between blacks and whites.

After this comment, I then asked Juan if he saw parallels between his reflections about race relations on television and what's happening in real life with the undocumented. He nodded in the affirmative and then went on to discuss Elvira Arellano, an undocumented woman who had been fighting to not get deported. For Juan, television is less of a direct source of power, like music is for Marco. Rather, perhaps particularly because he keeps a distance in his relationships with people, television is the lens through which he sees the

world, and he finds strength and resistance through the characters on the screen, both fiction and nonfiction. Here are some of his reflections about the show *Teenage Mutant*

Ninga Turtles:

When there's a revolution in progress or when a revolution that's about to start, that means there has to be change. That something in society isn't right, that a revolution has to take place in order for something to emerge, um, something good to emerge from the negativity or all those bad things that happened, that happened. Like yeah 'cause this man said, um, it was the TV show *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. But he said something very good, he said what I just said, but he said-he said, because this, uh, this man, this emperor or whatever, he said he was gonna try to take over the throne, and there was a revolution. And the man in charge of the revolution, he said, um, he said if there's any purpose of revolution, that means something's wrong, you [emperor] have done something wrong [so] that we have to have a revolution.

This episode stands out in Juan's mind because it spoke of something to which he related: the need for a revolution (which will be discussed further in a coming section). I believe that Juan sees this need for a revolution because, as the man in charge of the revolution said, "you [emperor] have done something wrong [so] that we have to have a revolution." This puts the power back into Juan's hands—he is no longer a victim or a lawbreaker or anything else for which society may point its fingers. Rather, society has done something wrong, and there is a need for change. And he needs to be a part of it. Both Juan and Marco have both benefited in finding ways to hold society accountable for its ills in order to not see themselves as the sole losers or failures.

Plainly, popular culture and the media have been important for both Marco and Juan. Both students have found avenues to engage in social critique and develop feelings of agency through their explorations and analyses of society and their places within it. Both Marco and Juan have felt their power—and thus, their *selves*—suppressed in school, in work, and on the street. Both Marco and Juan have found ways to manipulate their

experiences, maneuvering ways to reclaim power, whether internally or externally. And both Marco and Juan have engaged with popular mediums of entertainment to identify with and rediscover the power they know they and society have within. Power, for Marco and Juan is as much about how they see the world as how they see themselves.

As Marco and Juan discussed issues of power, another major theme that seemed to be hovering and present throughout our conversations was a real concern for their future, something that has been alluded to in bits and pieces in previous sections. In this next section, I have presented Marco and Juan's very understandable apprehensions with their futures as residents in the U.S. without papers.

Concern for the Future

Undocumented students face a unique concern for their future that other teenagers—regardless of income, race, or other factors—do not face. For Juan and Marco, a concern for their future ultimately came down to an access to money, mobility, and stability, all of which are viewed as attainable through formal education. While these concerns are common enough for many young adults, regardless of documentation status, for Marco and Juan, these concerns are compounded by the possibility and reality of deportation. In this section, I will explore how, in spite of roadblocks, Marco and Juan truly see education as the pathway to mobility, their discussions of their motivations behind education as the pathway to mobility, and their contingency plans.

Education as the pathway to mobility, in spite of roadblocks.

Both Marco and Juan speak of college as a pathway to mobility. Interestingly, they both cite various examples of how the school system has failed them, yet they both affirm that schooling is, as Juan says, “the way to prosper in society.” They also both

speaking very highly of the learning that they have been able to do outside of the formal education school system (i.e. Marco's interest and learning in music, Che Guevara, and revolution), yet, while they value what they have learned, they do not see their informal learning as a pathway of mobility or as a way to change their lives to the same extent that the formal education system will. Marco and Juan see formal education's emancipatory possibilities through its ability and possibility to change and raise their socio-economic status. They believe that they have the possibility of increasing their economic and cultural capital by attending college. Bourdieu (1973) describes cultural capital as knowledge, skills, and education that can provide advantages to a person, thus granting him/her a higher status in society. Bourdieu would argue that cultural capital is generally a hereditary transmission, but Marco and Juan believe in the American Dream and the possibility of making a better life for themselves than the one they inherited from their parents.

Knowing Juan's positioning with power and race relationships as the lens through which he sees, contextualized within his life experiences as an undocumented student, we can examine his perceptions about school. In this example, Juan discusses one perception of his, which is that school does not meet his needs. He explains:

[School] keeps me doing stuff. Like, I don't like waking up in the morning and I think, uh, I don't want to go to school, like, that's usually like, this year. That was this year. Freshmen year it was hard because it was like, 'oh I have to wake up at seven o'clock', but I like school. I like doing it and everything, and school was entertaining and everything. Then sophomore, junior year, and then this year, it was just, I guess there was just, I don't know, I guess it's just like the topics are more, the topics that we're doing, they're interesting, just that, the things that we're doing are somewhat boring.

I asked Juan to explain more specifically why school is boring if the topics are interesting. This time, Juan emphasized a relationship with his teachers. He explained:

Well, because when I go to school, well, there's this teacher, my first period teacher, Ms. G, she's white. Well, even when I had a white teacher like Ms. K, she was interesting; she made the, uh, everything, the topics we were doing interesting. Ms. G doesn't. She does it in a way that she has like good books, like the books that I like, I like reading all those books, it's just that, I guess it's just the way she teaches. It's not like a personal thing; it's just the way that she teaches. It just doesn't attract me at all.

He then proceeded to explain that he enjoyed school more when he had teachers "that kept me aware 'cause, let's see, like Ms. K, she kept me aware of everything. Like, that was the class that I was most quiet at, which was rare." I can see Juan speaking to the fact that there is a difference between being a teacher with a good curriculum and/or lesson plan versus a teacher who is truly invested in his/her students. Juan recognizes this difference and rejects the teachers who do not recognize him as the person that he is with the experiences that he knows and the needs that he has. Interestingly, Juan has identified his senior year as the year that he has lost faith in school. I believe that this particular year, his senior year, is the turning point because he has now determined, after the years and experiences that he has had in this life, in this society, in the school, that the school system, certain teachers, and people within the school are non-adaptable and inflexible to meeting his needs.

Using Gee's (2008) interpretive analysis, Juan feels like his primary Discourse is not validated or important within the school. Ms. G. has made an effort to find books of interest, but there's something that is discordant between her teaching style and his learning style. When Juan spoke of his favorite white teacher, Ms. K, he adapted to her Discourse, or the Discourse of the school. Because she found ways to relate to him, and he genuinely enjoyed her class, he adapted to her Discourse when he was in her class, which he states when he says, "that was the class I was the most quiet at, which was

rare.” She found a way to bridge their Discourses and they have mutual respect in the classroom.

Of course, this mutuality in a classroom does not always occur. Students who come from a different primary Discourse at home must learn a new Discourse that they encounter in school. Often times, students’ different Discourses are not recognized by the school system, which is what Juan identified as happening with him. The students with a different Discourse are seen as disruptive, as not “getting” the content, story, etc., as not prepared, or as disrespectful. Thus, the students are punished and denied privileges, which eventually leads (in many cases) to feelings of not being valued, not being important, not being smart, and not being an important part of the school. In Juan’s case, these feelings and experiences eventually contributed to his dismissal of school in general (although he still caters to the idea that an education can take him where he wants to go; he just might not enjoy it along the way).

Juan told me several disheartening stories describing his experiences which led to feelings of dismissal or being undervalued. One example was a story about Juan’s third grade teacher, a white male, who, in front of the class, criticized Juan’s ability to make anything of himself when he grew up. The critique resulted in the entire class laughing at him. Juan specifically inserted “I think I was the only black person there” during his explanation of the story.

An example of the school system not truly knowing its students was when Juan took his mandatory driver’s education class. All students in his school are required to take the class in order to graduate. However, in this midwestern state, as in many states, a social security number is a requirement for a driver’s license. Juan described to me

how he had to pull his teacher aside after class to tell him about his status and consequent inability to take the test on the day that the teacher was collecting the driving test fee from the students.

Another story exemplifies how the school Discourse was inconsistent with Juan's. Juan was telling me about the school he attended for kindergarten. He describes the school as, "I don't know; it was a suburban school, so it was one of those white schools, I'm not really sure which one it was." I asked him why he called it a white school. He responded:

Because there's just a whole bunch of white people, and some, some different nationalities were in there, but it was, like, two out of, like, the whole classes and everything, so I just called it white school because it was basically white people.

I asked him if he remembered liking the school, and he responded, "No, the teachers were mean." Later on as we were talking, he clarified his previous statement and said, "They weren't mean, it was just, it didn't fit my personality." Then Juan explained to me how he didn't see the white school as being accommodating to his culture. "They said I have to be more calm, more educated, that I was being wild. Yeah, they said I have to be more educated."

Seemingly, Juan equates being white with the cultural Discourse that is acceptable at the school, and he felt like his cultural Discourse at home was discordant with the Discourse at school. He learned quickly that he was going to have to follow this new Discourse if he was to be considered "more educated" or to do well in school. Juan has never fully embraced this idea of being calm, yet getting good grades is important to him. Therefore, he has learned how to operate in the school's Discourse when it is in his best interest, like, for example, when he needs to get good grades or when he enjoys the

teacher. This ability to know and understand what is happening and to manipulate the situation when necessary is an example of Gee's understanding of meta-knowledge. Gee (2008) states that many students with different Discourses gain "just enough mastery to ensure that they continually mark themselves as 'outsiders' while using [the new Discourses] and are, at best, colonized by them" (p.179). The advantage to being socially maladapted, Gee points out, is when a student becomes consciously aware of these differences, this insight, or "meta-knowledge" can help one to better manipulate the society of the dominant Discourse, as long as one has a "a theory of the society and one's position in it, that is, a base for resistance to oppression and inequality" (Gee, 2008, p.180). Juan unquestionably has theories about society and his place in it, which have greatly influenced his opinions and ideas about the need for a revolution. His actions and spoken knowledge are textbook cases of Gee's understandings.

As a final example of feeling undervalued or dismissed, Juan told me of his experience of being placed in a math class lower than his academic level when entering high school. I asked him why this happened. He explains:

It was like, it's like once you start freshman year, you start all over. You're starting all over because, like, it's different grades, different stuff and everything. So it's not like college, like college credits and stuff. It's not like [that]. It's just like you do what you're told and that's it.

I see this attitude of "you do what you're told and that's it," or resigned complacency, towards his high school experience as having colored the lens of much of his attitude towards schooling in general. By the end of his senior year, the culmination of Juan's feelings of being disrespected, being denied opportunities to grow, being seen as disruptive, etc., throughout his time in school, brought him to an exhaustion point. He no longer felt the desire to engage in school or with any people or structures that he

associated with school. Juan has had few teachers who have been both culturally cognizant of him, his learning style and his background and demonstrably invested in his learning by holding high expectations. These teachers he sees as the great minority.

The school system's inability to offer a rigorous curriculum that meets the students' needs is unjustifiable. A top student in eighth grade, Juan should be able to take higher level math when he enters freshman year, and he should not have to retake classes he took in middle school because he has to start at the "beginning" with the other students. Juan should not be required to take a class (like driver's education) that reinforces his exclusion from society every single day for a semester. I believe that Juan really wants to learn, but the school system has presented him with enormous challenges.

However, Juan's disappointments with the school system have not impeded his desire to attend college. I asked him if the fact that he doesn't like school contradicts his desire to attend college, and he responded:

Not really. I consider it my base because I realize that's my step to, to success, but you don't have to, like, agree with it, to actually be in it. So even though I have it as my base, like, I realize that in this world I have to go to school to get educated. I don't believe that school is this big important role that everyone considers it. Even though you need to go to school to, like, work and everything, it's not like your main goal—not when you're a teenager; [your main goal as a teenager is] basically like socializing and all that stuff.

Both Juan and Marco see college as a means to succeed in this society. However, Juan has also found an additional motivator to continue his schooling—a real interest in understanding why people behave the way they do. The same themes of power and race through which he has perceived his education have succeeded in giving him an impetus and real interest in learning about how people think and what motivates them. Therefore, Juan is motivated to study to be a psychologist or psychiatrist. Johnston (2000, p.10),

cites an undocumented senior in high school saying, “Success is not a destination, but a journey. Maybe the obstacles are getting harder, but they’re making me a better person.” Juan echoed this statement during an interview when he told me that he wouldn’t change any of his experiences in school because, he says, “it’s shaped me for the better.” His contextualized experiences related to his schooling have instigated a real desire to learn. In spite of obstacles (or because of them), Juan has found an internal motivation for continuing his education, in addition to his belief that as an undocumented person, school truly is his pathway to mobility and success in society.

Marco has spoken of this idea that school is the pathway to mobility as well. He discusses the idea roadblocks that a person can have who does not have a degree (regardless of status).

Yeah, school is not for everyone. And I believe that ‘cause obviously I did not like school. I kinda still don’t. But everyone should still go for it. Because I’ve seen it with family members, I’ve seen it with friends- they don’t have a school degree in anything, they don’t even have a high school diploma, and they’re trying to make money to raise their kids that they have, and they have, they have that roadblock, you know? I’m not planning on having kids anytime soon. But, I want to do other stuff, and I never want to have that roadblock, you know? I never wanna be like, oh I can’t do this because my job does not, does not allow me to or I don’t get paid well enough, and obviously to find a good job, you need a good, good school education.

Perhaps because of Marco’s struggles with oppressive structures in society and in school, he always came back to the same notion as Juan that school is his pathway to mobility. Most of his stories to me regarding music, graffiti, work, etc. were not explicitly about the roadblocks in his life. Rather, his stories painted a picture about his dislike of and feelings of disempowerment from school, society, and people who abused their power. It seems that he believes that having an education is a ticket away from

these oppressive structures. He states, “If you don’t have education, where are you gonna go?” Even his parting words to me reflected this. He said:

If you already have family, uh, if you have kids, I guess just support your kids, you know? Keep on pushing ‘em to go to school, because, I mean, uh, maybe ‘cause I was pushed to go to school, and I, actually, I just realized, you know, it’s important for me to go to school. On my own. So, push your kids to go to school because they would, they would appreciate you in the future for that. They would thank you for that in the future.

I find it extremely interesting that in spite of the fact that both students have essentially felt dehumanized as students in the schools that they attended for very formative years in their life, they both adamantly declare that they must go to college. As Juan describes it, “School is my base.” They both seem to have decided that oppressive structures and people exist, but they do not need to continue along the track of being oppressed. For Juan and Marco, a higher education presents that pathway out of oppression and into other opportunities.

Motivations behind education as the pathway to mobility: Access to financial stability, U.S. culture, and parental approval.

There are three main motivating factors why Marco and Juan speak so strongly about the need to attend college. First, they see formal education as the pathway to money and money as the pathway to stability and mobility. Second, the act of attending college and receiving a degree in the United States solidifies their access to U.S. culture as U.S. residents (albeit without the formal documentation). Finally, the influence of their parents has largely shaped their attitudes about the importance of schooling.

Both Marco and Juan talked about formal education as the pathway to money and money as the pathway to stability and mobility. Once Marco started working in the “real world,” as he refers to it, both the reality of being undocumented with its associated

ramifications and the reality of the costs of living hit him hard. This time period is when he identifies a shift in attitude about the importance of an education, even if his actions do not necessarily line up with his words. In the same way, Juan never mentioned money once during his interviews while he was a high school student. Once money became a reality for him—attending college and paying for tuition, books, and other associated expenses—then money suddenly became a topic of importance. It shocked me when Juan admitted to me before we had started recording one day that despite having enrolled in school, he had nearly decided not to attend school his first semester. This is the same student, who despite having all the odds against him, had always excelled at school, got angry when he received anything less than an A, and was convinced that having an education would be worth everything he was going through. As Juan said, he needed some “fundamentals of cash.” Thanks to Reach High’s scholarship, he was able to pay his tuition this past year; but once he exhausts the scholarship, how will he continue with his schooling? Marco explains this necessity for an education and the benefits it affords:

I’ve always seen it, especially, especially as far as, um, education. A lot of U.S. citizen students, they, they just stop going to school, you know? It’s just like, come on, man, just stay in school. You could uh, do so much with your life if you stay in school. You know, just take advantage of it. And then there’s students like me, you know, that are just like, I wish I had that, you know, I wish I had what those kids have, you know? At least just a social [security number] to work, you know, and they make good money, better money than what I’m making right now. But yeah.

Marco speaks about how teenagers in particular do not appreciate what they have “until we see what’s really going on. ‘Til we see what’s out there in the world.” Marco is, of course, reflecting on his own experiences and how the meaning of school shifted for him. Originally, school only meant doing what people told him to do. But, once he began working, he discovered for himself how a college education could afford him a

lifestyle different than what he sees in his job and its accompanying security. He explains further:

Uh, I don't know how to describe this, but I know it's important to have an education. Now I've realized, especially working right now, that with just a high school diploma you're not going to get very far . . . Being at my job is what encourages me, encourages me to stay in school because I see all the jobs- I mean I don't mind doing my job- I actually like to work very hard, because if not then I feel like I didn't accomplish anything, you know? But, um, yeah. I realized all the stuff I have to do, how sometimes dirty or sweaty I have to get, but you have to get over it, but I don't think it's worth it for just a high school diploma. And whatever I want to do with my life, [I] have to stay in school. Even, even with the music, you know? I know that I have the potential; I know I have the potential to make it big, but uh, I know that when I'm older, you know, you never know what might happen. Uh, I might break a finger, or break an arm actually and not be able to play for a while. So I need a job. I will always have school to rely on. So, yeah.

Marco didn't speak to this during the interview, but while setting up our interview on the phone, he mentioned that his schedule was really busy at work recently because his co-worker, a cook who had been working at the restaurant for 17 years, had recently slipped on some hot water, gotten terribly burned, and would be out of work for about six months. Therefore, Marco would be covering a number of his shifts. Marco's previous comments above could easily have come from the recognition of the stark realities of his job. He states:

And I guess that job is really what motivates me to keep going to school. Just being there. I guess it opened my mind in a way, it's just like, when I was younger, [I thought] oh, when I'm probably 19, 20, 21, I'll probably have a family by then now. Like everyone else in my family. Working there is like, I probably don't want to get married 'til I'm 40 now! Because, you know, working a lot, working a lot really tires you out. And then, like right now I just work for me. Basically, yeah, I help out my parents with what I can, but they don't ask me for anything... Like, I wanna have a stable job. And that'd be nice by the time I'm 40. And I don't wanna, I didn't suffer as a little kid you know? I never, I always had what I needed- not what I wanted, but just what I needed. And I want my kids to have even a better life than what I had.

Juan, younger than Marco and with less time, experience, and opportunity “in the real world” to have developed these sentiments, echoes Marco’s cry for the basic access to a social security number in order to work at a job or have a career that could give him some mobility. He explains:

[I have thought about] like, um, how would I get a job, ‘cause, you know, you need a social security number to get a job and to get paid or whatever, uh, if there’s a way that I can get at least, like, a green card or a residency card because even though I wasn’t born here I came here legally, and I have 14, almost 15 years here, so I was thinking if, like, I could get at least a working permit to work here at least to get some money, or, or, uh, a education permit, like being able to study here, and then when my studies are done, I could leave or whatever.

Marco and Juan express their desire to obtain a degree in order to have access to the wealth and a better life that a college degree could afford them. In addition to this motivation behind desiring a degree, both students speak about the importance of receiving a degree here in the United States. In this example, Marco speaks to this motivation:

I was just gonna go to school in Mexico just because my parents wanted to move from the United States. You know, they were, they were tired of this. And not of, I guess, they were just tired of like, having to accommodate themselves to a minimum wage job just because they don’t have papers, you know. I mean, now they found something they really like, so they’re ok with staying for a little bit more ‘til I finish my college career. ‘Cause, I mean, my sister, she’s a U.S. citizen, so she can come and go as she pleases, as long as she- we have the money, obviously, for her to travel. But they’re just waiting for me. That’s basically all they’re waiting for, just me, you know? To get an education, and that’s why- that’s another reason why I went back [to school], you know? The problem is, um, that I would get an education so they or we could leave [the U.S.]. But I don’t think I would leave, you know? [This city] is all I know. This is all I- this is where I was raised. I wasn’t born here, but it’s where I was raised. Unfortunately I wasn’t born here. Haha. But yeah, this is what I know.

I asked Marco why his parents wanted to wait until after he got his degree, and he said they didn’t want him to stay in the U.S. with just a high school diploma. He continued:

Yeah, because that way I get a job. I could live on my own . . . Well, yeah, like I have a friend I was talking to her not so long ago, and I'm like, ah yeah, yeah, you know, and for some reason I just told her like, and this is the way I sounded, I'm like, I'm just a illegal, uh, Mexican immigrant. And she's like, oh my God don't say that! I'm like, why not? I'm like, it's true. That's basically what I am. And she's like, but to me, she's like, in my eyes, you're American, because you were raised here. You've been here since you were little. You've basically just went through your whole school [life] here. You know? Just so you know. And I'm like, yeah, I guess you're right. So. There you go.

One can see how this friend helped Marco to change his image of himself and his sense of belonging in this nation. Juan, on the other hand, never spoke directly about the need or desire to graduate from a school in the United States. He never spoke about attending college in another country. He never even broached the subject of considering college in Mexico as an option. He has always spoken of college in terms of attending here in the U.S. Like many college-bound students in the U.S., study abroad for a semester or a year could be a possibility, but attending a college for four years and receiving a degree from another country often is not even a part of the discussion. Attending college simply means attending college in the U.S. Juan's lack of considering college in Mexico—his non-acknowledgement of this option—speaks volumes about where he considers his home to be.

The third motivating reason behind the desire to earn money and gain access into wealth and stability and mobility is the motivating presence and expressed wishes of their parents. Juan spoke of his mother often when discussing his future regarding having a career, making money, attending college, or essentially anything associated with upward mobility in the U.S. He says:

Because like ever since I was little, like I told you, I was a pretty good student, I liked going to school, [but] I have bad influences, like, kids like me. So, it was pretty much [I did well in school] because I didn't wanna let my mom down. So, it was just like, I don't know, I'm just close to my mom. So, if I let her down, it's

not like failing me, it's just like failing her. So, school is not the only way to make her happy but [is] one of the best ways for, like, her to feel good about me.

Once he began taking classes in college, he elaborated upon these thoughts:

Everything I do I do for myself, I really don't think of other people. I'm like a one person army—not an army, but, like, I just like doing things for myself. I don't like asking for a lot of help. But I went to school and I learned and everything because I wanted to learn and because, uh, I made my mom proud. And then, still now I do it because of me and because it makes my mom proud.

Juan's allegiance to his mother, and the importance of her opinion, is evident.

Marco speaks about his parents' role in his educational life and attitude as well. He says of his mother, "My mom has always been a 'for-school' type of woman, you know. So, I guess it's where I get it from." I asked him what a "for-school" type of woman is, and he explained, "School was important in life, you know? If you didn't go to school, you weren't gonna be successful." He continued by explaining:

But yeah, that's why, I guess that's a reason why I stayed in school, you know? But, um, yeah, when I was growing up, just the whole, I did good for [my parents] because I knew if I didn't that was really bad news for me. Punishments. Stuff like that. Got my ass kicked. Yeah, yeah, and I understand why because my parents were like, look, man, you're 12. You don't work, you don't do anything, all you have to do is go to school and you can't even do that good? And I understand why, you know? So, yeah, I guess, but that was the only motiv- the only reason I ever tried to do, tried to do good in school, was for them, you know? Not for Reach High, well, yeah, more than anything, just for them. Because I didn't, uh, the whole dadada—I hated that, I still do. Uh, there's not a lot of that anymore.

I asked what the "whole dadada" was, and he said, "Them screaming or talking. It's just like, ah, another lecture." Regardless of the techniques, his parents expressed desire for his success in school, and Marco's desire to do well for them is apparent. Despite the difficulties Marco experienced in school and the life experiences he's been up against as an undocumented student, his final parting words to me were his insistence on the idea of making education a priority. Interestingly, while insisting that people go to

school, he again references the importance of the non-formal education that his father introduced to him. He states that he thanks his parents for pushing him to go to school and to do well, yet here he contradicts himself:

Uh, if it wasn't for them [my parents] I wouldn't have realized how important an education is. Probably, uh, I think it would come down for me, even my dad just pushing me to go to school and teaching me—not teaching me—about rock and roll, but just letting me find out on my own what rock and roll really was.

Again, here we see this dichotomy between formal and non-formal education.

Marco most appreciates the non-formal education he learned from his dad, but he stressed the importance of going to school and how much he has to thank his parents for that realization. As Brown (2003, p.290) states, “Education has both enslaving and emancipatory possibilities.” Brown also states, “Educational institutions play a pivotal role in forging *aspirations* and structuring *choice* for youth through the daily actions and practices in schools that sanction and codify existent social and economic inequities” (2003, p.275, emphasis in original). Marco seems to know, thanks to his father, that the emancipatory benefits of authentic learning can be enormous. Because both students described less than positive experiences in school, it would not be surprising if they did not subscribe to the idea of formal education. Yet both of them are verbally committed to its importance, guided by the hope that they will not have to continue living a life that mimics their own school or life experience. In order to create change for themselves, their families, and their children, Marco and Juan want to continue in school so they can affect change over the nasty cycle of powerlessness.

Contingency plans.

Sadly, living in a world in the shadows dictates certain realities for families comprised of undocumented persons. Both Marco and Juan have spoken of contingency

plans. Both have spoken with their families about what they will do if somebody gets deported or if someone has to leave the country. Here, Marco speaks about the uncertainty of what the future holds and what the family plan would be:

My parents are getting older. And my mom has always told me, she's like, man, if anything ever happens to your grandma, she's like God forsake, you know? Let's say she has a big accident or something—or either one of the grandmas—we would leave right away. She's like, we would try to leave you enough money, and if you say you can't make it, just meet us in Mexico, but, we would leave right away. And I mean I think if I leave, like, getting a visa wouldn't be that hard for me. 'Cause I know the language very well, as you can see.

I asked Marco what the plan is regarding his sister, as she is a U.S. citizen. He replied, “I guess, well, God forsake, you know I'm not, I'm not a big God person, but let's just say, God forsake, we get deported, all three of us, who's she going to stay with, you know?” It appears that the uncertainty of the future still holds questions without answers.

Juan also has siblings who are U.S. citizens, but his sister closest in age to him maintains undocumented status, as he does. When I asked him about any family concerns regarding the future, he explained:

I know [my mom's] afraid to, to be deported and everything. She's protective, but she's, like, the only one that besides our uncle and aunts obviously that can take care of us. Like, they can take care of us and everything, but she's more of a—a—like, she wouldn't want to lose us . . . When we discussed this, we said that if by the time the ones that have documents [his younger brothers and sisters], uh, by the time they are 18, that probably if my legal status hasn't changed or there's nothing that we can do about it, then we'll go to Mexico. And they can stay here because they got papers, they can handle themselves and they'll be 18 so who cares? So we talked about that, we talked about maybe me, uh, Monica,⁹ and my mom probably will end up going to Mexico if our legal status doesn't change, 'cause we can do, she said we could work something out over there.

⁹ Monica is the next oldest sibling who is also undocumented. Not her actual name. All personal and institutional names are pseudonyms.

Juan then told me that his youngest sibling is nine years old, so it would be at least nine more years until this potential endeavor would be put into action. As noted, real concern for the ambiguity of the future, uncertainty in the possibility of certain policies changing, and fear for what's to come loom over Juan, Marco, and their family members, documented and undocumented alike.

Clearly, Marco and Juan's concern for the future is apparent in their everyday lives. Juan and Marco's concern for access to money, mobility, and stability is represented through their desires to attend and graduate from a U.S. college and to make a living that takes them out of their current socio-economic tier, putting them on the pathway of mobility. Given the unfortunate reality of their situation, both boys have discussed contingency plans with their families in case their expected plans do not come to fruition.

Agency and Revolution

A final theme that I encountered through my interviews with Marco and Juan was the idea of revolution. As noted previously, both Marco and Juan have found ways to exert power upon the general worlds in which they live. They have discovered ways to manipulate power in schools that do not meet their needs. They have found ways to resist solely using discordant Discourses and have, thus, enabled themselves to live with self-respect. And while they exert resistance, they speak of revolution. The term revolution comes from the Latin *revolutio*, meaning "turn around." One way that both Marco and Juan speak about turning around the system, or creating change, is through the power of having a voice. Marco talks about the importance of voice both from someone in power, like Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor, as well as from the people who march

in the streets. Regarding the former, he spoke of his admiration for Justice Sotomayor's ability and donned power to create real structural change. He says, "So, that's a pretty cool lady, I guess; she's fighting the politics from the inside." While Sotomayor may be fighting politics from the inside, he explains the importance of fighting politics "from the outside" as well. He explained that his anger actualized when he was 15 or 16 years old because he had begun reading about politics and listened to music that spoke of revolution. Then, during the George W. Bush presidency, when he became more personally interested in immigration, he began connecting what he'd read, researched, and heard in songs to his own personal experiences. He says:

[During] the Bush regime and all that stuff, I attended all those [immigration] protests, and that's where I started seeing, you know? I was like, okay, these kids back in the sixties, they wanted a new, a new way of living, you know? For the government to be better. They wanted this, this, and that. And we're still doing this [nowadays]. So that's how I kind of connected. I mean, as far as Tlatelolco compared to, um, that big march that happened in [this city and many others] for the immigrant rights, nobody died here in [the midwest], but it was, we're still standing, just, uh, the purpose that we're standing up for what we believe, you know? And I guess I've always, I'm still like that, no matter what it is. Just stand up for what I believe. And that's how I related it, everything what I've read, to what I'm living.

Juan talks about the power of voice as well. He discusses Elvira Arellano, an undocumented woman who made national news when she avoided her deportation order and sought sanctuary within a church instead. Supporters interpreted this action as her decision to allow people to see the face of an undocumented person. She has said, "I'm not a terrorist. I'm only a single mother with a son who's an American citizen" (Ruethling, 2006). Juan mentions her because she didn't hide; she defied the Department of Homeland Security, and, as the director of an advocacy group who supported her stated, "She became for all of us a symbol of resistance to the unjust, broken laws of this

country” (Ruethling, 2006). For Juan, she became an expression and representation of a powerful person who used what she could, albeit merely her voice, to create change in an unjust system and world. He explains:

And, like, the immigrants: they’re scared that they’re going to be deported when their family is here, like that case with that lady [Elvira Arellano] that got deported with her son. That’s just like, like, what they used to do in, um, in the olden times when they put ‘em up for example. Like, you, you do this, you try to speak up, you’re gonna be deported. You try to do this, and you will be separated from your kids. Which many people don’t wanna do that; they don’t want to get the risk of doing that, you know, some people think it’s worth that risk. Like, I’m sorry kids, or whatever, but we have to do this for change. Which Martin Luther King, Ghandi, a whole bunch of other people [did] in peaceful ways, even though they broke the laws—which were not right! But, they, they needed to do that to achieve their goal. So, it’s a sad story about that lady, but if you put it in perspective, and start analyzing it, there should be more people doing that. There should be more people trying to get their papers, trying to go about their business, you know what I mean? People will be deported every single day by the minute. Yep. And there’s a whole bunch. Yeah! It’s impossible, they’re not gonna, they can’t deport a bunch of, a whole community, because if you deport ‘em, it could be even three, four states. Which that’s almost, that’s like millions of people that would be up and get deported. Which you need them for the country. You need them to, to work for almost nothing; you need them to give you, what other people who are smarter wouldn’t give you. Because they [smarter people] know, they know their rights, they know what they can do, and they know how to use them.

Here, Juan started speaking about his definition of what “smart people” are.

Juan: In the case of the immigrants, they don’t know their rights, they don’t know how to use them, and they’re being manipulated by fear. Which is a very good type. I actually like that. But, it’s not very good. It’s a way, it’s hard. White people are smart. They’re smart! White people is smart. And not just white people but, when, when there are white people, but it’s not just white people, it’s the whole community

KM: People that are smart?

Juan: Yeah, people that are smart, that, that, not smart, but people, ‘cause you gotta be, you gotta be smart if you can think that up.

KM: You have to work the system?

Juan: To work the system you gotta be smart.

Juan: Well, if you're that smart in your own country, you can use that, you know to make at least a friend in the government, well first of all, 'cause you're not going to go straight to a high person right away, 'cause they can make friends with their friends, and then sooner or later you have this whole place, this whole like Lego community that you can use. And you can, you gotta at least be smart to work the system.

Juan's use of the term "smart" here is extremely thought provoking. I thought that he was trying to say that white people (oppressors, people with a *cola para pisar*) are very smart, because they know how to manipulate people, especially based on previous statements he has made regarding his admiration for certain people's manipulation skills. But I now understand him as speaking not simply about the power of manipulation but also about the need for the oppressed to find that power source in the same manner as the oppressors. A smart person knows not to give up, but to find another way. A smart person builds upon what he already has to make something greater. Juan speaks of Elvira Arellano as an example of this; she didn't have much, but she used what she had, and she caught the nation's attention. Attending marches and rallies, which Marco speaks about, are another example; those with little still have their voices. Single voices can be quite loud together. Being smart means recognizing one's resources and using them; being smart disallows others with "power" to make one feel afraid and worth less than others. Being smart means claiming the equal power that is rightfully one's own.

Marco and Juan speak of different ways of creating change. Marco speaks about making change through official channels, being someone who can actually change laws. Juan speaks about making change through the "outside track," making some noise. We may not all be members of Congress or judges, but we can all get involved and let our voices be heard. Marco agrees that this type of noise is valuable, but he argues that you

need an insider in the long run to follow through on the noisemakers' demands. Portes and Rumbaut (2006) agree that having the right political officials in office is the key to creating change. They have also found that social movements' impact on the creation of formalized organizations such as MALDEF (the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund) have played an important role in putting the right political officers on center stage. When speaking about the same immigration march that Marco attended, they write, "Ironically, a migrant group made up mostly of peasants and unskilled laborers has ended up playing an increasingly important role in the politics of both their original and adopted countries" (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006, p.153). The social networks that immigrants have been able to create are proving that this group is not one to be overlooked.

In order to change a situation, one needs to understand it. Understanding does not come from narrowly observing the outermost layer. Freire (2003, p.85) says, "A deepened consciousness of their situation leads people to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation." Freedom happens when there is praxis— action and reflection of oppression and its causes. Through praxis, those who are oppressed can acquire a critical awareness of their own condition, and with their allies, struggle for liberation. Here, Marco demonstrates this engagement and struggle for liberation from oppression, explaining how obtaining an education is revolutionary because then one has the power to fight from the inside:

Get an education because it's easier to fight for what you believe if you have an education in something and you know what you're talking about, and that way eventually you can fight it from the inside. You know, fight the system from the inside. It's like, if you get burned as opposed to an internal wound, you would die faster from an internal wound.

When Marco was speaking about his investigations into revolutions, he explained how education's emancipating possibilities for mobility go further than simply getting a good job or changing the system; having a degree or being educated can even change the way people look at you, view you, and treat you. This social capital, as Bourdieu (1973, 2006) would define it, is just as important and useful as economic capital. Marco explains:

Yeah, and I started reading about [Che Guevara], And after I read about him, I started reading about other revolutions . . . and I, I really never knew the history of the Mexican Revolution. And, yeah, that's, uh, that's one of my things. I don't like school, like I'm telling you, but it's always worth it going, continuing your education, school-wise. Also in other fields too, because you don't want to be talking about something that you completely don't know anything about and be seen as, oh that guy's a fool, you know? Why's he talking?

The way that one is viewed in society appears to be just as important to Marco as the actual place one has in society. As a final example, the emancipatory role of education is pointed out by Marco:

As far as diplomatic school-wise, yeah, school is not for everyone. And I believe that 'cause obviously I did not like school. I kinda still don't. But everyone should still go for it. Because I've seen it with family members, I've seen it with friends; they don't have a school degree in anything, they don't even have a high school diploma, and they're trying to make money to raise their kids that they have, and they have, they have that roadblock, you know? I'm not planning on having kids anytime soon. But, I want to do other stuff, and I never want to have that roadblock, you know? I never wanna be like, oh I can't do this because my job does not, does not allow me to or I don't get paid well enough, and obviously to find a good job, you need a good, good school education.

The importance of an education is clear to Marco. The need for a revolution is on both Juan and Marco's minds. As Juan says:

When a revolution [is] about to start, that means there has to be change. That something in society isn't right, that a revolution has to take place in order for something to emerge . . . something good to emerge from the negativity or all those bad things that happened when something is not right.

In summary, both Marco and Juan discuss revolution in terms of creating change within an unjust system. They recognize that having one's voice heard is important in the pathway to create change, and this can happen by calling attention to an issue through a march and protest and by having people in office who represent and hear "the people's" voices. Education is both emancipatory and revolutionary because it creates access to power; one has the opportunity, the equipment, and the power to fight "from the inside." Freire would agree with Marco and Juan, as he says, "Pedagogy must be forged *with* and not *for* people (2003, p.48, emphasis in original). He continues, "The reality of oppression is not . . . a closed world from which there is no exit, but . . . a limiting situation which they can transform" (Freire, 2003, p.49). Marco and Juan recognize this necessity to have their voices heard in order to create real change and be a part of a revolution.

Where Are They Now?

Now that our interviews have been completed, Marco and Juan continue in their daily struggle to figure out their path. Marco and I have managed to stay in touch with one another. Generally, he will send me a text on my cell phone at random, often beginning the conversation with nothing more than a 'Hey' or 'How's it going?' Through texting and follow-up phone calls, he has informed me that he obtained a second restaurant job and, consequently, lost it within a month because "they checked my social and it wasn't good." After finishing up his fall semester, he decided not to enroll in classes at Everett for the spring semester. Without a scholarship to cover the bulk of his expenses, the idea of spending all his hard-earned money on his classes appealed less to him. Marco also decided, after discussions with some family members, that he would

move to Mexico by the end of 2010. With his bilingual abilities, his cultural knowledge of the U.S., and his connections to family members living in Acapulco, he decided he could easily make a living and be an asset to the tourism business there. Then, after saving money, he would attend the school of Bellas Artes in Mexico City and study art and music as he has always aspired to do.

About a month after telling me about these new plans, Marco contacted me once again and informed me that he had changed his mind about moving to Mexico; he had decided to try to make things work in the U.S. instead. He had recently moved out of his parents' home (a big decision that initially did not sit well with the family) and moved into an apartment with some friends in a more hip, younger part of the same neighborhood. He was looking to begin doing construction work with his father "where they aren't so concerned about the lack of legal status," in addition to continuing his work as a line cook at the buffet restaurant. As evidenced here, the realities and contradictions of insecurity are intimidating and overwhelming, particularly for a young adult. Marco's desire to support himself has led him to make some decisions contradictory to his stated beliefs that education is the pathway to mobility.

In contrast, Juan has continued to excel in his studies at Everett and Lincoln. I have not spoken with him directly, but the director of Reach High has told me that he seems increasingly happy and self-assured. He continues to earn high grades in all of his classes. Despite his initial concerns at the beginning of the academic year regarding whether attending college was the best choice for him or if he should be working on getting some "fundamentals of cash," he has continued attending class regularly, and he still has not found a place to work.

In the end, what both Marco and Juan have found is that instead of education being a purely emancipatory pathway to mobility like they both seem committed to declaring, the pursuit of an education in practical terms in some ways is hindering their ability to “move forward” at a rate satisfactory to them. Both of them wanted to attend college. Both of them truly believe that an education can provide them with access out of their socio-economic class. However, once they both encountered the “real world,” they realized the importance of having the “fundamentals of cash.” Marco ended up dropping out of school during his second year of college when the cost of tuition proved to be too great; his income as a line cook was not enough. (It should be noted that this the only job he’s been able to permanently secure without a valid social security number.) Marco has noted similar patterns in his family; when speaking with him about how being undocumented affects his family, he stated that those who are “illegal” never pursued the “school thing.” Some undocumented family members have a high school degree, while others dropped out before graduating.

Juan, on the other hand, has continued with school, yet, he seriously considered not beginning school—despite acceptance and enrollment—due to prohibitive costs. What will happen next year to Juan? What will happen if and when he graduates from community college and wants to continue his education at a four-year college that will most likely be more costly? When I spoke with Juan about employment options, he told me about the possibility of working at a “vegetable place where they make salads” where his mother works. He worked there two summers earlier. He states, “I don’t know; I’m trying to get that [job] back but, the problem is that I have classes on Mondays and Tuesdays and Saturdays and Sundays, and I can’t just work two days.”

This example demonstrates how academic commitments have interfered with making money. Both Marco and Juan were counting on their education taking them on the pathway to economic capital, but the “real world” has presented significant obstacles sooner than they were expecting. Marco has already decided that school interrupted his ability to make money, and Juan has alluded to it. It is a Catch-22: school is getting in the way of making money (the lack, thereof, due to the lack of documentation), and needing money is getting in the way of attending school.

I asked Juan if there were any other reasons for why he was considering not attending college in the fall. He stated:

Oh yes, the undocumented thing. At the beginning I thought, what’s the use? Why would I study if I can’t use it here, where I’m living, where my family is, especially my mom? So I was like, it wasn’t more like a depressed thing; it was more like a I-don’t-care state. Which is completely different in my opinion, completely different ‘cause an I-don’t-care state is like, I understand these things, I’m not depressed but I just don’t care. I didn’t care because I’m not gonna be able to use it here where I’m living and where my mom is, which obviously I’m probably gonna end [up] living in the United States for all my life. Still, in my .head, like, I still, I still think about [it], it’s just that, if I don’t get an education, while I still don’t care, I might as well take advantage of [getting an education] if there’s a possibility in the future that the, uh immigrant [policies] change.

One can hear Juan’s resignation to the system he has grown up with. He has learned how to channel his powerlessness over his status to a shrug. Rather than feeling disempowered, or depressed, as he describes it, because of his situation, he has decided that there’s no use worrying about it because things are the way they are. The important part of his statement, however, is his attitude. In spite of his status and the system, he still aspires to do what he can, go as far as he can with his education. He still holds hope that our immigration policies will change, and his work and education will not be in vain. Marco has a slightly different perspective. Here, Marco explains the most difficult part of life right now:

It's just like, oh whatever. And the only part that's really affecting me right now is, well, yeah, I'm trying to look for a better job. And some of the good jobs—or at least what I think is a good job—they require a good social security number, but the only thing that's really putting me down from, or anything that's getting me down from anything, from the social security number, is the school thing, you know?

Marco sees his education losing out to his undocumented status. Attending college has been made more difficult because of the financial considerations associated with it. These expenses are particularly difficult for him and his family as undocumented workers who aren't able to make a decent wage. Sadly, our current system has placed Marco and Juan into a situation where it is difficult to be optimistic about the future because their options are so limited. Without documentation, both their educational and professional (or, simply, work) opportunities are limited. How can Marco or Juan transform their futures into something beyond a continuous struggle or a constant uncertainty? Juan has talked about how “we [the U.S.] are cutting them [undocumented students] off at their roots before they even have a chance to grow.” This statement is incredibly sad and disappointingly true. Current U.S. policy demonstrates an attitude of undervaluing or devaluing undocumented youth and their feasible contributions to society. Marco and Juan are only two of the 1.8 million undocumented students in the U.S. Variations of their stories could be told 1.8 million times. A profound motivation must run in a society that chooses to concede its youth's potential—and, therefore, its future generation.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

I commenced this study in an effort to learn about the educational aspirations of undocumented students, contextualized within their experiences as undocumented, Mexican immigrants. My findings were poignant and provocative. Both Marco and Juan

continuously reiterate their need for higher education. That was indubitably clear. But their actions and their words do not necessarily match. For Marco, instilled with the knowledge of the importance of education by his parents, his external motivation became intrinsic when he began working and making money. Ironically, Marco became intrinsically motivated to continue his education when he began working, yet work became a large reason for withdrawing from college. Juan also grew up in a similar household that stressed the importance of education, hearing this emphasis particularly from his mother. His mother's desire for him to do well in school and go on to college morphed and developed into an intrinsic desire for himself. Now that Juan attends college, work and money are constantly on his mind, and while he has toyed with the notion of working full-time in order to earn more money for school, he has continued with his schooling.

Marco and Juan have felt dehumanized in school, and they have developed mechanisms and adopted resistance techniques so that they could continue living with some self-respect. They have learned to see the world and the value of learning through modes outside of the formal education system, some of which they value very highly. Yet, while they may enjoy and benefit from their non-formal education, the formal education system and subsequent degree conferral are seen as the primary path of mobility.

Indisputably, both Marco and Juan have deep concerns about what the future holds for them. On a daily basis they tuck away the fear that someone in their family will get caught or raided, and their family will be torn apart. They have discussed contingency plans with their families and they both have talked about returning to

Mexico to work there, despite not knowing the country through anything other than stories and shared family and cultural language and values.

Marco and Juan have become motivated by the idea of revolution and they have become inspired by people and movements that seem to make change. They want to be part of a social movement, and they feel ready for it.

These students are our future and next generation. These students are quintessential immigrants in the U.S.; they work hard, they do not complain, and they do not get paid enough. Their dirt and sweat is the backbone of our society. And yet we choose to continue exploiting these youth, exchanging their fine minds, many of which have been formed alongside their documented peers for 15 years or more in the U.S. school system, for their physical labor. These students have the desire to attend college and contribute their gifts and talents to society, not solely the unsought, undesirable work they can find. Despite roadblocks, they continue with this desire for the “American Dream”—to go to college, work hard, and to have a better, more comfortable life. This is all they want. Denying this dream to our youth obviously is not in their best interest; so, to whose benefit is it? How does this attitude benefit our society?

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Like other college students, the two young men with whom I worked are unsure what their futures will bring. They do not know where they will be in ten years, but they are working towards their future. They do not know what obstacles, people, and experiences they will encounter along the way, but they are open to the possibilities. These two young adults also face challenges and uncertainties that other young, college-aged adults do not even think about: they do not know if they or their parents are going to be picked up the next day and held in a detention center before being deported to Mexico. They do not know if the restaurant where Marco works will be raided by immigration officials or if he will be pulled over for a driving violation and be detained or, ultimately, deported. They do not know what they will do once they graduate—if they graduate—from college because there is no legal way for them to participate in society in the careers they are preparing for and studying. They do not know how they can support themselves financially, either in college or after graduation, because they can only work either under the table or with a fake social security number—both less than desirable, and certainly not lucrative, options.

These two students did nothing more than get carried in the arms of family members from one sovereign state to another at a time when they were too young to remember. They have heard stories of the mother country so often that they can describe in minute detail how tall a flag pole is in the town of their birth, but they have no actual memory of the said object. These students have attended schools in the U.S. from kindergarten through twelfth grade, and they speak fluent Spanish and English. These students could be an enormous asset in our rapidly globalizing world, yet they are cut off

from opportunity before it even has a chance to grow. Juan describes this loss of opportunity in the following way:

Juan: I think that there has to be change. I think that, um, well you know that there are several, um, no, there are many, many uh, undocumented students in this community, in the United States in general, that I've met a person that doesn't want to end up going to school because she doesn't have papers, so she has a point of view that, why is it useful, why should I do this, and blah blah blah. So, I think that it's not just—and I believe that it's not just—her, that it's many other students, and that's why many Hispanic students are not graduating. So, I do believe that if the United States wants this whole, this whole country to, to prosper, you've got to [give] the opportunity to the people that actually are here, that want to [work], but can't do it because of the huge, huge obstacle that they have. They have to change [the law] so then in the one way, [the state] helps them out, but then [the state is actually] helping the country out.

KM: You're right though; you help out the economy. Like, for the kids that would have graduated and gone to college-

Juan: And could have been the next Bill Gates! Or the next, uh, artist or the next whatever. You never, you never would have found out because you never gave them the opportunity, you never gave them the uh, the sense of [possibility]. So, you're cutting their dreams before they even started, before they even started to sprout in their head. You're cutting [their dreams] from the roots, before, before they have even started to grow in their head. So, that's the difference.

What does this attitude of a nation do to a child's aspirations to really participate and learn in school? What happens to children who have no incentive to participate? As Juan commented regarding the notion of staying to work in the U.S. as an undocumented adult once he receives his degree, "I come out [of school], I'm working for them and not getting nothing in return? Hell, no." What happens to a common sense of nationalism when a government denies the majority of the premises of our Constitution to a large segment of the nation's future workforce?

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

These are not children who do not know the United States, the U.S. school system, or the English language. These are children of people who sought out a better life for themselves and their families, whose pioneering spirit is akin to those who built this nation. These are children whose bilingualism and biculturalism should be embraced as an asset in our globalizing society rather than pushed aside to be discounted and unrecognized *especially* once they turn eighteen and/or graduate from high school. These are children who know U.S. tenth-grade math, who took the Constitution test in eighth grade, who learned about the Battle of Antietam in fifth grade, and who know the capitals of our fifty states—or who *would* if they chose to stay in school and graduate because they had a genuine reason to do so.

In conclusion, the importance of exploring undocumented students' perspectives about education is a vitally needed missing piece of the discourse. There are at least 11 million undocumented people in the United States, 1.8 million of them under the age of 18 (Passel, 2006). It is important to recognize the impact current legislation has on these youth, all of whom are growing up in the U.S, graduating from U.S. elementary and high schools, and soon to be contributors to U.S. economy and society. It is important to understand where students' educational motivations and aspirations currently lie in order to give undocumented students the tools they need to succeed. The impact of the choices of our undocumented youth does and will affect individual classrooms, whole schools, entire school districts, and the national economy.

Osborn (2006) calls the disengagement of members of a community living together and not having a basic understanding of each other as people, as a culture, or as a language, curricular bankruptcy. Freire (2003) states that oppression happens when

people fail to recognize others as people but rather as unrecognizable and non-important beings to exploit. It is inexcusable that we, as a nation, founded on principles of fairness, justice, and equality, refuse to engage with those who have been forced to live within the shadows. And worse, we have found ways of interpreting our laws to prevent our *children* from participating fully. The obstacles that these students are encountering is a testament that U.S. status quo is not a welcome, open door to all those who want to work towards the American Dream. Rather, it is an opaque system that allows and encourages certain groups of people to excel and holds others back. These practices reinforce the same standards of power hegemonically imbedded within our U.S. society so that we, the mainstream, cannot see them and do not question them. Besides the economic unsustainability of these practices, morally, how can we justify our actions?

Because the voices of the undocumented have been stripped (along with their dignity), we do not hear *their own* stories. We may hear the stories of the media or the journalists or anyone else who tells their stories, but the perspectives and voices coming directly from the undocumented themselves are difficult to find. This separation makes it easier to pretend “they” are not there, “they” do not count, and “it” does not matter. Ranciere (1991, 2003) believes that those at the top of the division of labor speak for those at the bottom. Those whose voices are heard that “represent” the other do not allow the actual voices of the people to speak, and thus, we hear the voices of the dominators, not the dominated. Those who are privileged to speak are given the opportunity to speak for the people, but how can one speak when one is not the other? Hence, those who can speak are considered those with important things to say (philosophers, sociologists, principals, teachers, superintendents, researchers, etc.), while those who *need* to speak

and be heard—students, the working class, the undocumented, the marginalized—are often silenced. This alterity, or inability of being another, prohibits the possibility for a person to truly speak for another. Anyone whose voice is taken away, or whose voice is “given to them” by someone else is still silenced. And therefore, in spite of the fact that I am trying to give undocumented students, by way of Marco and Juan’s stories, a voice, sadly, I am only a part of the oppressor’s discourse. Their stories, told through me, are really *my* story of them. *My* voice. They still have not told *their* story. They continue their silence.

When we fail to extend opportunities to our students to learn and to teach, to hear and to be heard, to speak and to be listened to, we injure our students, and subsequently, the world at large. Current scholarship demonstrates that immigration, specifically regarding the status of the undocumented, is a heated and loaded topic. Policy surrounding the undocumented is hotly contested and not well-understood. School workers and states alike find confusion in the often contradictory decisions and policies that are proposed or implemented. Economically speaking, both supporters and adversaries have views about the role of the undocumented in the U.S., although with regards to students, there is less outright acknowledgement of how these laws directly affect them. There is much research about the educational aspirations of immigrant students, more recent scholarship regarding Latino students, and sparse information about undocumented students, Latino or otherwise. Freire (2003, p.48) says the fight must be “forged *with* and not *for* the oppressed in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity.” In order to create transformation, the situation, the story, and the injustice must be transformed *with* the oppressed, which, of course, is extremely difficult as this population

of undocumented youth are extremely vulnerable. Until undocumented students are truly allowed to speak and are given back their voices, real and true transformation cannot and will not occur.

Hopefully, through the advocacy lens of this paper, progress will soon be made in schools and in our national policies regarding undocumented youth.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

Background

1. I'd like to get to know you a bit more. How do you describe yourself? Who is (name of participant)?

Education

2. Talk to me about school. What kinds of experiences do you have? How do you feel about school? What do you like about school? What do you dislike?
3. What are your goals? (Academic, personal, professional, next 5-10 years)
4. Does school (high school, college) help you to achieve your goals? How or how not is there a connection between school and your goals? What is it? (Or) If not, why do you think not?

Immigration

5. Pick out a political cartoon in the book *Migra Mouse* that speaks to you positively or negatively. Describe what you see and tell me how you feel. (OR) I have picked out a political cartoon that relates to immigration. Tell me what you see and how you feel.
6. Immigration is an issue that everyone is talking about today, and in some ways, it affects everyone. For example, knowing family, friends, or students in your class who have moved to the U.S., talking to people in India when you call to get your computer fixed, eating at different ethnic restaurants, or even simply living in Chicago, a city with many people from many different countries. Does immigration affect your life in any way? What are your experiences with immigration? How do you think that having papers or not (being undocumented) affects people's lives?

What do you think it means to be undocumented to people without papers? How do you think they feel about being undocumented? How do you think it impacts their lives?

If the student volunteers the information that he/she is undocumented, I will ask: What does being undocumented mean to you? How did you come to know you were undocumented? Do you see yourself in a certain way? How does your family see being undocumented?

(If the student does not volunteer this information, I will not ask. My motivation for asking the students these questions is so that I can understand how their views and experiences related to education are contextualized around their experiences of being undocumented.)

7. How do you think about the future? What are you excited about? What are you concerned about?

Appendix B

IRB Approval

DEPAUL
UNIVERSITY



Research Involving Human Subjects
NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

Institutional Review Board
1 East Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60604-2287
312/362-7593

To: Katherine Moone, Graduate Student, School of Education
Karen Monkman, PhD., Faculty Sponsor, School of Education

Date: August 25, 2009

Re: Research Protocol #KM061109EDU
"Jovenes Indocumentados: Undocumented Latino Students' Trek through Education"

Please review the following important information about the review of your proposed research activity.

Review Details

Full Committee Review

Expedited Review, under 45 CFR 46.110

Original Review

Continuing Review (Renewal)

Amendment

Incident Report/Adverse Event

Your research meets the criteria for expedited review under the following categories:

Category of Review: 5, 6, 7

"(5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis)."

"(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes."

"(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies."

Approval Details

Approved

Approved (Previous contingencies have been resolved.)

Review Date: August 21, 2009

Approval Period: August 21, 2009 – August 20, 2010

Consent Documents: #09-203, Version 8/21/2009, Parental Permission-English (enclosed)
#09-204, Version 8/21/2009, Parental Permission-Spanish (enclosed)
#09-205, Version 8/21/2009, Assent (enclosed)
#09-206, Version 8/21/2009, Consent (enclosed)

Waiver of signed Consent/Assent, applicable to #09-203, #09-204, #09-205, #09-206

The Board determined that the research satisfies 45 CFR 46.404; it is not involving greater than minimal risk, therefore children may participate in this research project. Parental permission and assent will be obtained.

Reminders

- Only the most recent IRB-approved versions of assent/consent forms may be used in association with this project.