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“ESTABA BIEN CHIQUITO” (I WAS VERY YOUNG):

THE PATHWAYS TO ADULTHOOD OF THE UNDOCUMENTED 1.25 GENERATION

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my research participants.

We all have a story to tell. Thank you for sharing yours with me.

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Abstract

Exclusionary immigration policies impact the day to day lives and transition to adulthood of undocumented immigrants arriving as minors. In response to the challenges faced by these young people, a burgeoning qualitative scholarship has shed light on their experiences. Yet, much of this research has focused on the experiences of children that immigrate at the ages of 12 and under, otherwise known as the 1.5 generation. The plight of the 1.25 generation—those who immigrate between the ages of 13 to 17—has largely been missed. Moreover, the timing of immigration, or the point in the life course when an individual immigrates, has not been considered as a source of differentiation in the experiences of undocumented immigrants.

This study examines the experiences and pathways to adulthood of the undocumented 1.25 generation through 40 semi-structured interviews with Mexican and Central American undocumented and DACAmented young adults who immigrated between the ages of 13 to 17. The pathways of the undocumented 1.25 generation diverged into the *enrolled* and *never enrolled* based on whether they accessed K-12 schooling in the United States. Gender further demarcated the lives of the never enrolled by structuring their challenges and access to supports. Among the enrolled, their ability to transition and stay on path towards college completion separated them into *stayers* and *leavers*. Moreover, the transition to adulthood was differently experienced as a result of their aspirations and the extent that exclusionary immigration laws disrupted the lives they had envisioned. In discussing these findings, I argue that the timing of immigration warrants analytical consideration and that paying attention to

the aspirations of undocumented immigrants can provide insight into how exclusionary immigration policies are experienced across the life course.

This research provides social workers, educators, and other stakeholders a more complete understanding of the trajectories of undocumented immigrants who arrive as minors. By examining the experiences of the undocumented 1.25 generation, I shed light on the challenges, needs, and vulnerabilities of an understudied population. This knowledge allows for a more nuanced understanding of the plight of undocumented immigrants, and can assist stakeholders to develop more targeted resources, supports, and inclusive policies. This study also advances immigration scholarship by stressing the analytical importance of the timing of immigration and the role of personal aspirations in understanding the lived experiences of undocumented immigrants.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A segment of the undocumented population immigrates prior to the age of 18 and "comes of age" in the United States. The transition to adulthood for these young people, referred to as undocumented childhood arrivals, is fraught with difficulty. Barred from legal employment and federal financial aid for postsecondary education, undocumented childhood arrivals come face to face with illegality—the conditions, constraints, vulnerability, and deportability produced by exclusionary immigration policies (De Genova, 2002)—as they transition into adult roles.

In response to the challenges faced by undocumented childhood arrivals, a burgeoning qualitative scholarship has shed light on their experiences (Abrego, 2006; Cebulko, 2018; Diaz-Strong & Meiners, 2007; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Enriquez, 2011, 2017a; Perez, 2009; Silver, 2012; Gonzales, 2016). The main story emerging from this work is that undocumented childhood arrivals move from inclusion to exclusion as they transition from childhood into adulthood (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2016). Initially, undocumented children encounter a more inclusive context due to their constitutionally[1] protected right to K-12 public education. Early experiences of inclusion in school lead them to develop aspirations in line with their native-born and documented peers (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2016). During adolescence, however, they are jolted by experiences of exclusion as they are barred from attaining a driver's license, legal employment, and federal financial aid (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2016). Hence, in transitioning to adulthood, undocumented childhood arrivals also "transition into illegality"

[1] The 1982 Supreme Court case, *Plyler v. Doe*, held that public K-12 education cannot be denied based on immigration status.

(Gonzales, 2011, 2015).

Existing scholarship has provided important insights into the challenges undocumented childhood arrivals face and how illegality shapes their experiences and transition to adulthood. Yet, much of this knowledge derives from the experiences of children that immigrate at the ages of 12 and under—referred to as the 1.5 generation (Abrego, 2006; Cebulko, 2018; Diaz-Strong & Meiners, 2007; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Enriquez, 2011, 2017a; Perez, 2009; Silver, 2012). The plight of adolescents who immigrate between the ages of 13 to 17—the 1.25 generation (Rumbaut, 2004) —have largely been missing from scholarship. Indeed, various seminal studies do not include 1.25 generation immigrants in their samples (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2016; Perez, 2009), and studies that contain any adolescent arrivals fail to consider their unique experiences (Abrego, 2006; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Enriquez, 2017a).

Not only are the experiences of the 1.25 generation absent in scholarship, but their challenges and needs have been obscured by the practice of conflating all childhood arrivals under the 1.5 generation label. Although as defined by Rumbaut[2] (2004), the 1.5 generation consist of immigrants arriving between the ages of 6 to 12, the term is commonly used in scholarship to reference all who arrive as minors without further qualification (Abrego, 2011; 2014; Cebulko, 2018; Enriquez, 2011; Gonzales, 2018; Silver, 2012). The common reference is problematic in that studies have mainly sampled from those arriving under the age of 13, but discuss the findings as broadly applicable to all childhood arrivals. This practice renders the experiences of adolescent arrivals invisible.

[2] Rumbaut (2004) divided immigrants arriving under the age of 18 into three categories. The 1.75 generation are composed of children arriving before the age of 5, the 1.5 as those arriving between the ages of 6 to 12, and the 1.25 are minors arriving between the ages of 13 to 17.

Moreover, the focus on the 1.5 generation has led to various problematic assumptions about immigrants arriving as minors. Assumed within this work is that undocumented childhood arrivals are not involved in the decision to immigrate and experience institutional inclusion in school settings once in the United States. For example, in an article describing differences between the 1.5 generation and immigrants arriving as adults (the 1st generation), Abrego (2011) asserts that members of the 1.5 generation—defined as immigrants arriving in childhood without further qualification—"were often too young to participate in the decision to migrate, do not recall details of the migration journey, and occupy legitimized spaces in the United States as students in educational settings where they are safe from ICE raids and deportation" (pg. 363). The understanding that the lives of childhood arrivals are largely structured by someone else's decision (presumably their parents) to immigrate and by school settings, ignores the possibility that the youth themselves might possess agency in the migration process and that educational settings may not contextualize their lives in the United States. Yet for immigrants arriving in adolescence, these are real possibilities masked by the focus on the 1.5 generation.

The 1.25 generation—or adolescent arrivals—immigrate at a point in the life course where significant biological and socioemotional development occurs. Consequently, I contend that the experiences of the 1.25 generation will vary from those of the 1.5 generation. Adolescents are in the midst of figuring out their role in society, engaging questions of who they are and where they are going, and developing autonomy from parents (Erikson, 1950; Muuss, 1996; Collins & Steinberg, 2007). Accordingly, the 1.25 generation exercises more agency in the decision to immigrate and greater voice in the activities that structure their lives

once in the United States. Moreover, while the 1.5 generation experiences most of their K-12 schooling in the United States and develop their aspirations within the U.S. school context, the 1.25 generation completes most of their schooling elsewhere. Their aspirations then may vary more widely and result in different experiences, fears, and concerns related to their legal status as they come of age. Finally, for the 1.5 generation, greater distance exists between their adaptation to the United States and the transition to adulthood. Adolescent arrivals, however, face the task of adapting to a new country while simultaneously engaging in decisions about work, school, and family formation that carry long-term implications for their trajectories.

Despite the differences between the 1.5 and 1.25 generations, scholarship on undocumented childhood arrivals has not considered the stage of development at arrival—what I call *the timing of immigration*—as an important source of variation. Increasingly, immigration scholars have pushed back against homogenizing the undocumented childhood arrival population and increased their attempts to understand the diversity of their experiences (Abrego, 2014; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). To this end, while much of the initial scholarship focused on Latinx college going youth (Abrego, 2006; Diaz-Strong & Meiners, 2007; Enriquez, 2011, 2017a; Perez, 2009; Silver, 2012), over the years, scholars have examined the experiences of non-college going youth (Gonzales, 2016; Enriquez, 2017a), non-Latinx populations (Cho, 2017), and undocumented immigrants with higher class privilege (Cebulko, 2018). Additionally, in paying attention to heterogeneity, scholars have debated whether illegality acts a "master status" (Gleeson & Gonzales, 2012; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018) or the "final straw" (Enriquez, 2017a). The "master status" frame situates illegality as a social location that "overrides other social characteristics" (Gleeson & Gonzales, 2012, pg. 3). Enriquez (2017a) has argued that the

"master status" view conceals how other social locations intersect with illegality to shape pathways. Gonzales and Burciaga (2018) contend that the "master status" concept does not negate varied pathways; they hold that immigration status can be predominant while other traits also play a shaping role.

Regardless of whether viewed as a "master status" or "final straw," scholars agree that variation exists within the lived experiences of undocumented childhood arrivals and that it is important to understand the "salient axes of difference" (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018, pg. 178). To that end, scholars have highlighted several potential factors that explain variation among childhood arrivals including educational access and attainment, class, gender, race and ethnicity, eligibility for DACA, first-generation student status, and place (Enriquez, 2017a; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). The timing of immigration, or when in the life course a minor immigrates to the United Sates, however, has not been considered as an important source of difference. Only Abrego (2011) has examined stage of development as a source of variation. Yet, Abrego's (2011) work situates stage of development within a child vs. adult binary; immigrants arriving under the age of 18 are considered as one group and those arriving after the age of 18 as another. Within childhood arrivals, differences by the *timing of immigration* have not been considered.

To address the gap in knowledge on the 1.25 generation, this dissertation takes up the question: what are the pathways to adulthood of undocumented adolescent arrivals, what shapes those pathways, and what are their subjective meanings? Within this overarching question, I also consider how the experiences, educational pathways, and transition to adulthood of the undocumented 1.25 generation differs from what is known about the 1.5

generation. I answer these questions qualitatively through narrative inquiry and draw on interviews with 40 Mexican and Central American undocumented (or DACAmented) young adults living in the Chicago metropolitan area who immigrated between the ages of 13 to 17.

Based on the existing literature I expected that the pathways to adulthood of the undocumented 1.25 generation would be shaped by the family, school, and work context. Within these contexts, I anticipated that compared to the 1.5 generation, adolescent arrivals would encounter 1) a dearth of support and resources, 2) negative high school experiences as a result of standing out as "outsiders", 3) lower educational aspirations, and 4) a more immediate experience of exclusion rather than initial inclusion. As I demonstrate throughout the dissertation, these expectations shook out in nuanced and sometimes unexpected ways. Indeed, although broadly the 1.25 generation struggled accessing resources, for a segment, gender played a salient role in shaping the resources available as they transitioned to adulthood. Moreover, in addition to the negative implications, standing out from their peers in high school also carried positive benefits. Finally, some adolescent arrivals did possess lower educational aspirations, were primarily motivated to work, and encountered legal exclusion immediately upon arrival. Yet, despite their more immediate legal exclusion, they did not always experience the transition to adulthood and illegality as disruptive.

Throughout the dissertation I elucidate the within group variation in the experiences of the undocumented 1.25 generation in transitioning to adulthood, what explains the nuances in their diverse pathways, and how they differ from the 1.5 generation. In Chapter 3, I examine the role gender plays in shaping the pathways of adolescent arrivals who never enrolled in K-12 schooling. Chapter 4 considers the high school relationships and transition to college of those

who enrolled in K-12 schooling, and Chapter 5 considers how the 1.25 generation subjectively experienced the transition to adulthood and illegality in light of their varied aspirations.

In the remainder of the introduction, I provide the general background to situate this three-paper dissertation. I begin with relevant background on undocumented immigrants and immigration policy, and then discuss in greater detail the gap in research on adolescent arrivals across immigration scholarship. I then describe the overarching theoretical frame for the dissertation and the developmental tasks of adolescents. I end with a brief overview of each dissertation chapter.

Background

Undocumented Immigrants in the United States

Approximately 11.3 million undocumented immigrants reside in the United States (Krogstad, Passel, & Cohn, 2017), of which about 3.2 million arrived before the age of 18 (Batalova, Ruiz Soto, & Mittelstadt, 2017). An immigrant is any foreign-born individual who resides and intends to remain in the United States. Undocumented immigrants are composed of individuals not authorized to live in the United States by the government. Currently, for unskilled workers and those without close family ties to U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents, there is virtually no legal mechanism for immigrating and working in the United States. Nonetheless, in search of better economic opportunities for themselves and their families, many immigrants settle in the United States without legal authorization. About 50 percent of undocumented immigrants cross the border clandestinely and enter without ever having been “inspected” by immigration officials (Pew Research Center, 2006). Approximately 45 percent undergo an inspection process and enter by obtaining a temporary VISA but remain

in the United States once it expires (Pew Research Center, 2006). A majority of undocumented immigrants are of Latinx origin. In 2014, 55 percent originated from Mexico and 14 percent from the Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (Baker, 2017).

Undocumented Immigrants in Illinois

With an estimated 550,000 undocumented immigrants, Illinois has the sixth largest undocumented population in the United States (Baker, 2017). In Illinois, Latinx make up 84 percent of the undocumented immigrant population; a vast majority, 77 percent, are of Mexican origin (Tsao, 2014). Central Americans accounts for approximately 3 percent of the Illinois immigrant population (Hall & Lubotsky, 2011). Traditionally, Illinois has been considered an established destination for immigrants with Chicago as the gateway city; however, over the past twenty-years, Illinois' immigrant population has increasingly spread into the suburbs (Hall, M., & Lubotsky, 2011). Relative to other states, Illinois is considered "friendly" and has enacted policies to accommodate undocumented immigrants (Barrios & Condon, 2017). In 2003, Illinois became one of the first states to provide in-state tuition at public colleges and universities to undocumented students (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). Illinois also enacted a policy in 2013 allowing undocumented immigrants to obtain a driver's license (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). More recently, in 2017, Governor Rauner signed the *Illinois TRUST Act* which prevents law enforcement from detaining anyone simply because of their immigration status.

Immigration Policy and DACA

Immigration policies and laws, by excluding undocumented immigrants from full societal membership, make their day-to-day existence challenging. Undocumented immigrants are not

permitted to work legally, are ineligible for most social welfare benefits, and in most states are barred from obtaining a driver's license. Additionally, undocumented immigrants live with the fear of deportation for themselves and their family members (Menjivar & Abrego, 2012). These obstacles are in addition to the challenges experienced by immigrants from low-income backgrounds such as high rates of poverty, disproportionate participation in the low-wage labor market, living in low resourced neighborhoods, and discrimination. In Illinois, poverty impacts many undocumented immigrants; a full 67 percent live below 200 percent of the poverty line (Tsao, 2014). The various difficulties experienced by undocumented immigrants combined with a lack of access to government supports creates a vulnerable population. Immigration scholars have argued that illegality, rather than being an unintended consequence of immigration policy, is produced by U.S. laws to stigmatize a population and create a disposable workforce (De Genova, 2002). As expressed by De Genova (2002), through including some immigrants and keeping others outside of the law, U.S. immigration policies create a vulnerable population that through fear of deportation is rendered a commodity.

The vulnerability created by illegality has increased with Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies. Of greatest bearing to undocumented childhood arrivals, has been the back and forth surrounding the Obama era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. DACA, an executive action signed in 2012, provides relief from deportation and renewable two-year work permits to undocumented childhood arrivals who immigrated prior to the age of 16 and have completed or are enrolled in an eligible education program.[3] DACA

[3] In addition, to be eligible, childhood arrivals must have been under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012, entered the U.S. prior to June 2007, have resided continuously in the U.S. for at least five years, and have not been convicted of a significant misdemeanor.

does not provide a pathway to legalization nor access to social welfare programs, including federal financial aid. Nonetheless, DACA carries the significant benefit of allowing childhood arrivals to work legally and obtain important documents such as a driver's license. DACA excludes a host of childhood arrivals; minors who arrived at the ages of 16 and 17, individuals without the "proper" educational credentials, and youth who have been involved with the criminal justice system are not eligible. Of the 3.2 million undocumented immigrants arriving as minors (Krogstad, Passel, & Cohn, 2017), only 1.7 million were DACA eligible (Passel & Lopez, 2012).

As an executive action, DACA falls in the "gray areas" of legality; it offers some protection but falls short of providing legal status (Menjivar, 2006). Even prior to the Trump administration, the temporary nature of DACA created uncertainty for undocumented childhood arrivals (Perez Huber, 2015; Siemons, Raymond-Flesh, Auerswald, & Brindis, 2016). This uncertainty escalated with Trump's presidency and has resulted in a back and forth regarding DACA's future. On September 5, 2017, President Trump rescinded the DACA program allowing work permits to begin expiring in March 2018. However, in January 2018 a California federal court, and in February a New York court, re-instated the DACA program by issuing a preliminary injunction. In February 2018, the Supreme Court rejected by-passing lower courts before taking up DACA and left the injunction in place. The Supreme Court, however, is expected to eventually take up the issue of DACA. At the time of this writing, those who received DACA can renew, but new applications are not being accepted.

The Gap in Research on the Undocumented 1.25 Generation

We lack precise data on the age-at-arrival of undocumented immigrants, however,

several estimates suggest that the 1.25 generation constitutes a substantial segment of childhood arrivals. One estimate shows that 58% of those immigrating as children arrived at the age of 9 and older (Fry, 2005). Data from the Mexican Migration Project (MPP), based on randomly selected households in 134 communities in Mexico, provides an even more striking picture; 60% of undocumented minors who immigrated from these communities were 12 and over, and the mean age at arrival was 14 (Donato & Perez, 2017). Finally, in 2017, 83% of apprehended unaccompanied minors—those who cross the border without a parent or guardian—were between the ages of 13 to 17 (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018).

Despite evidence that a substantial portion of immigrants arriving as minors are members of the 1.25 generation, their experiences have been either missing or obscured in the emergent scholarship on Latinx undocumented childhood arrivals. Indeed, various seminal studies do not include adolescent arrivals in their samples (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2016; Perez, 2009), and studies that include any adolescent arrivals do not analyze potential differences by the timing of immigration (Abrego, 2006; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Enriquez, 2017a). Further highlighting the lack of attention to the significance of developmental stage at arrival, some studies fail to report the age-at-arrival of their participants (Cebulko, 2018; Enriquez, 2011; Silver, 2012). There are several articles that have elucidated the experiences of newly arrived adolescents (Hopkins, Martinez-Wenzl, Aldana, & Gandara, 2013; Hernandez, 2013; Suarez-Orozco & Hernandez, 2012). These articles, however, are based on a handful of participants drawn from larger school-based samples that exclude minors who never enrolled in K-12 school in the United States—an important segment of the 1.25 generation (Oropesa & Landale, 2009). Additionally, these studies examine the here and now experiences of newly

arrived adolescents rather than their pathways to adulthood.

More recently, the surge of Central American unaccompanied minors—a vast majority of whom are adolescents—has resulted in several studies on their plight (Canizales, 2018; Crea, Lopez, Taylor, & Underwood, 2017; Heidbrink, 2014; Terrio, 2015; Jefferies, 2014). To understand the focus of this work, it is necessary to note the crucial differences in border policies for Central American and Mexican unaccompanied minors. When Central American minors are apprehended crossing the border, they are placed in removal proceedings; however, while undergoing removal proceedings—a process that can take years—they are released to a family member in the United States (American Immigration Council, 2015). [4] As a result, an elaborate system involving government agencies, legal service providers, and non-profit social service organizations, has emerged to address the detention, family reunification, and post-release needs of Central American unaccompanied minors (Heidbrink, 2014; Terrio, 2015). Mexican minors, on the other hand, can be immediately deported if a border patrol agent determines they are not a victim of human trafficking or have a credible fear of returning to Mexico (American Immigration Council, 2015; Cavendish & Cortazar, 2011). As a result, apprehended Central American minors enter an elaborate system while Mexican minors are largely deported if caught crossing the border.

[4] The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2008 provides the guidelines for the treatment of unaccompanied minors. Apprehended unaccompanied minors from non-contiguous countries are transferred to the Department of Health and Human Services under the care of the Office of Refugee Resettlement to be screened for trafficking. TVPRA protections, however, do not extend to unaccompanied minors from contiguous countries (Mexico and Canada).

The emerging scholarship on unaccompanied minors has primarily focused on Central Americans given the various systems and agencies involved in their detention and release. Within this work, scholars have examined their interaction with the immigration system (Heidbrink, 2014; Terrio, 2015), the child welfare system (Crea et al., 2017), and post-release services (Roth & Grace, 2015). Other scholars have examined the barriers to school enrollment faced by Central American unaccompanied minors (Jefferies, 2014), and the role of church (Canizales, 2018) and support groups (Canizales, 2015) in their incorporation. Overall, however, these studies have left unexplored their pathways into adulthood and have not addressed the plight of Mexican unaccompanied minors (Coleman & Avrushin, 2017).

Theoretical Framework: Agency and the Timing of Immigration

This study draws on the life course approach as the overarching frame. Within each chapter, however, I discuss other relevant theories and concepts to situate the specific area of focus. The life course approach seeks to understand and situate social pathways and developmental trajectories within the socio-historical context and consists of five principles: 1) development as a lifelong process, 2) linked lives, 3) the historically situated nature of development, 4) agency, and 5) timing (Elder & Shanahan, 2006). The first principle states that development is best understood from a lifelong perspective, linked lives highlights the role of others in regulating and shaping trajectories, and historical time and place states that all human development occurs in a particular historical context (Elder & Shanahan, 2006).

In this dissertation, I draw on the agency and timing principles of the life course approach as they undergird the notion that the experiences and pathways of the 1.25 generation will differ from those of the 1.5 generation. The agency principle acknowledges that

people construct their lives within available opportunities and constraints. The role of agency in directing one's life path, within constraints, gains particular importance among minors who immigrate in adolescence. Accordingly, I foreground the agency of the 1.25 generation in directing their lives, but also show the constraints imposed by social structures.

The timing principle asserts that individuals may be differentially impacted by the same event or experience depending on *when* in the life course it occurs (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003). As Elder & Shanahan (2006) state, "The meaning of a transition has much to do with its *timing*" (pg. 685). In other words, although embedded in similar policy and social contexts, the timing of immigration may lead to variation in how immigrants interact with and experience these contexts.

Developmental Changes and Tasks of Adolescence

As a significant period of development, adolescence gives rise to extensive biological, cognitive, and socioemotional changes that significantly increase the physical and mental capacities of young people (Steinberg, 2008). Biologically, adolescents undergo puberty which includes a set of biological processes that result in the greatest period of growth since fetal development; puberty occasions increases in physical size and strength and the onset of reproductive capacity (Susman & Rogol, 2004). Additionally, significant brain development—particularly in the prefrontal cortex—transpires during adolescence (Keating, 2004). The prefrontal cortex governs various cognitive skills associated with executive functioning including self-regulation of emotion and behavior, understanding consequences, planning, decision making, and problem solving (Keating, 2004). Although their mental capacities expand, adolescents' cognitive abilities remain immature as the pre-frontal cortex continues developing

into the twenties (Steinberg, 2008). Adolescents are more impulsive than adults, tend to focus on short-term consequences rather than long-term outcomes, and may make choices that appear beneficial at the moment but harmful in the long-run (Scott & Steinberg, 2003). Moreover, adolescents' ability to navigate complex problems and social situations remains immature (Steinberg, 2008). Hence, when combined with a lack of appropriate supports, adolescents' cognitive immaturity creates serious vulnerabilities (Dahl, 2004).

Along with the biological changes that bring about sexual maturation and expand cognitive abilities, adolescents undergo socioemotional changes. Among these socioemotional changes, identity development stands as the key developmental task of adolescence (Erikson, 1950; McAdams, 2011; Collins & Steinberg, 2007). Identity development involves a process where individuals attempt to make meaning out of their "past, present, and future" and create an integrated and meaningful whole (Muuss, 1996, pg. 51). In exploring identity, adolescents must answer the critical questions of "who am I", "where am I going", and "who am I to become" (Muuss, 1996).

Another salient socioemotional change and task of adolescence entails developing autonomy from parents (Collins & Steinberg, 2007; Collins & Laursen, 2004). Attaining autonomy involves changes in family and peer relationships, results in feelings of independence, and increased ability to self-regulate behavior (Collins & Steinberg, 2007). Importantly, although gaining autonomy from parents has traditionally been highlighted as the main task, both autonomy (independence) and interdependence develop in adolescence (Collins & Steinberg, 2007).

Dissertation Organization and Overview

This dissertation follows a three-paper format wherein each empirical chapter stands alone. Within each empirical chapter, I provide the necessary context to situate the question addressed, the relevant literature, the theoretical concepts employed, and relevant details on the sample and analysis. Chapter 2 provides a detailed account of the methodology for the overall dissertation including a description of narrative inquiry, sample selection, participant recruitment and the data analysis. In addition, I reflect on the challenges experienced in recruiting and interviewing undocumented immigrants and the implications of those challenges to data collection.

In the three empirical chapters, I address different parts of the following overarching research question and sub-question:

- What are the pathways to adulthood of undocumented adolescent arrivals, what shapes those pathways, and what are their subjective meanings?
- How do the experiences and transition to adulthood of the undocumented 1.25 generation differs from what is known about the 1.5 generation?

Chapter 3 draws on the experiences of the 19 participants who never enrolled in K-12 schooling once in the United States and sheds light on what happens to young immigrants who do not benefit from the resources provided by school settings. I demonstrate that for this segment of adolescent arrivals, gender played a salient role in shaping their experiences in the United States as they transitioned to adulthood, and argue that illegality and gender intersect differently based on the timing of immigration.

Chapter 4 considers the experiences of the 21 participants who did enroll in K-12 schools upon arriving in the United States. In this chapter, I consider their high school

experiences and relationships and what enabled some and not others to transition to and stay on path towards college completion. I show that school sorting mechanisms and the benefits of positive school relationships and embedded resources are not experienced equally by undocumented youth. I propose that the timing of immigration explains differences in how the benefits and downsides of school sorting mechanisms are experienced.

Chapter 5 examines how, in light of their aspirations and fears, the undocumented 1.25 generation experienced the transition to adulthood and illegality. To that end, I discuss the experiences of adolescent arrivals with 1) college aspirations, 2) aspirations to work and provide for their families, and 3) Central Americans fleeing violence. Unlike the 1.5 generation, I show that the 1.25 generation did not always experience illegality as a dominant disruption in their transition to adulthood. Rather, their aspirations and the extent that illegality thwarted their goals differentially shaped how they experienced the transition to adulthood and illegality. In this chapter, I contend that paying attention to the aspirations and fears of undocumented immigrants can shed light on how illegality is experienced across the life course.

Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the major findings and arguments of the dissertation and the implications for social work and immigration scholarship. I argue that the focus on the 1.5 generation hinders stakeholder's ability to develop supports and services to address the varied needs of undocumented immigrants arriving as minors. Moreover, I contend that the timing of immigration contributes to variation in immigrants' experiences and urge scholars to move beyond the binary generational differences of child vs. adult employed in immigration scholarship.

Chapter 2: Research Design & Methods

To examine the experiences of the undocumented 1.25 generation in transitioning to adulthood, I employed the qualitative method of narrative inquiry and conducted 40 semi-structured interviews with Mexican and Central American undocumented and DACAmented young adults who arrived in adolescence. In this chapter, I provide background on narrative inquiry and then detail my sampling criteria, interview approach, recruitment efforts, and data analysis process. I also reflect on the challenges encountered in recruitment and the implications of those difficulties to data collection.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry operates from the assumption that through stories individuals construct the self, produce identity, and assign meaning; storytelling—by connecting one event to another—creates an ordering process to experiences that would otherwise be random (McAdams, 2011; Polkinghorne, 1988; Ochs & Capps, 1996; Chase, 2003). Hence, "narrative is an essential resource in the struggle to bring experiences to conscious awareness" (Ochs & Capps, 1996, pg. 21). Narratives can include short stories about an event, a prolonged story about a specific part of a persons' life, or an entire life story (Chase, 2005).

Although centering individual stories, narrative inquiry is also concerned with the macro; narratives are understood to be constructed against a social backdrop and to reflect societal norms, values, and ideologies (Chase, 2003). As asserted by Ochs and Capps (1996), people "evaluate specific events in terms of communal norms, expectations, and potentialities; communal ideas of what is rational and moral; communal senses of the appropriate and the esthetic" (pg. 30). Through storytelling narrators also grapple with deviations from societal

expectations (Ochs & Capps, 1996). Thus, narratives provide a way to make sense of dissonance or to "resolve the discrepancy between what is expected and what has transpired" (Ochs & Capps, 1996, pg. 27). Accordingly, narrative inquiry offers a window to understanding the social world and its impact on people.

This study is retrospective in nature as I speak to young adults about their experiences immigrating as adolescents and their transition to adulthood. A narrative approach fits well with a retrospective study since narratives are essentially "retrospective meaning making" (Chase, 2005, pg. 656). Moreover, a narrative approach enables me to shed light on the stories of a marginalized population and offers a window into how the social context shapes their trajectories.

In utilizing a narrative approach, I operate from the assumption that narratives and the self are intricately intertwined (Ochs & Capps, 1996). Additionally, I take the position that storytelling does not necessarily produce factual recounting of events. Rather, narratives are constructions of events or "versions of reality" as opposed to "truth" or objective facts (Ochs & Capps, 1996, pg. 21). Moreover, narratives are co-constructed between the narrator and listener; they are "socially situated" within a particular setting, audience, and purpose and may take a different shape in another context (Chase, 2005, pg. 657). Narratives are valuable because they contain insight into the meaning of the lived experience and how individuals see themselves and their world. In other words, stories tell us who people are and how they became that way.

Within qualitative research, what counts as narrative inquiry is contested and falls along a spectrum (Riessman; 2008; Stanley & Temple, 2008). On one end of the spectrum, narrative

inquiry is synonymous with qualitative or interpretive approaches (Robert & Shenhav, 2014). Thus, any qualitative study involving interview data would be considered narrative inquiry. On the other side of the spectrum, narrative inquiry only applies to work which incorporates strategies developed out of linguistics and literature to analyze the structure of stories (Robert & Shenhav, 2014). I take the position that narrative inquiry functions as a subtype of qualitative inquiry, and that the defining characteristic of narrative inquiry revolves around prioritizing data in the form of stories. In prioritizing stories, not all interview data can be considered narrative inquiry. Rather narrative inquiry involves explicit effort and attention to inviting storytelling. Outside of prioritizing stories, I take the position that narrative inquiry does not need to be restricted to analyzing the structure of stories (Riessman, 2008).

Data Collection

Sample Criteria

The purposive sample of this study consists of young adults (ages 18 to 35) who entered the United States without authorization during adolescence. Although different ideas exist regarding the starting point of adolescence, for the purposes of this study, I defined adolescent arrivals as immigrants entering between the ages of 13 to 17. Starting at 13 ensured that I captured the experiences of individuals who identified as adolescents at arrival, addressed the gap in literature which has mostly focused on those arriving prior to the age of 13, and remained in alignment with the 1.25 generation as defined by Rumbaut (2004). To capture the varying experiences of the undocumented 1.25 generation, I included in the sample those who benefited from Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) or who were in the process of applying for legal relief through asylum or other means.

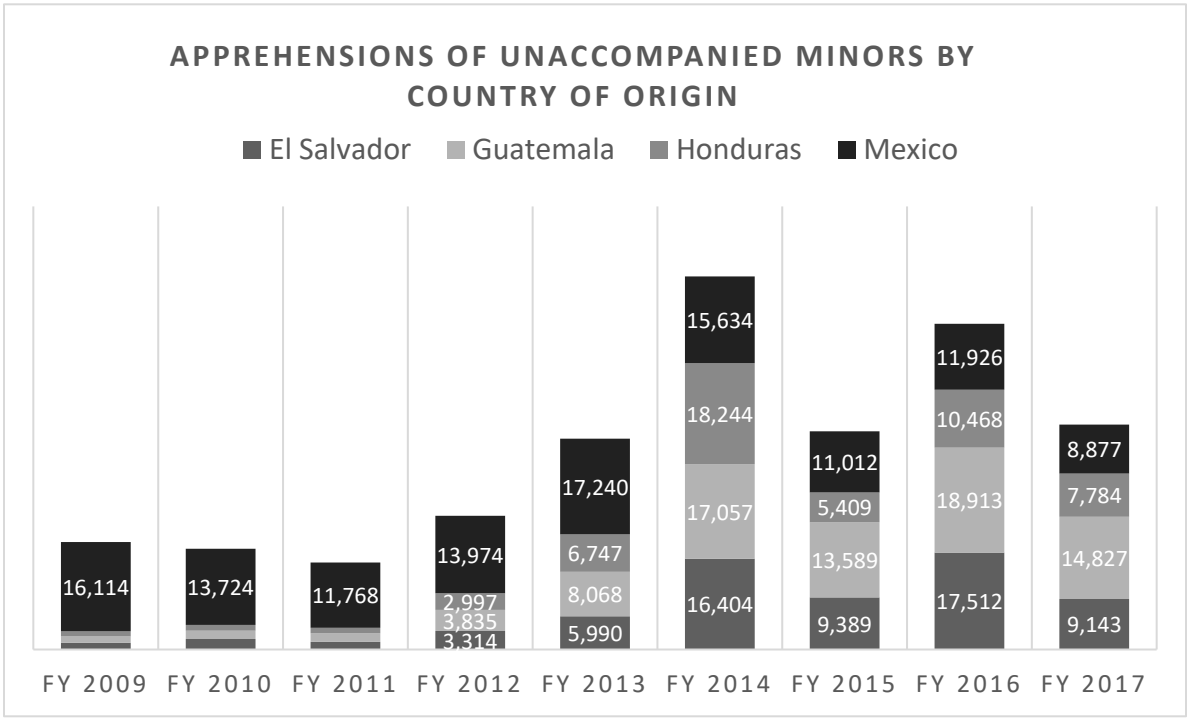
I further restricted the sample to undocumented or DACAmented adolescent arrivals living in the Chicagoland metropolitan area who were born in Mexico and the Northern Triangle Central American countries of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Combined, these four countries make up 69 percent of the undocumented population in the United States (Baker, 2017). In Illinois, Mexicans make up 77 percent of the undocumented population (Tsao, 2014), and Central Americans consist of approximately 3 percent of the immigrants (Hall & Lubotsky, 2011).

Despite differences in their background, I opted to include immigrants from Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries because—as evidenced by apprehension data on unaccompanied minors—they make up a significant segment of the undocumented 1.25 generation. Unaccompanied minors are defined as children who make the journey to the United States without a parent or guardian. A vast majority of unaccompanied minors are members of the 1.25 generation. In fiscal year 2017, for instance, 83 percent of apprehended minors were between the ages of 13 to 17 (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018). As shown in Figure 1, until 2014 Mexicans were the predominant group of apprehended unaccompanied minors. In 2014, unaccompanied minors from the Northern Triangle countries surpassed Mexicans. Nonetheless, while Central American minors increased, Mexicans continue to account for a substantial portion of apprehensions.

Importantly, although data on apprehended unaccompanied minors provide the best available picture of adolescent arrivals entering the Unites States and recent changes by country of origin, the numbers fail to reflect various minors including: 1) adolescents who evaded apprehension, 2) those who entered with a visa and overstayed, and 3) those who

immigrated with a parent to the United States. Nonetheless, apprehension data provide a lens into the migration pattern of the undocumented 1.25 generation and show the relevance of the four countries included in the sampling criteria.

Figure 1: Apprehensions of Unaccompanied Minors



Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection Southwest Border Apprehensions FY2009-2013 & FY 2013-2017

Sample Characteristics

As Table 1 shows (see Appendix A for the characteristics of each participant), the full sample consists of 40 Mexican and Central American undocumented or DACAmented young adults (ages 18 to 35) who immigrated during adolescence (ages 13 to 17). I further divide the sample between participants who enrolled in K-12 schooling once in the United States (N = 21) and those who never enrolled (N = 19). For the overall sample, the average age at the time of the interview was 26 and the mean age-at-arrival was 15. The distribution for the age-at-arrival was as follows: 13 percent arrived at 13 years-old, 15 percent at 14 years-old, 38 percent at 15

years-old, 20 percent at 16 years-old, and 15 percent at 17 years-old. Twenty-two men and 18 women participated in the study of which 24 were Mexican and 16 Central American. Thirteen participants were DACA beneficiaries, and 2 possessed a non-DACA related work permit. The remaining 25 were ineligible or had not applied for DACA. Defined as traveling to the United States without a parent, 29 participants were unaccompanied minors; however, 9 of those individuals reunited with a parent in the United States. Hence, half of participants lived with a parent upon arrival, and the other half resided with another family member or friend. At the time of the interview, 35 participants worked full-time, 15 were either married or living with their partner, and 17 were parents. Twenty-one participants completed high school or a GED program, and 7 obtained a college degree. Interviews were conducted in Spanish with 34 of the participants.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics by K-12 Enrollment

Characteristic	**Full Sample**	**Enrolled**	**Never Enrolled**
N	40	21	19
Mean current age	26	26	27
Mean age at arrival	15	14	16
Male	22	12	10
Mexican	24	14	10
DACA/Permit	15	14	1
Unaccompanied	29	12	17
Lived w/parent on arrival	20	17	3
FT Employment	35	18	17
Married/Cohabitating	15	5	10
Parent	17	6	11
Graduated HS/GED	21	21	0
Graduated College	7	7	0
Language Competency Medium/High	30	20	10
Interview in Spanish	34	15	19
Recruited through organization	21	12	9

Interview

Narrative inquiry sensitized how I approached the interviews. I viewed participants as people with stories to tell and oriented the interview towards eliciting storytelling (Chase, 2003; Chase 2005). To invite storytelling, my interview instrument (see Appendix B) leaned on the unstructured side. Rather than a set of interview questions that I moved through in sequence with each participant, the interview instrument consisted of six discussion domains on 1) their pre-migration experiences, 2) their immigration journey, 3) their experiences after arriving in the United States, 4) their transition to adulthood, 5) the impact of their legal status, and 6) their current life and future aspirations. During the interview, I posed a broad opening question for each domain and then allowed follow up questions to emerge from listening closely to the participant's story. After following their lead, I posed questions of interest to the study that the participant had not brought up. Hence the interview process unfolded in the following manner: 1) pose broad domain question and listen to story without interruption, 2) follow-up with questions based on areas they brought up, 3) circle back to questions of interest to the study that were not brought up by participant. Through this process, I signaled that I was interested in their story rather than answers to a set of predetermined questions.

The procedures for this study were approved by Social Service Administration Institutional Review Board (SSA IRB) at the University of Chicago. At least one interview was conducted with 40 participants and 14 participants were interviewed twice. First interviews were conducted between September 2016 and June 2017, and took place in public spaces (libraries, parks, community or organizational spaces) or in the respondent's home. First interviews ranged between 45 minutes to 3 hours. After the completion of the first interview,

each participant received a $30 Target gift card to thank them for their participation. Second interviews were conducted between October 2017 and May 2018. Except for one participant whom I met in person, second interviews were conducted via phone and ranged from 15 to 45 minutes. Second interviews were conducted to clarify information and inquiry on parts of the participant's story originally missed. Interviews were audio-recorded and conducted in either English or Spanish based on the preference of the participant. The audio recordings were professionally transcribed verbatim in the language conducted. I translated any quotes used within the chapters that were initially in Spanish. The corresponding endnotes provide the original quote in Spanish of translated quotes. Quotes that do not contain an endnote were originally in English.

To protect participants' confidentiality, consent for the interview was provided verbally rather than in writing. Prior to commencing the interview, participants completed an intake sheet (see Appendix C) with basic demographic information. All data, including audio-recordings, intake sheets, and transcripts, were stored on a private password-protected computer. Moreover, participants were asked to identify a pseudo name or were provided one if they preferred. The pseudo name was used throughout the interview and the writing of the dissertation.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited through personal and organizational contacts and a snowball approach. I stayed clear of recruiting through online methods such as Facebook (except for private messages) given the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Trump administration and out of concern that potential participants might inadvertently out themselves on Facebook.

Recruitment through personal contacts involved drawing on established relationships with individuals who met my sampling criteria. Additionally, I reached out to personal contacts who I thought might have family members, friends, or co-workers eligible to participate. Information about the study was provided to personal contacts via email, phone, and personal Facebook messages.

I also drew on established connections with organizational contacts and actively built new connections. I focused organizational outreach on religious institutions, social service organizations serving immigrant and Latinx communities, immigration legal service providers, and immigrant advocacy organizations. Finally, incorporating a snowball strategy, I asked participants after the completion of each interview to provide my contact information to others in their networks who met the sampling criteria. Overall, 21 participants were recruited through organizations and the remaining 19 through personal contacts and snowball approach.

Several important points regarding recruitment are worth mentioning. First, to ensure that my participants were not heavily clustered around one type of respondent (i.e. college students), I purposely sought out varied avenues and resisted recruiting largely from postsecondary institutions. Second, recruitment through organizations mainly involved attending events where I personally provided information to potential participants. The personal approach became necessary as the sampling criteria was very specific (something I heard over and over from organizations). Thus, organizations struggled identifying potential participants. Moreover, the bulk of recruitment occurred after the election of President Trump, and it became essential to be the "face" of the study. In order to feel comfortable sharing their story, potential participants needed to speak with me personally and have the opportunity to

ask questions. Hence, I attended 13 events, mostly Know Your Rights workshops, throughout the Chicagoland area where I briefly provided information regarding the study and made personal connections to participants before and after the workshop. With permission, I also provided information to potential participants at one of the consulates.

Data Analysis

Narrative analysis may take different forms depending on the aspect of the "narrative" that is of interest. Common approaches include thematic (the "what" or content of the story), structural (how the story is organized), and dialogic (how the story is produced and for what purpose) (Riessman, 2008). Concerned with the content of the story, I mainly employed a thematic approach to analyzing the data; however, for Chapter 5, I also paid attention to how the story was organized.

Interview data were analyzed via ATLAS.ti and analysis was approached both deductively and inductively. In conducting the analysis, I completed a first run of each interview transcript. The first run involved reading and listening to the audio while highlighting and commenting (in ATLAS.ti) on concepts embedded in the research questions and on novel insights, patterns, and themes. Moreover, throughout the first run of the interviews, I reflected in a running analysis memo on emerging insights, patterns, themes, and potential findings. The running analysis memo evolved in categories (such as school experiences, work experiences, access to supports) which were used in developing the codebook. Through this approach, I attended to the research question while also remaining open to emerging themes.

The codebook was initially developed from two sources: 1) the analysis memo developed from the first run of the interviews, and 2) the post-interview reflections. After

creating the initial codebook, I strategically coded eight transcripts from participants with distinct sets of experiences and revised the codebook. This process provided the foundation for the codebook used with the remaining transcripts. As needed, codes were added, relabeled, split or otherwise modified with each transcript.

I incorporated reflection memos throughout the data collection and analysis process. These strengthened the validity of my interpretations through two main avenues. First, they provided a space to practice reflectivity. In these documents, I captured my biases and assumptions, and the challenges and emotions I experienced throughout the data collection and analysis process. Second, these memos documented the analytical process by capturing my evolving interpretations. Below, I list the various memos incorporated and the information captured within each type of memo.

1. Pre-interview reflection
    a. My assumptions and biases about the participant
    b. Lingering questions from previous interviews to probe on
    c. My emotional state
2. Post-interview reflection
    a. Information not captured by audio
    b. Physical surroundings, physical appearance of participant, interesting dynamics, body language, etc.
    c. Conversations pre or post interview
    d. Brief summary of story/trajectory
    e. Thought provoking parts of the interview, questions that emerged, potential insights gained
    f. My experience and emotions
3. Methodological memo
    a. Events that changed the data collection process or the way I approached the work (i.e. started asking new questions)
    b. Weekly account and reflection of the data collection process and challenges encountered
4. Analysis memo (completed after first run of each interview and throughout the coding process)
    a. General thoughts on emerging insights or questions from transcripts

b. Emerging categories, patterns, themes
c. Lingering questions and areas where data conflict or seem contradictory

Reflection on Recruitment Challenges

The timing of data collection, September 2016 through June 2017, happened to align with President Trump's election and first five months in office. Hence, an already challenging population to reach, became even harder to recruit post-Trump. In this section, I draw on the methodological memo and reflect on the recruitment challenges I encountered and the implications of these difficulties for data collection.

Whose stories are heard?

In recruiting the undocumented 1.25 generation, I found that societal messages about whose stories matter and should be heard impacted my data collection efforts. Indeed, a segment of participants struggled viewing their story as interesting and valuable for research purposes. I experienced this barrier as somewhat new as my previous qualitative work was mostly conducted with the undocumented college-going 1.5 generation. Likely resulting from greater exposure to research and the attention this population has received in scholarship and the media, college-going youth more intuitively recognized that their story should be heard. In a similar vein, my participants who attended college quickly grasped the importance of their story; however, as I detail below, others required greater convincing.

Potential participants who never enrolled in K-12 schooling or did not attend college often assumed their experiences were not of interest to the study. For example, one young man whom I was unable to recruit, stated that his story was not interesting because he just worked after high school. Similarly, appearing interested in the study, a young women assumed

she would be disqualified from participating and warily stated, “But I did not enter high school.” Over and over potential participants brought up their lack of education as a reason why their story was either not interesting or disqualified them from the study.

Although I never mentioned educational enrollment or attainment as criteria for participation, this was an embedded assumption that I constantly worked against. With time in the field, I developed language to highlight the importance of each individual story. I moved away from starting conversations off with, “I am conducting a research project to understand the experiences of adolescent arrivals.” Instead, I would say, “Everyone has as story to tell. And each one has something to teach about the experiences of immigrants.”

Similar to the assumption regarding education—but even to a greater extent—was the persistent supposition that the study was about the 1.5 generation. No matter how I stressed that I was interested in immigrants who arrived as adolescents, my audience heard young arrivals. This was particularly evident when I recruited at Know Your Rights (KYR) workshops. During these workshops, I would describe the study to the entire audience and stick around after the workshop to answer questions and connect to potential participants. To my dismay, many individuals would approach me with a potential participant in mind; however, upon further inquiry, I would realize that their contact had arrived in early or middle childhood. On various occasions, middle-aged 1.25 generation members approached me about a 1.5 generation immigrant (they would often refer to them as DREAMERs) they thought might be interested. After clarifying the age-at-arrival criteria for the study and how I thought the experience of adolescent arrivals would differ from younger arrivals, they would realize I was interested in stories like their own. Nodding their heads, they would state, “Yes, you are right,

coming as an adolescent is totally different" and sometimes would proceed to share a part of their story. Unfortunately, because I was interested in young adults (ages 18 to 34), these moments did not yield research participants. Outside of the KYR workshops, I encountered similar struggles when asking for help from organizational and personal contacts; after describing the study they would note potential participants who arrived before the age of 13.

With each KYR workshop and conversation with organizational and personal contacts, I more carefully crafted my message to avoid the confusion. I started off with the age-at-arrival criteria rather than the country of origin or immigration status. I also juxtaposed my interest in adolescent arrivals against the 1.5 generation. "We know about those who come before the age of 13," I would say, "but we are missing the stories of those who come later." While this approach helped, I was never able to eliminate the assumption that I was interested in young arrivals. Both the assumption about education and younger arrivals highlights that societal messages shape whose stories are deemed valuable and of interest to researchers. Inevitably societal messages about whose story is moving and significant influences who responds to calls for participation, whose stories are heard, and the knowledge produced. Without this recognition, and significant effort to reach beyond those individuals who are most likely to respond, many stories will remain unheard.

Potential participants' sense of readiness to tell their story also impacted whose stories were heard. Various potential participants kindly declined to participate as they did not want to bring up bad memories and were not ready to talk. An 18-year-old young man declined to participate because he did not want to talk "about those things." Likewise, another young man declined participation stating he was not "ready to talk." The sense of readiness to share their

story fell along age lines. Older individuals had greater distance from their experiences and time to reflect and process. Indeed, many participants during the interview commented that in the past they would not have shared their story. For example, in recounting her story, thirty-year old Patricia stated, “Like now I am talking to you about it. Before I could not talk about it because it was very traumatic.”[1]

In conducting interviews, researchers must recognize that those who agree to participate have reached a place in their lives where they are ready to tell their story around the area of interest to the study. To that end, retrospective studies work well as they provide the necessary time span that may be needed. Yet, that also means that we may be missing the stories of individuals, who for a host of reasons, have not reached a point where they can share their struggles.

Finally, through the data collection process, I realized that my sense of comfort with some participants over others threatened to influence whose stories I heard and whose I missed. For example, I felt uneased when my attempts to share information about the project appeared to make a potential participant uncomfortable. I cringed internally when someone took a step back, crossed their arms, or looked away. Eventually, I felt myself hesitating when approaching individuals who appeared timid and preferred to approach those who seemed social. I did my best to push myself through these awkward moments. I told myself that unless they explicitly declined, I should not assume their body language meant they were uninterested.

I also discovered through the pre-interview reflections that I held a bias on the type of individual that would make a good story teller. In my mind, the outgoing type made for a good

story teller; surely, they would not hold back and freely share their experiences. Conversely, more timid individuals, I assumed, would struggle freely sharing their story and would hold back on the challenges they experienced. In one pre-interview reflection with a participant I viewed as timid, I wrote:

> *I expect her not to be very talkative and to hold back on me. I am worried this interview might be somewhat uncomfortable, and that it will feel like I am pulling teeth. Will she open up? My bias is that she will not. I see her as a very quiet person.*

This interview shook that bias; with the first question, the participant openly shared the most difficult moment of her life. Although I pushed myself out of my comfort zone and resisted the urge to only pursue more outgoing individuals, I realized that my preferences impacted data collection. Qualitative research and human interaction go hand in hand. To extent that one person over another creates comfort versus discomfort may systematically impact our samples. To that end, self-awareness and reflection are critical to understanding the limitations of the data collected and creating the opportunity to expand our reach.

Trust

Gaining the trust of would be participants was a significant challenge throughout the data collection process. Each potential participant had to determine, often after limited interaction, whether I was a person they could entrust with their story. Unfortunately, Trump's presidency created caution on all sides as both individuals and organizations threaded more carefully.

When recruitment involved a third party—either through a personal or organizational contact—their advocacy and relational capital with the participant was instrumental to building trust. When potential participants appeared hesitant or expressed fear, personal contacts often

vouched that I was a person of “confianza” (translated as trustworthy but also intimating a person within the circle). Moreover, personal contacts often brought up the study various times to potential participants until they received permission to make the connection. For example, a young woman I volunteered with, reached out via text and Facebook message several times to her friend to no avail. “No worries,” she stated; she was sure he would agree to participate. Sure enough, one Saturday evening she ran into her contact at a party, and they called me to setup the interview. Rather than simply passing on my contact information, she understood the importance of following up with her contact and immediately making the connection. Understandably, not all third parties persisted when encountering hesitant individuals. I heard one too many times, “I’m sorry but they weren’t interested,” or “they looked scared and I didn’t press,” or “they said they would think about it, and I didn’t feel comfortable asking again.”

When recruiting directly or once a connection was made through a third party, my identities were crucial in gaining the trust of potential participants. Potential participants were not entrusting their story to a research project or a university but to a person with various identities that either fostered trust or raised caution. I never felt like an insider but neither like an outsider. I occupied a space where my various identities created both closeness and distance from my participants. On one hand, as formerly undocumented, I carry intimate knowledge and comfort in discussing experiences related to legal status. Yet, over the years, my educational attainment and newly acquired citizenship and class privileges have distanced me from the day-to-day challenges and fear faced by the undocumented community. Hence while I consider myself a member of the immigrant community, I recognize that I am privileged member of that

community and live a very different reality. Nonetheless, my immigrant experiences and identity provided an opening to gaining the trust of potential participants.

Beyond my immigrant identity, access and trust were premised on various other identities. My student status offered a connection to college-going youth and their trust and interest in participating. My identity as a cis woman and a mother opened-up the opportunity to talk with women and quickly develop a sense of intimacy during the interviews. At other times, my role as a volunteer was sufficient to gain trust with those served by the organization. One identity which served me well was that of a soccer mom. As a part of the Latinx soccer community, via my youngest son Matteo, I gained access to young men who might otherwise not have participated. These men were not necessarily soccer players but the relatives, co-workers, and friends of the soccer parents. The role of my identity as a soccer mom became evident when in connecting with one participant, I introduced myself as "the university student working on the research project." Appearing confused, I gave the name of the individual who had put us in contact. Finally making the connection, he said, "Oh, you're Matteo's mom." From then on, whenever I connected with a potential participant via the soccer community, I introduced myself as the soccer mom rather than university student.

Scheduling

Another barrier faced in recruiting the undocumented 1.25 generation was scheduling. Potential participants found it hard to pin down a time for the interview due lengthy work weeks and unstable work schedules. It was common to hear, "I want to help you out, but I don't know when I will have a day off work," or "I work six days a week and on my days off I run errands and spend time with my family." Accommodating my participants' schedules required

significant flexibility on my end. I would offer to meet them at a location convenient to them and promise not to take up more than two hours of their day. Often, we would tentatively schedule an interview and reschedule, two sometimes three times, when they were called into work. Sometimes I would change my other commitments last minute when I received a message stating that they finally had a day off. On various occasions, I waited around after our scheduled interview because they left work late. During one interview scheduled at 9:00am, I texted and called the respondent when he had not arrived by 9:15am. Thirty minutes later, as I was walking out of the library assuming he had forgotten or was no longer interested, he texted "sorry, on my way." Upon arriving, he apologized and explained that he had worked until 5:00am and had overslept; my frustration with his lateness disappeared.

The scheduling conflicts were often gendered. While work was the main conflict for the men in my study, childcare created scheduling conflicts for the mothers. It was common to hear, "The only problem I have participating is that I don't have anyone to watch my kids." To accommodate childcare conflicts, I would offer to meet them in their home or at a park where their kids could play while we talked. Indeed, many of my interviews with mothers took place in their homes, and I learned to get comfortable conducting interviews with babies who found the recording device intriguing.

During the months of data collection my schedule, including my family life, centered around the interviews as I prioritized the schedules of my participants. It became clear to me that the flexibility I possessed was tied to my privileges. I had reliable transportation and felt comfortable driving throughout the Chicagoland area, and my husband largely took responsibility for our children's needs on the weekends. Given that I was not working, I could

respond to my participants' scheduling needs and drop other commitments as needed. Despite these privileges, as a graduate student, I was a one-woman shop and was working with limited funds and time. This left me wondering how the researchers' privileges and constraints shape qualitative samples. Simply put, some participants require more time and resources to recruit than others. For example, recruiting college-going participants was easier than a young person who never enrolled in school and works 60 hours a week. While one phone call or email might suffice to recruit a college-going participant, a significant investment in hours was required to recruit just one non-college going participant.

How sampling is hindered by practical limitations and what that means for sample sizes are important considerations for qualitative researchers. The assumption sometimes exists that all qualitative samples are convenience samples. Yet, there is nothing convenient about recruiting hard to reach populations. Moving towards more purposive sampling, to reach those who have been missed, requires greater investment in time and resources and may result in smaller sample sizes. I sometimes fear that the push for increasingly large sample sizes in qualitative work (which stems from the desire to satisfy quantitative oriented criteria) results in sampling from the low-hanging fruit—those who intuitively understand the value of their story, who have stable work schedules, are conveniently located near the researcher, and can be easily recruited through social media. Consideration of practical limitations to sampling and reclaiming the notion that qualitative research does not necessitate large sample sizes can promote data collection with hard to reach populations and contribute to expanding our reach.

In the current historical moment of ramped up anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, research that examines the lived experiences of undocumented immigrants is critical. At the

same time, recruiting undocumented immigrants may become increasingly more challenging. Greater awareness, reflection, and discussion of recruitment barriers—and what that means for data collection and knowledge production—can promote research that expands our understanding of the experiences of undocumented immigrants.

Chapter 3: "Maybe If I Had Met Someone Who Could Open My Eyes:" The Gendered Challenges and Access to Resources of the Never Enrolled 1.25 Generation

The 1982 U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Plyler vs. Doe* provides undocumented immigrants arriving as minors the constitutional right to a free public K-12 education. K-12 school settings, immigration scholars have demonstrated, provide a crucial socializing context and source of resources for the undocumented 1.5 generation—immigrants who arrive prior to the age of 13 (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2016; Perez, 2009). We would expect that nearly all 1.5 generation immigrants enroll in K-12 schooling once arriving in the United States. Yet, this expectation does not hold for the 1.25 generation—immigrants arriving between the ages of 13 to 17 (Rumbaut, 2004). Indeed, despite their constitutional right, a segment of the 1.25 generation never enrolls in K-12 schooling in the United States (Oropesa & Landale, 2009). As a result, K-12 schooling does not play a salient role in structuring their lives in the United States and in providing resources. Yet, we know little about the challenges experienced by the never enrolled undocumented 1.25 generation, and how they navigate the difficulties encountered upon arriving in the United States.

This chapter considers what shaped the experiences of the undocumented 1.25 generation—or adolescent arrivals—who never enrolled in K-12 schooling in the United States. Drawing on interviews with 19 participants, I focus on the challenges adolescent arrivals experienced upon arriving in the United States and the resources they accessed to navigate these difficulties. Although overall, the never enrolled encountered various challenges and suffered from a dearth of resources and supports, I show that gender differentially structured their challenges and access to resources. Moreover, I find that gender shaped their experiences

in ways that differ from what has been documented for immigrants arriving in adulthood (the 1st generation) and the 1.5 generation. Consequently, I suggest that the role of gender varies based on the *timing of immigration*—when in the life course an individual immigrates.

Before delving into the experiences of never enrolled participants, I provide an overview of the role gender plays in the experiences of the undocumented 1st and 1.5 generations. I then describe the sample for this chapter, and detail the gendered experiences of never enrolled participants. I end with a discussion on how the role of gender might vary based on the timing of immigration.

The Gendered Experiences of Immigrants

Migration and incorporation is a gendered process; gender shapes the decision to immigrate (Espinosa & Massey, 1997), labor market access (Hagan, 1998), the institutions immigrants interact with, and overall structures immigrants' experiences (Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Menjivar, 2000). Gender's role in structuring the institutions immigrants interact with and access to resources within these settings, serves as an important mechanism through which gender shapes the lives of immigrants. In some cases, interaction with institutions outside the family and access to embedded resources has provided women greater power and the opportunity to reshape patriarchal gender relations (Menjivar, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). For example, Menjivar (2000) found that undocumented Salvadoran women were better positioned to establish ties outside the family because they engaged the school system, healthcare system, and community assistance on behalf of their families. The ties women formed to institutional agents and others outside the family carried the potential

for “transformations in gender relations” as the connections women made increased their resources and power within their relationships (Menjivar, 2000, pg. 193).

Scholars have also documented that the migration process by providing greater autonomy to women can serve as an equalizing force in relationships. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) found that the separation of couples, often associated with the migration process, resulted in the renegotiation of patriarchal relationships for undocumented Mexican 1st generation couples. As Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) notes, during the period of separation, women who remained in Mexico increased their autonomy and men in the United States gained domestic skills. Once reunited, patriarchal relationships were renegotiated as women were unwilling to give up their acquired autonomy and decision making power (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

When women struggle accessing supports outside of the family, the opportunity to reshape gender relations and increase their autonomy suffered. For example, Hagan (1998) showed that labor market access hindered Guatemalan immigrant women’s ability to forge community ties as their main access to employment was live-in housekeeping. Separated from the community during the week, women lacked community ties which diminished access to informational networks and maintained them dependent on their male partners and their female household employers (IRCA) (Hagan, 1998). Guatemalan men, on the other hand, found work in the community and were better able to access informational networks (Hagan, 1998).

Although in some cases migration provides the opportunity to reshape gender relations, the power dynamics associated with legal status have also been found to heighten inequality between couples. Dreby (2015) found that illegality heightened gender inequality in mixed status relationships among 1st generation Mexican immigrants. In relationships between

undocumented women and authorized men, fear of deportation increased women's vulnerability to domestic violence and positioned them as more dependent on men (Dreby, 2015). As Dreby (2015) states, "legal status augments the imbalance of power already existing between partners" (pg. 68).

Most of the work on the role of gender in shaping the experiences of undocumented immigrants derives from the 1st generation. Only recently has the role of gender received attention in studies examining the 1.5 generation. Centering in on the role of gender in the family formation process, Enriquez (2017b) demonstrates that gender norms more detrimentally impacted undocumented 1.5 generation men. Gender expectations that men provide financially, Enriquez (2017b) found, impaired undocumented men's dating relationships, their sense of readiness for marriage, and their feelings of parental efficacy (Enriquez, 2017b). In contrast, situated as dependent, illegality created less constraints for women in dating, marriage, and parenting (Enriquez, 2017b).

Overall the findings point to the importance of access to resources and supports to how gender plays out in the lives of undocumented immigrants. When women gained more access to resources, the opportunity existed for them to increase their autonomy and independence (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Menjivar, 2000). When women struggled accessing supports, unequal power dynamics intensified (Hagan, 1987; Dreby, 2015). For men, reduced economic resources due to their legal status impacted their romantic relationships (Enriquez, 2017b).

Sample

This chapter draws on 19 undocumented adolescent arrivals who never enrolled in K-12 schools in the United States. As Table 2 shows (see Appendix D for the characteristics of each

never enrolled participant), the sample consists of 10 men and 9 women, and an almost even split between Mexicans and Central Americans. The average age at the time of the interview for the women was slightly higher than the men; however, 16 was the mean age-at-arrival for both groups. All participants were excluded from Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) due their age-at-arrival (over 15), the year of arrival (after 2007), lack of educational credentials, or a combination of these factors; one female participant possessed a non-DACA related temporary work permit. All men and 7 of the women were unaccompanied minors, meaning they traveled to the United States without a parent. Once in the United States, only 3 participants lived with a parent. At the time of the interview, most were working full-time, and half were either married or living with their partner. Seven of the women and 4 of the men were parents. Although none completed high school or a GED, 3 at some point enrolled in a GED program. Interviews were conducted in Spanish with all 19 participants. Finally, 6 of the women and 4 of the men self-rated their English skills as low.

Table 2: Characteristics of Never Enrolled Participants by Gender

Characteristic	Never Enrolled Women	Never Enrolled Men
N	9	10
Mean age at interview	28	26
Mean age at arrival	16	16
Mexican	5	5
Have Work Permit	1	0
Unaccompanied	7	10
Lived with parent on arrival	3	0
Fulltime employment	7	10
Married/Cohabitating	5	5
Parent	7	4
Ever enrolled in GED Program	1	2
Interview in Spanish	9	10
Low English Competency	6	4

Data Analysis

In analyzing data for this chapter, I drew on interviews coded in ATLAS.ti and compared the experiences of the young men and women in the areas that emerged as significant throughout the data collection and coding process. Thus, I paid particular attention to the following categories: 1) Migration Decision & Motivation, 1) Experiences at Arrival, 2) Resources & Supports, 3) Family Life, and 4) Impact of Legal Status. Across these categories I compared their stories and identified crucial differences in the challenges they experienced and their ability to access resources. Throughout the analysis and writing, I consistently went back to the interviews to maintain the entire story present as I focused on particular aspects of their experiences.

The Gendered Experiences of the Undocumented 1.25 Generation

Gender functioned as a strong shaping force among undocumented adolescent arrivals. Gender not only influenced the motivation to immigrate but carried through to structure the challenges they experienced in the United States and the supports available to them. I found adolescent men benefited from greater access to resources upon arriving due to stronger kin networks in the United States and ability to more readily interact with peers met through work. Adolescent women, on the other hand, experienced dependency and exposure to gender violence upon arriving and were unable to access supports and resources for various years.

I begin this section by discussing the gendered reasons never enrolled participants immigrated, followed by how the ensuing family and financial circumstances at arrival impeded K-12 enrollment. Then, beginning with the experiences of the young men followed by the women, I describe the gendered challenges encountered at arrival and the supports accessed in

navigating these difficulties.

The Motivation to Immigrate

Gender played a role in the decision to immigrate among never enrolled adolescents. Positioned as providers by gender norms, the motivation to immigrate among adolescent men largely revolved around better work prospects and was made against a backdrop of poverty and lack of opportunities (see Appendix D for the motivation of each never enrolled participant). For example, 15-year old arrival Rafael immigrated after hearing that his father was planning to leave Mexico for the United States. Sensing that his father was too old for the journey, Rafael felt it was time to start financially providing for the family.

> *I would look at my dad. He told me he was coming. And, at age 15, I no longer thought about myself. I thought about my parents, and I thought about my sisters. The day comes when someone has to take the reins and provide, provide for the family.*[2]

In addition to poverty and lack of opportunity, gang violence threatened to disrupt adolescent men's ability to provide for their families and prompted them to flee. Faced with few choices other than join a gang or be killed, migration provided the best alternative. Such was the case with Manuel whose transition to provider began very early. Facing dire poverty in rural Guatemala, Manuel snuck out of his childhood home when he was only 10 in search of work in a nearby city. The larger city setting, however, exposed Manuel to gang recruitment and prompted several moves further and further out from his childhood home. Eventually, immigrating to the United States was the only avenue to escaping gang threats. At the age of 16, Manuel went home to tell his mother he would be leaving Guatemala.

> *I loved my family very much, and I loved my mother very much, I wanted to help her. I said, "No, I have to work, I have to help, that's why I left the house." And I said to her, I arrived and I said to her, "You know what? They [the gangs] are looking for me and they tell me this and that. That if I do not enter, by force I will have to enter, and that they will*

come looking for me"... I say, "No, they know I'm from here." Sooner or later, at that age it is very difficult. And I said, "No, it's better that I go work somewhere else."[3]

While poverty and violence prompted adolescent men to immigrate in search of work, the reasons for young women were more varied. In addition to work opportunities, other catalysts for adolescent women included following their new spouse, family reunification, and gender violence. For several adolescent women, gender constraints and the desire for independence led them to marry and then to immigrate with their spouse. While romantic love was a part of each relationship, the decision to marry was primarily undertaken to achieve independence from their parents. With limited options for women in their birth countries, marriage provided an avenue to loosen the parental grip and exit challenging family dynamics. Fernanda, for example, was 16 when she met her 19- year old husband who had temporarily returned to Mexico from the United States. Growing up Fernanda witnessed her father physically abuse her mother. As Fernanda explained, tired of the trouble at home and hoping to finally get a chance to attend parties, she accepted a marriage proposal.

***Fernanda**: I was like bored to be in the house and to be watching them [her parents] always fight ... It [marriage] was like a way out, like I thought, "Now I am going to go to parties, I'm going to go out."*
***Daysi**: Did you go to the parties? Did you go out?*
***Fernanda**: I only went twice. After that, no.*
***Daysi**: Was it the way out that you wanted?*
***Fernanda**: No, it was the easiest. The one I found, and I said, "Well, let's get out of here."*[4]

Other adolescent women were motivated to immigrate for family reunification. Seventeen year-old Jasmin from Honduras, for example, migrated to reunite with her mother who had been living in the United States since she was 7. Family networks also facilitated the migration of adolescent men; unlike women, however, family reunification never served as the

primary motivation to immigrate. Finally, violence also prompted migration among young women. For example, 14-year old arrival Elsa fled Honduras with her mother when her stepfather attempted to sexually assault her.

Barriers to K-12 Enrollment

The barriers faced by participants to enrollment in K-12 schooling was also gendered. For adolescent men, their financial responsibilities and lack of information hindered enrollment. Indeed, once in the United States, young men became financially responsible for themselves and financial contributors to their families. For example, 16-year old Manuel who fled gang recruitment in Guatemala, could not even begin to imagine enrolling; "If I go study,"[5] Manuel thought, "Who is going to provide for me?"[6] In the United States, the family members or friends who they lived with were not positioned to financially support them or to provide guidance on the school enrollment process. As evidenced by the experience of 15-year old Rafael, both financial limitations and a vast void in guidance hindered K-12 enrollment.

> ***Daysi:*** *Did you ever want to go to high school?*
> ***Rafael****: Yes, always.*
> ***Daysi****: And what happened? Tell me why that did not happen.*
> ***Rafael****: It did not happen because, I think also the lack of knowledge of my brothers. That they did not have an education either. If I had little education, they really had absolutely none. Lack of knowledge, lack of--, economically, because they could not take care of me either. I was not just thinking about me, I already had a family in Mexico to help, my dad and my mom.... Then two or three years pass, sometimes there is no one to remind you to follow your goals in life. And the bottom line, that's where people sometimes get lost. Because there is no one to guide you, there is no one to remind you that you have to try your best.*[7]

While the financial circumstances of never enrolled men largely prohibited their enrollment, in a couple of cases, young men rejected enrolling when presented with the opportunity. Daniel, for example, left Mexico at the age of 14 seeking something beyond what

his small town could offer. After arriving, Daniel's uncle offered to support him financially so he could study, but as Daniel explains, he preferred to "earn dollars."[8]

> *My uncle always told me, "Son, do not work." I'm going to put you in school. You are going to be like one more son here in the family. I'm going to take care of your expenses for as long as you can study... And later on, I will be content that when you are big that you visit me or remember me." It was what he told me. But then I started to work, I started to see money coming in, and I let myself be guided by money, even less did I care about studying?*[9]

For adolescent men school enrollment was both prohibitive and not aligned with the motivation to immigrate to the United States. The barriers to school enrollment for young women, however, were move varied. Similar to their male counterparts, financial responsibilities prohibited school enrollment for two of the women. For example, 16-year arrival Alejandra, left behind fifteen siblings in Mexico and immediately started working in a factory and sending remittances. In contrast to the men, however, in addition to working she found herself unwillingly providing care work for her cousin's children. Between "being responsible for the kids"[10] and work, Alejandra could not consider schooling.

For the other adolescent women, enrollment was hindered by a lack of spousal emotional support, lack of childcare, lack of information, barriers imposed by schools, and residential instability. In Arely's case, a combination of these factors derailed her educational goals. Eight months pregnant, Arely followed her new spouse to the United States at the age of 16. In Mexico, Arely enjoyed school and desired to continue her education, but a lack of knowledge regarding programs available to teen parents kept her from enrolling.

> *I also did not know that I could still study high school ... I never had information that like, "Oh, go to school," "Go to school for a year and there they will care for your son." So, I think to myself, "If I had known, I would have gone."*[11]

Barriers to enrollment among the three adolescent women who lived with a parent at

arrival varied, but had in common that the family was overwhelmed with other stressors and lacked the resources to surmount enrollment barriers. For example, 17-year old Jasmine from Honduras attempted to enroll but was placed in a school far away from where she lived in Chicago due to academic gaps. Unfortunately the distance was a hurdle too difficult for her family to overcome. Likewise, 14-year old arrival Elsa failed to enroll because in the first couple of years she moved around to different states as her mother searched for better work opportunities. Once settled in Illinois at the age of 16, Elsa attempted to enroll but classes had already started, and she was told to wait.

For adolescent men, family and financial circumstances impeded school enrollment and did not align with their goal—albeit constrained by their social conditions—to work. Among women, enrollment was hampered by financial conditions and lack of information on childcare services, barriers imposed by the school, and residential instability. Men exercised some agency in not enrolling, but agency was less present in women's lack of enrollment. Rather than tied to a goal, their lack of enrollment was connected to challenges in their lives and involved greater constraints on their agency. Even when working was a priority, such as in Alejandra's case, gendered expectations constrained women's agency to pursue schooling as, in addition to working, Alejandra was obliged to provide childcare services for her cousin.

Adolescent Men: Challenges and Supports

Never enrolled young men experienced various challenges at arrival including missing their families, trauma associated with dangerous border crossings, and social isolation. These challenges created emotional distress such as loneliness, depression, a sense of displacement, and a desire to return to their birth countries. In the midst of these emotional challenges,

adolescent men felt pressure to quickly locate a job in order to support themselves, send remittances, and pay the debt incurred crossing the border. Finding work was difficult as their youthful physical appearance clearly did not match the adult ages listed on their fake IDs. Moreover, getting to work required reliable transportation which was complicated by undocumented immigrants' ineligibility for obtaining a driver's license.[5] To navigate these challenges, young men largely turned to their family networks and eventual peer networks. Despite their legal status, through accessing the support of male kin and non-kin peers, adolescent men attained support and resources to navigate these challenges.

The story of Jesus illustrates both the challenges encountered and the supports accessed. When 17-year old arrival Jesus left Mexico in search of work opportunities and with the goal of buying a "truck,"[12] he was not prepared for the dangers of the journey which involved days of hunger and thirst while waiting in the desert and hours cramped in the cabin of a semi-trailer truck; when he cried out from the foot cramps the coyote berated him. Once in the United States, Jesus struggled moving past these memories that, at the age of 24, he can finally talk about because they feel more distant.

> *Maybe I'm telling you this now because I've forgotten a bit and the fear leaves you. But when you arrive, you arrive like traumatized. I don't even know how you arrive. You say to yourself "Damn, I could have died and no one would have noticed."*[13]

At arrival, Jesus lived with his brothers. Although Jesus felt supported by them, their long work hours posed barriers to receiving emotional support. Jesus' brothers would come

[5] Prior to 2013 undocumented immigrants were not eligible to obtain a driver's license in Illinois. Illinois' law changed in early 2013 enabling undocumented immigrants to apply for a temporary visitor driver's license (TVDL). While many of the study participants had a driver's license at the time of the interview, they were not eligible to obtain a license when they first arrived.

home from long work days, and they would understandably rest and sleep rather than engage Jesus in conversation. Nonetheless, when Jesus did get a chance to talk with his brothers, he would confess that he wanted to return to Mexico because he missed his family and friends and found the "routine"[14] of work to home "boring."[15] During these moments, Jesus' brothers would encourage him by reminding him of his goals.

> *They would tell me, "Do not be like this. Try hard. Think about everything positive. Think that dad would like it if you had your own home." And someday you could, I don't know, maybe have a car. Make the years you are here worth it…I mean, better to work hard and when you leave to go back you will take money.* [16]

In addition to emotional encouragement, Jesus benefited from his brother's assistance locating work. Within two weeks, Jesus started working at a car wash and several months later learned about a landscaping job through a work friend. Switching to the landscaping job, Jesus's friend provided a ride to work; thus removing a critical obstacle to working. Moreover, through the landscaping job, "little by little," [17] Jesus began forming other friendships and started having social life on his days off.

Generally the work options available to undocumented immigrants are among the most physically demanding, unstable, and lowest-paying jobs. The reality of this work notwithstanding, as reflected in Jesus's experience, the work context facilitated engagement with peers. These peer networks, in addition to facilitating job connections, enabled young men to socially integrate and reduced the social isolation experienced upon arriving. Indeed, 14-year old arrival Daniel, initially "felt very lonely." In particular, as Daniel recounts, he longed for his mother when he arrived.

> *Well, those days, I think those days are ones where one wants their mom more than anything else. I was used to my mom, my sister. I mean I had never been without them. Very sad, I felt very alone.*[18]

Yet, with help from his brothers who provided access to a car so he could "get around"[19] and slowly getting to know people at work, Daniel's feelings of loneliness eased.

> *When you arrive, at that, moment you don't know anyone. But you start to work, start to know more people and little by little you begin to figure things out and you end up knowing so-and-so, this one and that one, and so on…. And well the time comes when on your day off you no longer stay at home, someone comes to get you, go to the mall, or go to eat, things that little by little start happening.*[20]

Another common struggle for adolescent men was the heavy financial strain associated with supporting themselves, sending remittances, and paying their border-crossing debt. Young men often took two to three years to pay off their debt. Although male kin often provided assistance in easing the debt burden, in Manuel's case, assistance also came from an older roommate. Manuel's border crossing from Guatemala to the United States came at a cost of $10,000. Manuel's earnings from his low-wage job were not sufficient to cover his living expenses, remittances to his mother, and the $500 monthly payment required by the coyote. With incurring interest and after missing one payment, Manuel's debt rose to $12,000. As Manuel recounts, upon witnessing his financial struggle, his older male roommate offered assistance.

> *Until the older man told me he had $8,000. And he said, "I have $ 8,000 and you don't need to pay me any interest. Just when you finish paying me the $8,000, you see how much you want to give me." And I said, "Really?" The man lived there. And he said, "You know what, you guys are very young, you are fighting for your lives, you do honest work, you do not do bad things here… And he would give me lots of advice.*[21]

Impressed with Manuel's hard work, his roommate lent his savings to provide relief from the accumulating interest. After gathering additional money from his brothers, Manuel paid off the debt to the coyote.

Similar to Manuel, the ability to access non-family support was crucial for Elmer who did not have any family in the United States. Twenty-four year old Elmer left Guatemala at the age of 15 when an opportunity arose to emigrate with an older friend from his neighborhood. Elmer's mother "totally broke"[22] when he announced his plans. For days she would break down crying every time she glanced his way in fear that he might perish on the journey. But Elmer was determined and preferred death over missing the opportunity to lift himself and his mother out of perpetual poverty.

Once in the United States, Elmer lived with his friend, the friend's father, and two other men. Initially Elmer's living conditions were suitable, but when his friend's father returned to Guatemala this changed. No longer having an older man who provided order, as Elmer recounts, his friend and the other men increased their drinking and no longer cared for the apartment.

> *When I was living with him [his dad's friend], I was with a man of respect who had order in the apartment. We all respected him. And then when he left, the friend I was with had no commitments at all, and started drinking. The apartment became a complete mess, everything was ruined. It was no longer the same ... And then another young man began to drink and began to take more friends from work to the house. They would make a mess. Like they drank starting Saturday. They spent Saturday and Sunday drinking.*[23]

Thankfully, a co-worker opened his home for a few months until Elmer could find a new place to live. Soon after, Elmer struck up a friendship with a young Mexican man he met at the park. A conversation sparked when Elmer, with a soccer ball in hand, observed his soon to be friend roller skating. Having developed few English skills, when his new friend asked him if he liked to play soccer, Elmer responded "No, I only play futbol."[24] After the park, Elmer was invited over for mole (a traditional Mexican dish), and later the family invited Elmer to their church. Elmer began attending the church regularly and met a 2nd-generation Guatemalan women who

offered to teach him English, and a Guatemalan family that rented Elmer their spare room. As Elmer explains, at the church he also found peer support.

> *Then there [the church] I also met some young men who are now part of my life, my friends. And there at the church a family rented me a room. And now I have been living, since the time I met them, I haven't moved anymore.*[25]

Without family in the United States, Elmer's peer networks developed at work were instrumental in providing a short term solution when his living arrangement deteriorated. Later, a chance meeting at the park, by engaging Elmer in a religious institution, opened up crucial emotional and instrumental resources that facilitated learning English, securing a stable living environment, and accessing friendships.

For the most part, the family and peer networks of young men provided resources to navigate the challenges associated with working, integrating socially, and easing the debt burden. In one case, however, work relationships facilitated a turning point and enabled 14-year old Esvin to redirect his path towards educational pursuits. The youngest of ten, Esvin's family in Guatemala lived in a rural town in severe poverty; Esvin never attended school and was illiterate. When a friend planned to travel to the United States, Esvin decided to join him in search of work opportunities. Although Esvin had brothers living in the United States, they were living in Oklahoma when he arrived in a Chicago suburb to live with his friend and friend's father. The common experience among adolescent arrivals of feeling lost and socially isolated was exacerbated for Esvin by his inability to read and write.

> *I worked and arrived [home] and locked myself up, because I had no one to go out with. I didn't know anyone. Later I met people, but the same as me, they worked. I was confined, from work to home. The most difficult thing was that I could not read or write. So it was very difficult for me because being here a lot of people say, "Okay let's go there, let's take this street," and I did not know how to read. It's like being locked in a*

world not knowing how to read or write."[26]

A year after arriving, Esvin switched jobs to the restaurant where he was still working at the time of the interview. There, as Esvin recounts, he found the encouragement that opened up the world he felt confined in.

> *And there I met this person who helped me a lot. I met very nice people there who told me "go to school, we will take you to school, we will enroll you, and you come to work, you study… And I say, "No, I don't know anything." And he said, "That's what school is for, it's to go learn."*[27]

At 17 years-old, Esvin took the advice of his co-workers and enrolled at a community college in an ESL and adult basic education program—simultaneously learning how to read and write in Spanish and in English. Between work and school, Esvin's daily schedule began at 9:00am and ended at 2:00am. In addition to encouragement to enroll in school, Esvin's Italian boss facilitated learning English by refusing to speak to him in Spanish. When Esvin complained that he would not understand him, his boss would say "yes you can."[28] A waitress, a white women, helped Esvin with his homework and explained things he struggled comprehending. At the community college Esvin also found support from his teachers. On one occasion, after only getting 1 out of 100 questions correct on a math test, Esvins' teacher pulled him for a talk; "No matter how many times you fail, what is important is that you never give up,"[29] the teacher told him. When we talked, 22 year-old Esvin was preparing to take the GED exam and hoped to enroll in college. Starting off as a busboy, Esvin now works as a cook.

Young men experienced a host of challenges at arrival including emotional distress and social isolation. These young men accessed emotional and instrumental support mostly through male-kin and non-kin and through relationships developed at work and in religious institutions. These networks provided the resources to address various challenges encountered at arrival

including dealing with loneliness, finding and getting to work, paying their debt, locating stable living, and learning English. What may be less evident, however, is the role of autonomy. As men, they had some freedom to make choices about where to work, whether to attend church, to enroll in ESL classes or adult basic education programs, and when and where to hang out with friends. They had some degree of autonomy in deciding what contexts to engage. This in turn provided access to supports to navigate the challenges they encountered after arriving in the United States. Overall, adolescent men experienced fewer constraints to accessing resources than did the women I describe next.

Adolescent Women: Challenges and Supports

In a similar fashion to the young men, adolescent women experienced emotional distress and social isolation when they arrived in the United States. In addition, gender norms and oppression exposed these young women to violence that, in conjunction with illegality, constrained their ability to access supports. Consequently, it would take various years in the United States before never enrolled women gained the resources needed to address the challenges they encountered.

Twenty-seven year old Arely met her spouse when he temporarily returned to Mexico. He was not her first boyfriend, but she had never before felt so in love. Still, love was not the only reason she accepted his marriage proposal. Arely's father refused to let her move out to continue studying, and since she was ready to venture out, marriage was her second best option. Arely recalls, "I knew that I didn't want to get married, that I wanted to study."[30] Without the support to study, Arely married and was soon pregnant. At the age of 16, Arely arrived eight months pregnant in a suburb of Chicago. Living with her spouse and his uncles,

Arely spent most of the day in her room with the baby watching TV. This routine continued through the weekends, since her husband would often drink with his uncles and other men. Adding to the drinking was the abuse which began a month after her son was born; that day, her husband arrived home drunk and enraged cut all her clothes with a scissors.

The abuse soon progressed to hitting, and the drinking continued. When her son was eight months old, Arely discovered she was pregnant with a second child. Recognizing that a second child would increase her dependency on her husband, Arely pushed for an abortion; her husband, however, refused to assist Arely locate information to terminate the pregnancy. Arely explains that with nowhere else to turn she ended up with a second child.

> *How do I do it [terminate the pregnancy]? I mean, at that moment I was really closed in. Later I would think, "Well, maybe if I had met someone who could open my eyes, or who could have orientated me better, maybe I would have only had one child." But in the end things didn't work out that way.*[31]

For several years Arely lived under the abuse of her spouse without telling anyone and without support and resources. Arely's only family member in the United States lived in another state, she had not made any friends as she barely left the house, did not initially work, did not drive, and was not free to make choices about enrolling in ESL classes. At times Arely considered calling the police, but hesitated out of fear that her husband would be deported and removed from his children.

It was not until Arely was 19 that she slowly began to access support and resources. Arely started working at a factory after having her second child. Tired of asking for rides or taking taxis, Arely became determined to learn to drive despite the fear and anxiety it produced. Her husband lacked the patience to teach her, but a young man who rented a room in their apartment stepped in to help. Believing their young roommate to be gay, Arely's

husband agreed. While teaching Arely to drive, the roommate also encouraged her to stop waiting on her husband to go out on the weekends. He would tell her, "If your husband doesn't want to take you, go without him. "[32] One day when Arely's husband was drinking, she grew desperate at being locked up in the house, and as she describes, grabbed the car keys for the first time and ventured out on her own.

> *Until one Sunday I remember thinking, "Well, but if I can drive the car now, then why don't I do it?" Right? Because it still made me nervous… So I remember grabbing the kids and we left, and I left. And then he was calling me, because he didn't see the car. I remember that I went to Kohls.*[33]

Arely's trip to the Kohl's department store, facilitated by assistance and encouragement from her roommate, began to change the trajectory of Arely's marriage. Arely felt empowered because the ability to drive meant she could get to work and would not starve without her spouse. Her sense of empowerment further increased when a couple of years later her kids started attending school and participated in an after-school program. Engagement with the K-12 school context via her children provided Arely with the school-embedded resources that she missed due to lack of enrollment. Staff in the after school program provided Arely with information on shelters should she need to leave her husband.

Growing with empowerment and threatening to leave him, Arely's husband ceased the physical abuse and diminished his drinking. He later entered a 12-step program and stopped drinking all together after attending a spiritual retreat. Arely's increased sense of autonomy also led her to enroll in English classes. As she recounts, ten years after arriving, she finally felt empowered to go against her husband and enroll.

> *Last year I started going to school for English, but it was because I said, I am going. Because I always said, I want to go and I want to go, and I could not because I was not free to make my own decisions. And then last year I told him, "you know what I'm going*

> *to go to enroll in English classes, I have been here 10 years and it can't be possible that I don't know how to speak English."*[34]

When we talked, Arely had reached level two in her classes and had developed friendships with other women in the program. As part of the 12-step program, the family connected to a church and were receiving pastoral counseling. Eleven years after arriving, Arely finally feels she is "beginning to live"[35] the family life she had desired.

Laura's story initially follows a similar trajectory but results in her abusive husband going to jail. Laura's parents had immigrated when she was about 7 years old, leaving her in the care of her grandmother and aunt in Mexico. At the age of 13, Laura attempted to cross the border to reunite with her parents but was caught and spent a month in a Mexican detention center for juveniles; she became too scared to try again. Laura was 16 when she met and married her husband who had been sent back to Mexico by his parents to keep him out of trouble in the United States. The "hitting" [36] began soon after they married. When he decided to return to the United States, Laura saw it as a second chance to see her parents and even an opportunity to save her life.

> *I said, "This is the opportunity, it presents itself to me again. I'll leave again, because this one [her husband], one day is going to kill me here.* "[37]

Once in the States the abuse continued and progressed to two to three times per week. Despite having her parents in the United States, she did not live with them and years of separation produced a distant relationship. Laura "never complained"[38] about the abuse to anyone, and it would take almost four years before Laura's parents became aware. They learned of the abuse when Laura ran to their house with her two-year old son after an argument. Running after her, Laura's husband provoked an incident that prompted Laura's

parents to call the police. Prior to the event witnessed by Laura's parents, as she explains, she had not called the police due to a lack of information and fear.

> *Because I didn't know. I went from home to work, from work to home… Then when he would say to me, "If you call, I'm going to take away my son, I know English, you don't. I can drive, you can't. I can say that you're Mexican." I mean, and like obviously, I saw a lot on the news…Then I said, "No, it won't be good for me because I need to be here for him [her son]." No, they're going to take my son away. And I do not know English. I did not study here, nothing, and he did. I mean, he navigated the language well and had studied here. So it never crossed my mind.*[39]

Laura likely qualifies for a U visa[6] since her cooperation and court appearances led to her husband's conviction and incarceration. Although Laura was provided with information about the possibility of a U visa, all she wanted was an official divorce. Given the power he had wielded over her, Laura resisted anything that came through her ex-husband, including the ability to gain status. When she attempted to follow up a couple of years later, she was scared away by the fees; barely surviving on wages of $9.00 an hour, she could not afford the legal costs and felt hesitant to rehash the abuse she had undergone. Twenty-seven at the time of the interview, Laura has learned very little English which, as she states, "feels bad"[40] because "maybe they are telling you that you are stupid, or dumb, and you say 'yes'."[41] In addition to the impact on Laura, her story also reveals the long-term implications created by gender oppression and lack of access to supports. Indeed, when we talked, Laura's greatest concern was her son who struggles after having lived through the abuse of his mother.

> ***Laura**: After all that [the abuse] it turns out my son could no longer speak, he lost his speech, he is traumatized.*
> ***Interviewer**: Because he would see things?*

[6] Victims of crime who cooperate with law enforcement during the investigation and prosecution are eligible for a U nonimmigrant status or U visa. A U visa grants recipients temporary status for three years after which time they are eligible to apply for legal permanent residence.

> ***Laura**: Yes, he saw so many things. And because he was small, he stopped talking. He lost his speech. And since that time my son has been going to special schools. He struggles a lot, and he still continues to struggle, because he is a very aggressive child.*[42]

In the cases of Arely and Laura, their vulnerability to abusive relationships commenced prior to migration through gender norms that limited their ability to attain independence outside of marriage. Zafiro, on the other hand, initially immigrated in search of work opportunities, but then found herself vulnerable to a deeply troubling relationship. When she left Mexico at the age of 17, Zafiro planned to spend a year working to earn enough money to fix her mother's house and return. After four months of being in the United States, however, she entered a relationship in an unconventional way that foreshadowed later issues. Upon arrival, Zafiro moved in with her aunt and brother who shared a living space with various other individuals including her eventual partner. When Zafiro along with her aunt and brother decided to move out, one of the male roommates moved out with them. Having established credit, the male roommate leased the one-bedroom apartment in his name. Zafiro recounts that, when they were handed the keys to move in, the male roommate exclaimed to Zafiro's family that she would be sleeping in the room with him.

> *I do not know why I remember this. He [the male roommate] tells my brother and my aunt, "Your sister and I are going to live in the room, we are going to occupy the bedroom, you are going to occupy the living room." It was just one bedroom and the living room. I really do not know. Until today I ask myself, why did I accept? ... That is how it happened. If I had not lived it, I would not believe that it had been that way.*[43]

Zafiro had three children back to back with him. Eventually Zafiro's mother and younger sister joined her in the United States. When Zafiro was pregnant with her fourth child, her partner was accused of sexually assaulting her 15-year-old sister. The accusation made by Zafiro's sister led to his conviction and deportation. After his deportation, Zafiro's story took

various twist and turns including new relationships and two more children. When we talked, Zafiro was working full-time in a housekeeping job and was focused on raising her six children without the help of their fathers. The experience with her ex continues to take a toll on Zafiro who only recently has begun telling her story. Zafiro also struggles putting all the pieces of the puzzle together due to gaps in her memory. "I have something blocked in my head that does not let me remember more,"[44] Zafiro states. When I ask Zafiro to describe herself she states, "I don't know. I think that I am just beginning to be the real me."[45]

Arely, Laura, and Zafiro's stories show the impact of gender violence and inability to access supports. In contrast, Fernanda's story offers hope that formal supports can contribute to filling the gaps for young women. Recently married, Fernanda left Mexico at the age of 16 and turned 17 during the border crossing. In addition to turning a year older at the border, Fernanda also found out she was pregnant. Once in the United States, Fernanda and her spouse lived with his family members. Although Fernanda did not feel emotionally supported by her spouse's kin, they did inform Fernanda that despite her immigration status she was eligible for Medicaid during her pregnancy. Access to public aid would result in more than medical support. Through the public aid office, she learned of a doula program for young mothers and enrolled. Fernanda describes the program activities.

> *We went to classes to prepare us how to be mothers. All the young pregnant girls would get together. We had activities, like games, they taught us the stages of pregnancy, the baby's first days. One of the workers would be with us during our birth, if we wanted. And yes, on the day the birth came, she was there supporting me, cheering me on.*[46]

During Fernanda's transition to the United States and to parenting, the doula program offered useful information regarding pregnancy and parenting and the emotional support of staff and other young mothers. After her first son, Fernanda soon had a second child and stayed

home caring for her children. When she started working at the age of 21, at a fast-food restaurant, she had not learned any English; later costing her the potential to become a manager. Nonetheless, at the time of the interview, twenty-five year old Fernanda lit up when talking about her sons who were performing well in school.

While not all the adolescent women were married or experienced spousal abuse, seven of the nine women I spoke with encountered some form of violence. Three of the women experienced domestic violence in their childhood homes, and in two cases violence prompted migration. Moreover, in all cases, the autonomy of the women I interviewed was hindered and they struggled paving a way to independence. With time and eventual access to support and resources, however, women grew in their sense of empowerment and resisted their oppression. The oldest women I spoke to, thirty-four year old Alejandra, now describes herself as one of the strongest women on earth. When asked why, she notes.

> ***Daysi****: How would you describe yourself? Who is Alejandra?*
> ***Alejandra****: She is the strongest woman that can exist in this world?*
> ***Daysi****: You describe yourself as strong.*
> ***Alejandra****: Yes, I have always said that I am one of the strongest woman there can be in this world. Because in August, it has been four years that I don't need to have a man by my side to be able to raise these beautiful human beings that I'm raising.*[47]

To the end of becoming the strongest women on earth, driving, working and economic resources are crucial. Immigration policy, however, exacerbates women's dependence and the challenges created by gender norms and oppression. Gender expectations push adolescent women seeking independence into marriage relationships. Isolation in the United States with little family support makes them vulnerable to domestic violence. Immigration status exacerbates the situation by increasing the fear of driving—a crucial element to independence. It also makes them hesitant to call the police as they do not want their children separated from

their fathers. Constrained work opportunities limit their ability to learn English, which serves as a mechanism for men to wield power. Low-paying jobs and lack of access to many social welfare programs keeps them dependent on their spouses. As evident in Arely's story, when women access emotional and instrumental support (someone teaching them to drive) they gain empowerment, resist, and act to change their circumstances. Moreover, Fernanda, who through a doula program found support during her first pregnancy, shows the promise of social welfare programs in filling in the gaps.

Discussion

The experiences of the never enrolled undocumented 1.25 generation shed light on what happens to young immigrants who do not benefit from the resources provided by school settings and elucidates the role of gender in shaping their challenges and access to supports. Moreover, their experiences provide evidence that in examining the lives of undocumented immigrants, the timing of immigration warrants analytical consideration.

Gender played a salient role in shaping the experiences of never enrolled adolescents. At arrival, adolescent men transitioned to financial independence and felt pressure to find work and send remittances. In navigating these challenges, young men drew on male kin and non-kin for emotional and instrumental support focused on adapting, locating work, getting to work, and easing their debt burden. These supports enabled adolescent men to navigate the challenges they encountered. As opposed to adolescent men, at arrival, the young women were financially dependent on their spouse or parent, were exposed to gender violence, and often cared for their children or someone else's children. Adolescent women had weaker family networks to draw on, were less often engaged in the work context, and were constrained in

their autonomy to make choices about taking ESL classes or engaging in social activities. As a result, adolescent women struggled accessing needed supports.

In some ways never enrolled men and women look similar in their adult outcomes: they only have access to low-wage jobs, have less than a high school education, and possess limited English skills. Yet, their process of migration and incorporation differs as a result of the intersection between gender and illegality. To be sure, neither group encounter a smooth path in the United States. Dangerous border crossings, family separation, social isolation, and emotional distress impact them all. Moreover, although young men accessed peer supports at work, their legal status exposed them to wage and other forms of discrimination in the work place, and they faced the constant threat of deportation. The goal is not to romanticize the experiences of young men but to highlight the intersectional nature of the vulnerability experienced by never enrolled adolescent arrivals. Illegality intersects with gender to differentially shape their migration experience, the challenges encountered in the United States, and ability to access resources. Never enrolled men navigate illegality with the help of male networks who help them find work and adapt. With less access to kin and non-kin supports, adolescent women are exposed to gender violence while simultaneously hindered by immigration laws from accessing supports that might enable them to move out of dependency and oppression. Thus, never enrolled women are closed in by both gender oppression and immigration policy.

I suggest that, at least in part, the timing of immigration creates differences in the role gender plays in shaping the experiences and pathways of undocumented immigrants. In other words, how illegality and gender intersect varies based on the timing of immigration. Indeed,

my finding that gender norms more negatively impact adolescent women, differs from studies which show that 1st and 1.5 generation women are better positioned than men to forge ties outside the family (Menjivar, 2000), that the migration process increases women's decision making power (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994), and that illegality more detrimentally impacts men's family formation (Enriquez, 2017a). Rather, never enrolled women in this study were not initially able to forge strong community ties, faced severe constraints to their autonomy, and norms of dependency did not ease the impact of illegality in the family formation process.

The experiences of the never enrolled undocumented 1.25 generation suggest that one mechanism through which the timing of immigration shapes the lives of undocumented immigrants is through structuring the challenges faced at arrival, the contexts they interact with, and the supports available within these contexts. The 1.5 generation, by virtue of their age-at-arrival, interact with the K-12 school context. As a central socializing institution, the lives of the 1.5 generation are structured by school settings in a myriad of ways. There they learn English, develop their aspirations, socialize to gender norms that are based on U.S. culture, form friendships, interact with various adult figures, and access school-embedded resources. Within the 1.25 generation, greater variation exists regarding access to the school systems as they arrive at a point in the life course where they exercise greater agency and begin making life shaping decisions about work, family, and education. For example, as evidenced by the stories of the young men, enrollment in K-12 was both prohibitive and not aligned with their motivation to immigrate. Thus, while school settings touch the lives of nearly all 1.5 generation immigrants, adolescent arrivals immigrate at a developmental moment where their agency and circumstances may lead some out of school settings. The timing of immigration then matters to

the main contexts that immigrants interact with and that shape their experiences.

Among immigrants arriving in adulthood, Menjivar (2000) has shown that gender norms enable 1st generation women to forge ties and access resources as they engage various contexts on behalf of their families. Adolescent women, however, do not immediately engage these contexts. Although some became parents soon after immigrating, it would be several years before their children started school and they accessed supports. Additionally, adolescent women often did not work, and when they did, were not allowed to socialize with co-workers outside of work. Moreover, engagement with the health care system, when present, did not facilitate access to supports in navigating the challenges faced. Disconnected from school settings and other crucial contexts, adolescent women faced gender violence and oppression largely on their own.

The timing of immigration provides a potential explanation for why gender norms impact the 1st generation women in Menjivar's study differently than the 1.25 generation women in my study. The young women in my study were vulnerable in various ways. They were vulnerable due to gender oppression and exclusionary immigration policies, but also their developmental vulnerability. Although these young women often met some of the milestones of adulthood (such as marriage and parenting), biologically they occupy a space of developmental vulnerability. Indeed, due to the continued development of the pre-frontal cortex, adolescent's executive functioning skills—which govern decision-making, problem solving, and understanding consequences—remain underdeveloped (Dahl, 2004). Hence, young women, not only lacked engagement with contexts where they could access supports, but were facing the challenges of gender violence, parenting, illegality, and adaption to the United States

within a developmental period where navigating complex social situations remains immature.

With time in the United States, adolescent women located resources and grew in their sense of empowerment; however, adolescent men were more immediately able to access resources upon arrival. Thus, gender heavily shaped their lives in the initial years upon arrival and placed women at a greater disadvantage. Importantly, as access to supports and resources shift so might how gender shapes their experiences. Eventually, the women, as in Menjivar's study, might be better positioned to access resources. Yet, this does not discount their experiences at arrival and shows the importance of the dimension of time and changes across the life course to understanding the experiences of undocumented immigrants.

Hence, I contend that the role of gender varies, at least in part, based on the resources and supports available to undocumented immigrants at different points in the life course. To that end, the timing of immigration—by impacting the institutions immigrants interact with at arrival and their access to supports—influences how gender plays out in the lives of undocumented immigrants.

Chapter 4: “She Tried to Help Me:” The Role of School Relationships in the College Pathways of the Undocumented 1.25 Generation

K-12 schools are critical to the incorporation of undocumented immigrants arriving in childhood as they provide a central space for building relationships and accessing resources that shape their educational pathways. The significance of positive school relationships and embedded resources are amplified for disadvantaged youth who may be more “dependent on the educational system for resources that are not attainable elsewhere” (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995, pg. 118). Indeed, scholars have demonstrated that positive school relationships promote academic success among disadvantaged students and negative relationships harm their educational outcomes (Conchas, 2001; Katz, 1999; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Yet, positive versus negative school relationships rather than formed randomly are influenced by school tracking (ability grouping) mechanisms (Conchas, 2001; Katz, 1999; Oakes, 1985; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). In general, students in high achieving tracks benefit from trusting and supportive relationships with teachers and peers, while those in lower tracks experience negative interactions (Conchas, 2001; Katz, 1999; Oakes, 1985).

In line with the idea that tracking structures school relationships, the college pathways of undocumented childhood arrivals have been tied to school sorting mechanisms. In a seminal study of the undocumented Latinx 1.5 generation—immigrants arriving before the age of 13—Gonzales (2010, 2016) found that students in high-achieving tracks benefited from trusting and supportive relationships, positive messages, and individualized attention that enabled them to transition to college (Gonzales, 2010, 2016). In contrast, students in general tracks were not supported by school staff and failed to receive the positive attention and resources to transition

to college (Gonzales, 2010, 2016).

Knowledge on the transition to college of undocumented immigrants and the role of school relationships, however, derives almost entirely from the experiences of the 1.5 generation. We know little about the school experiences and transition to college of undocumented immigrants arriving between the ages of 13 to 17—the 1.25 generation. Yet, differences of great consequence exist between the 1.5 and 1.25 generations. Arriving prior to the age of 13, the 1.5 generation experiences most of their formal schooling in the United States (Rumbaut, 2004), and encounter school tracking mechanisms gradually. Conversely, the 1.25 generation completes most of K-12 schooling in their country of birth (Rumbaut, 2004), and encounter tracking in one fell swoop rather than incrementally. Additionally, the limited English skills of adolescent arrivals often result in English as a Second Language (ESL) and low-level course placement (Callahan, 2005; Harklau, 1994; Kanno & Kangas, 2014).

In light of these differences, this chapter examines how tracking shapes the school relationships of the undocumented Latinx 1.25 generation, and the role these relationships play in their transition to college. Based on existing literature, we would expect that placement in ESL and low-level courses would result in school relationships characterized by lack of trust, conflict, and negative messages which would hinder access to school-embedded resources and hamper the transition to college. Interviews with 21 undocumented adolescent arrivals, however, reveal a more complex picture. Overall, I did not find the expected connections between tracking, school relationships, and college pathways. Instead of negative school relationships in lower track courses, I found that the 1.25 generation experienced supportive relationships in these spaces. Supportive school relationships, however, did not facilitate their

transition to college. Rather, the primary dividing line between *stayers* (those on a path towards college completion) and *leavers* (those who never transitioned to college or stopped out before earning a degree) were family financial resources.

The finding that positive school relationships exist despite low track placement and that they fail to facilitate college access differs from much of the literature focused on the school relationships of Latinx immigrants and the undocumented 1.5 generation. My finding suggests that school relationships within track levels are not homogeneously experienced. In other words, the experiences of Latinx immigrants may vary within low and high achieving tracks. As I will argue in this chapter, the *timing of immigration*—when in the life course an individual immigrates—may be a potential source of variation.

In this chapter, I describe the high school experiences of Mexican and Central American undocumented young adults who immigrated between the ages of 13 to 17. In providing background, I discuss the disadvantages adolescent arrivals (the 1.25 generation) face in tracking and then briefly summarize the impact of tracking on school relationships, and how school relationships shape the college pathways of the Latinx undocumented 1.5 generation. I then describe this chapter's sample and elaborate on the high school experiences of my participants with a focus on their course placement and their relationships to school staff and peers. Finally, I demonstrate that despite positive school relationships, family financial resources rather than school factors separated their college pathways into *stayers* and *leavers*.

Tracking and the 1.25 Generation

While the U.S. K-12 system does not function based on an explicit and formal tracking system, grouping students based on academic ability is common practice (Lucas, 1999; Oakes,

1985). Tracking operates differently across states, districts, and schools. Tracking can range from grouping students by ability in a single classroom, to different classes or programs within a school, to separate schools altogether (Oakes, 1985). “Objective” assessments of ability are often confounded with race, class, and behavior; thus, sorting mechanisms predictably relegate disadvantaged students to low achieving tracks where less time is spent on instruction and where negative classroom climates prevail (Lucas, 1999; Oakes, 1985).

Immigrants entering U.S. schools during adolescence face additional disadvantages that exacerbate biases and result in low-track placement. Upon entering high school, the 1.25 generation must learn English while simultaneously acquiring grade level academic content. As English Language Learners (ELLs), they are placed in ESL courses that often sacrifice academic rigor under the assumption that English proficiency must be prioritized to succeed (Callahan, 2005, pg. 307). Additionally, while tracking is generally gradual and based on various sources of information (previous grades, standardized tests, and the perception of teachers), adolescent arrivals do not possess a history of U.S. school records and incremental perception of their abilities (Harklau, 1994). Rather, placement decisions transpire in one fell swoop and are based on limited information or a single placement test. (Harklau, 1994). Even when previous school records are available, these documents are largely incomprehensible to U.S. educators (Harklau, 1994). Finally, the 1.25 generation’s limited English skills complicate placement as their academic abilities are confounded with language skills. (Callahan, 2005; Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Harklau, 1994).

Given the disadvantages listed, studies have shown that ELLs are generally placed in low track courses regardless of their academic abilities (Harklau, 1994; Kanno & Kangas, 2014). In an

ethnographic study of Chinese ELLs, Harklau (1994) found that newly arrived high schoolers were by default placed in low track classes. Likewise, Kanno & Kangas (2014) show that ethnically diverse ELL high schoolers found themselves in general or low track courses regardless of their academic performance. Given their emerging language skills, well intentioned teachers preferred to place ELL students in lower tracks to "protect" them from coursework that might be overwhelming (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). Placement decisions went unchallenged by students and parents because they were unaware of their options within the U.S. tracking system (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). Indeed, the informal nature of U.S. tracking, which Lucas (1999) describes as a "hidden in-school stratification system," disadvantages newcomers (pg. 131). Hence, both in ESL and mainstream courses, adolescent arrivals find themselves in less than rigorous classrooms without regard to their education background or abilities.

Tracking and School Relationships

Partly through structuring different types of relationships with school staff, tracking creates unequal educational experiences and exacerbates inequality for Latinx youth (Oakes, 1985; Katz, 1999; Conchas, 2001). Overall, scholars have found that high achieving tracks are more conducive to positive school staff relationships than low achieving tracks (Conchas, 2001; Katz, 1999; Oakes, 1985). For example, examining the experiences of Latinx students in a middle school, Katz (1999) found that tracking harmed student-teacher relationships. Believing that racism was involved in placement decisions that resulted in Asian and white students predominately placed in higher tracks and Latinx in lower tracks, students blamed their teachers rather than the system (Katz, 1999). This led to student-teacher relationships

characterized by mistrust and the belief that teachers did not care about them (Katz, 1999). As Katz (1999) notes, students felt "that no matter how hard they tried, they could not overturn their teachers' negative perceptions." (pg. 826). Likewise, students in ESL courses have been found to experience negative relationships with teachers (Conchas, 2001; Katz, 1999) and classroom climates with a student culture of "goofing off" (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008, pg. 99).

Beyond school staff, peers are a vital source of information and support that influence the educational outcomes of Latinx youth (Gibson, Gandara, & Koyama, 2004) and the 1.5 generation (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Torodova, 2008). Yet, tracking limits interaction between disadvantaged and advantaged peers and structures the kinds of peer relationships that form (Conchas, 2001; Gibson et al., 2004; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). High achieving tracks facilitate a climate where peers support and respect each other, while conflict characterizes peer relationships in lower tracks (Conchas, 2001; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Oakes, 1985). In an ethnographic study of native and foreign-born Latinx students in different tracks, Conchas (2001) found that students did not form friendships across tracks as they did not perceive shared values. Instead, high achieving Latinx developed supportive friendships with Asian and white students in high tracks (Conchas, 2001). Students in the general program, on the other hand, interacted with other Latinx but did not describe those relationships as supportive or as influential to their educational goals (Conchas, 2001). Likewise, Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch (1995) found that tracking impeded low-income Mexican students from associating with higher income Mexicans.

Tracking & School Relationships of Undocumented Youth

In the transition to college, supportive relationships take on an even greater weight for

undocumented students as they are excluded from federal and state financial aid[7] and must navigate wide-ranging college admission policies. Indeed, Gonzales (2010, 2016) identified school-based resources as the *primary factor* separating the undocumented 1.5 generation into college-goers and early-exiters (non-college goers). In line with theoretical understandings about the role of tracking, Gonzales (2010, 2016) found that course placement shaped undocumented youth's school relationships and access to resources. College-goers benefited from early tracking into high achieving courses which provided "a sense of belonging" where they saw "themselves as part of a valuable whole composed of a close-knit group of peers, teachers, and staff" (Gonzales, 2016, pg. 82). Conversely, students in the general tracks lacked relationships with school staff, felt ignored, disconnected, negatively labeled, and believed that school staff were not available to help them (Gonzales, 2010). As Gonzales (2016) notes, "Their general track classes did not give them access to individualized attention from teachers, and school personnel did not give them the kind of encouragement college-goers described receiving" (pg. 83). Overall, the negative relationships in lower tracks deprived early-exiters of the resources benefiting college-goers in high tracks (Gonzales, 2016).

Peer networks have also been identified as critical for undocumented students' college pathways as they provide resources that may be unavailable elsewhere (Enriquez, 2011), and tracking has been shown to shape their access to peer resources. High achieving academic settings, Gonzales (2016) found, provided access to supportive peers with similar goals. In these peer groups, students shared information that facilitated the transition to college (Gonzales,

[7] In Illinois, private scholarships are the main source of funding for undocumented immigrants since, in addition to federal aid, they are excluded from state financial aid and institutional aid in public universities (Gonzales, Luna-Duarte, Diaz-Strong, Rivas, & Brant, 2016).

2016). In another study of the undocumented Latinx 1.5 generation, a bulk of which "were in honors and AP classes," peer resources emerged as vital (Enriquez, 2011, pg. 486). Indeed, Enriquez (2011) asserts that because school staff are often unaware of the challenges legal status presents and the resources available, undocumented peers become "key providers of informational resources" (Enriquez, 2011, pg. 487). Hence, in navigating the college going process, undocumented youth draw on their peers more than on school staff (Enriquez, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

As discussed thus far, it is well established that tracking shapes school relationships and facilitates or hinders access to resources. In addition, these aspects of schooling have been shown to structure the college pathways of the Latinx undocumented 1.5 generation. Yet, there has been little consideration for how tracking and embedded resources might be experienced differently by Latinx undocumented students, and what might account for potential variation. To this end, Stanton-Salazar's (1997) and Bourdieu's (1977; 1986) frameworks provide a lens to considering why school relationships within tracks might be differentially experienced. Incorporating a social capital framework, Stanton-Salazar (1997) argues that to succeed minority youth must "engage socially those agents and participants in the mainstream worlds and social settings who control or manage critical resources" (pg. 33). However, as Stanton-Salazar (1997) notes, students' ability to activate the resources within school agents varies. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977; 1986) view of social reproduction, Stanton-Salazar (1997) theorizes that the ability to engage school agents is partly related to whether their behaviors and attitudes are deemed "worthy" of attention and support by school agents. Indeed, Bourdieu (1977, 1986) asserts that school agents reproduce inequality by rewarding students

who exhibit the values, attitudes, and norms that sustain the dominant class. Hence, through exhibiting qualities valued by those in power—such as hard work and respectfulness—some minority youth access crucial school-based resources (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Given the understanding that student behavior and attitudes influence engagement of school agents, school relationships within tracks might vary based on the values, norms, and behaviors that undocumented youth exhibit. Hence, the expected pattern of negative relationships in low tracks might be disrupted when students exhibit behaviors deemed "worthy" of support. Moreover, differences in students' values and norms might shift the expected benefits of supportive relationships in high tracks. As I demonstrate in this chapter, undocumented adolescent arrivals experience the benefits and downsides of high and low tracking differently than what has been reported for Latinx students and the undocumented 1.5 generation. Central to these differences, I argue, is the timing of immigration; arriving in adolescence, the 1.25 generation stand out in ways that engage the positive attention of school staff while also alienating them from their native-born and younger arriving Latinx peers.

Sample Characteristics

This chapter draws on the experiences of 21 Mexican and Central American undocumented and DACAmented 1.25 generation immigrants who enrolled in K-12 schooling in the United States. I further divide the sample into *stayers* and *leavers*. *Stayers* include the 10 respondents who transitioned to postsecondary education and, at the time of the interview, had either completed college or were on a path towards college completion. *Leavers* consist of the 11 participants who either never enrolled in college or had stopped out of college for a significant period. I use the term leavers for the 11 participants who were not on path towards

college completion as most either left college or high school. Of the 11 leavers, 8 enrolled in college and later stopped out, and 2 left high school (eventually earning a GED or HS diploma) and never attended college.

Table 3 reports the sample characteristics of stayers and leavers. An almost equal number of men and women participated in each group. While stayers are evenly divided between Mexican and Central Americans, a majority of leavers are Mexican. Important differences between stayers and leavers include their family composition at arrival and the language used in the interview. Eight stayers lived in a household with two parents or caretakers as opposed to only 4 leavers. Five stayers as opposed to 10 leavers preferred to conduct the interview in Spanish. Appendix E provides detailed demographic information and other relevant data for the 21 participants discussed in this chapter.

Table 3: Characteristics of Enrolled Participants by College Pathway

Characteristic	**Stayers**	**Leavers**
N	10	11
Mean age at interview	25	27
Mean age at arrival	15	14
Male	6	6
Mexican	5	9
Have DACA/Permit	7	7
Unaccompanied	4	8
Lived with parent on arrival	9	8
In U.S. lived in a 2 parent/caretaker household	8	4
Fulltime Employment	7	11
Married/Cohabitating	1	4
Parent	1	5
Graduated HS/GED	10	11
Ever enrolled in college	10	8
Graduated College	7	0
Interview in Spanish	5	10
Low English Competency	0	1

Analysis

This study was not originally designed to examine the role of tracking and school relationships among adolescent arrivals. However, given that the high school experiences of all but one participant were structured around their ESL and concurrent low-level course placement, the role of tracking emerged as important. In analyzing data for this chapter, I drew on interviews coded in ATLAS.ti and ran reports on the following categories: 1) School Experiences, 2) ESL Experiences, 2) Peers, 3) College Experiences, and 4) Aspirations. I then examined the experiences between stayers and leaves across these categories and identified differences, similarities, and patterns. As needed, and as allowed by the IRB protocol, I contacted some participants to clarify or attain additional details regarding their high school coursework, school relationships, and paying for college. Throughout the analysis and writing, I went back to the interviews to ensure that despite nuances in participants' experiences the emerging patterns held up.

The High School Experiences of the 1.25 Generation

The patterns expected from tracking—positive staff and peer relationships in high achieving classes and negative relationships in low track placements—did not bear out for the undocumented 1.25 generation. Rather, while nearly all participants were placed in ESL and concurrent below level classes, they narrated positive relationships with school staff. In terms of peer relationships, participants struggled fitting in with their native-born and 1.5 generation Latinx peers; thus, respondents formed few to no friendships or found belonging among their ESL counterparts. This section describes these patterns beginning with placement upon arrival and then focusing on relationships with staff and peers.

ESL and Below Level Placement

Learning English was a major task to be undertaken by recently arrived adolescents. Except for one participant, all were placed in ESL classes upon enrolling. Illinois policy requires any student who speaks a language other than English at home to be assessed for English proficiency when first enrolling. Illinois schools with 20 or more ELLs in one language are required to establish either a full-time or part-time Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program. TBE provides instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL), and content-area instruction in the students' native language with a gradual move towards English only. Schools with less than 20 students in the same language can create a Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) which provides the student with instruction or other assistance in their native language (Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), 2016). Fifty-six percent of ELLs in Illinois are enrolled in TBE programs followed by 35% in Content Based ESL (ISBE, 2016). Content Based ESL teaches English through content-area instruction and is taught by bilingual or ESL certified teachers.

Mirroring the types of programs in Illinois, participants were either placed in full-time ESL programs or part-time programs (presumably full-time and part-time TBE programs). Although participants were unware of the official name of the ESL program they took part in, their descriptions fit the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE, 2016) definitions of full-time and part-time TBE programs. Within the ESL programs described, the use of Spanish versus English for content-area instruction varied. In some cases, classes were taught in Spanish, others completely in English, and others in a bilingual format. Moreover, when students began with content-area instruction in Spanish they gradually moved into English only instruction or

into mainstream classes. Finally, along with their ESL program, participants were often enrolled in one to several mainstream classes with non-ELL learners.

Participants experienced their course placement, whether ELL specific or mainstream, as below their academic ability. This pattern aligns with findings from other studies that show recently arrived adolescents tracked into low-level courses despite their abilities (Callahan, 2005; Harklau, 1994; Kanno & Kangas, 2014). Both stayers and leavers felt that while effective at teaching English, their ESL classes were not providing rigorous subject matter content. As a result, some participants expressed a lack of belonging in their ESL classes, and nearly all found school in the U.S. to be easy and lacking in challenge. Moreover, students at times recognized that their placement was a result of assumptions rather than accurate assessment of their abilities. The quotes below from stayers and leavers illustrate the lack of rigor my participants experienced in their initial placement and demonstrate the overall pattern of low-level placement.

> *I remember getting my schedule and going to my classes the first week, and it was just awful. I felt like I belong with the regular [classes as opposed to ESL courses].*
>
> (Jorge, Stayer)

> *I think schools believe that just because a student is an immigrant they will not be able to study well, that they will not do well. It's like they underestimate the student, and I felt that way… I was learning English, but this class was not teaching me anything [about subject matter content].*[48]
>
> (Roberto, Stayer)

> *In Mexico I was more advanced in my classes. Everything was like more advanced. And then when I moved here they placed me in ESL English and I had to take algebra all over again, no actually geometry first, when I supposed be already in calculus. But they put me in geometry. I was a junior and they had me with freshman and sophomore people…. I didn't take any testing or anything. I was like "I think that you have to test me first to see where I am supposed to be at". But no they still placed me in geometry. It was fine, I knew everything already because in Mexico I learned that when I was like in 7th grade.*
>
> (Mariana, Stayer)

The level of education in high school [in the U.S.] was very bad. Since I came from Mexico I did not feel like I was in school until college. There [in college] I was like, "now I have to do homework". Because all of school, all of high school, it felt to me like a game. I mean to tell you the truth, I thought to myself, "ignorant gringos", literally. Because I worked full time, I never did homework, and I was on point.[49]

(Fabian, Stayer)

[We had] very good grades. Because everything they were teaching here, we [Veronica and her sister] already knew about it. Why? I don't know. I think sometimes we were maybe more advanced.[50]

(Veronica, Leaver)

Most things [subject matter content] I had already seen in Mexico... Like for social science, like all of those things already, well, it was just like a review for me. [51]

(Pablo, Leaver)

The first class that I was taking, like math, my teacher was telling me, "you know this, I can see that you know all this, you do it in like seconds. I'm going to talk to your counselor because you should be at a higher level of math."

(Benjamin, Leaver)

They [Mexican schools] become aware of what your capacity is and they put you according to your capacity, nothing more, nothing less ... [in the U.S.] I did not have much choice. So, I was really struck by how easy school was here.[52]

(Cecilia, Leaver)

Arriving in adolescence and staring off in ESL and concurrent low-level courses left little room for advanced course placement such as honors and AP coursework. Generally, both stayers and leavers moved completely out of ESL classes and into full-time mainstream courses within a couple of years. Hence, an adolescent starting off as sophomore was not fully mainstreamed until their senior year or a freshman until their junior year. Even once mainstreamed, many participants remained in lower level courses. For example, 16-year old arrival Mariana, as a senior, was enrolled in mainstream classes but with sophomores.

Moving out of lower track courses, or "jumping tracks" (Harklau, 1994), requires the recognition that tracks exist and advocacy from students, parents, or teachers. However, the 1.25 generation has little time to figure out the U.S. education system which impedes their self-

advocacy. Indeed, knowledge of the system came too late for 15-year old arrival Jorge. Jorge left Honduras with his 13-year old brother Christopher to reunite with his parents in the United States. The hard work of Jorge's parents in the United States provided for a private bilingual education in Honduras where the brothers learned English and excelled academically. Starting high school as a sophomore, despite his bilingual education and strong academic background, Jorge tested into ESL and was placed in low-level mainstream courses. Jorge experienced this placement as "frustrating" and labored to move out of ESL classes.

> *My mentality was, "Okay. So, I'm here in this country. What I need to do is excel." That's all that's in my mind, school-wise. It felt like I didn't fit there [ESL classes]. So, I was always trying to prove myself. That entire first year, it was all about me trying to prove myself.*

The year Jorge spent proving himself was partially successful as by his junior year Jorge moved out of ESL and into all mainstream classes. Jorge was finally in "regular courses where there were not only Latinos but also whites, blacks, Indians, and Asians." But mainstream coursework was not sufficient for young Jorge who sought to excel academically. With time in the United States, Jorge came to "find out" about advanced classes and set a goal to enroll in AP classes before graduating high school. Unfortunately, as Jorge explains, this goal did not materialize.

> *I was the first one within my family to go to a high school here in the U.S., so I didn't know the whole process on how to be placed in AP or how to request that or how to go about it…. The challenge was not so much of the English but it was so much of the interaction, you know, how the system worked. I didn't know how to work the system, I didn't know who to ask the right questions to…. When I requested the transfer it was like October and by that time they told me it was too late.*

Outside of AP Spanish, Jorge was unable to negotiate placement in other AP classes. Nonetheless, armed with knowledge about AP courses, Jorge ensured younger brother

Christopher understood the importance of early high-level placement. Christopher also received assistance from his high school counselor who placed him in honor classes due to his strong grades from 8th grade. As result, in high school, Christopher took honor courses and four AP classes. A combination of factors enabled Christopher to jump tracks: 1) his bilingual education in Honduras enabled him to test out of ESL and enroll in mainstream classes when starting 8th grade, 2) upon starting high school he benefited from a year's worth of U.S. school records, 3) his older brother learned the system and used that knowledge to his brother's benefit.

Barring the combination of factors that Christopher benefited from, only participants who were highly motivated to move out of below level coursework—and who had the time to solely focus on academics—jumped tracks. Like Jorge, Roberto emigrated at the age of 15 from El Salvador to reunite with his parents. In El Salvador Roberto lived with his grandparents and attended a private Catholic school. Entering high school as a sophomore in a majority white school in the suburbs, Roberto was placed in a program where content and English language instruction were provided together. The content he was learning, according to Roberto, was information that was taught in El Salvador in the 4th grade. Roberto became determined to move out of the ESL program; after school he spent three to five hours reading and working on English exercises. He also advocated for himself by pushing his counselor to place him in a higher math class. At Roberto's insistence, his counselor finally offered a summer math class available to students who had failed the course during the academic year. Yet accessing the summer class required permission from the Math Department Chair. Fortunately, Roberto's pleas and promises to the department chair that he would not disappoint resulted in access to

the summer class. Roberto's efforts after school and during the summer paid off; by his junior year, he "no longer had to take any of those [ESL] classes."[53] Roberto had jumped tracks and was where he felt he belonged.

> *I said to myself "finally, finally." I felt good because I now understood everything and wrote, that is, I did not feel bad anymore. I had already learned, and then, I felt calmer because I started taking honors and then AP. I mean, I finally felt I was where I should be.*[54]

Among the 10 stayers, 6 eventually enrolled in some type of advanced class. Still, 2 of those 6 only took AP Spanish. In some cases, like Roberto, students advocated to move up; in other cases, their ESL teachers advocated for higher placement. The intervention of teachers also resulted in some leavers moving up to higher level classes, though not honors or AP. Showing the significance of self-advocacy or school staff assistance, in no case did parents advocate for higher placement.

While not all stayers negotiated higher course placement, they were far more successful than leavers. No differences existed, however, in their aspirations and attitudes towards school; both stayers and leavers valued education, felt positive about their abilities, and aspired to attend college. Yet stayers benefited from their parents' financial support which allowed them to solely focus on academics. Indeed, 8 out of the 10 stayers lived in homes with two parents or caretakers, while only 4 of the 11 leavers benefited from the resources of a two-headed household (see Appendix E). Less family resources meant leavers managed both academics and work, leaving less time to devote to academics and extracurricular activities. Only 2 stayers worked during the school year compared to 7 leavers. Predictably, of the 2 stayers who worked, neither took advanced coursework outside of AP Spanish.

In summary, adolescent arrivals were automatically placed in low level coursework regardless of their academic background and abilities, and only a few ever enrolled in advanced courses. Their self-advocacy skills, support of their teachers, and time to solely focus on their education enabled some to take advanced level classes. Most, however, remained in lower or general track mainstream classes which they experienced as below their academic abilities.

Relationships to School Staff

Based on the understanding that negative relationships are the norm in low-level tracks, one would expect that the 1.25 generation would encounter conflict with school staff in their ESL and below level coursework. Indeed, I hypothesized that adolescent arrivals due to their lack of English skills would be easily identified as "outsiders" and experience school negatively in the U.S. Yet, both stayers and leavers narrated supportive and positive relationships with teachers and other school staff regardless of their placement or eventual track jumping.

The undocumented 1.25 generation, as I originally posited, did stand out as "outsiders"; however, standing out brought positive instead of negative implications for their relationships to school staff. Upon entering U.S. schools, participants experienced culture shock, and felt U.S. students were disrespectful, immature, unmotivated, sexually permissive, and generally focused on unimportant matters. In contrast, having migrated in search of better opportunities, adolescent arrivals presented themselves as innocent, respectful, motivated, and hard-working. For example, Pepe, a stayer who left Mexico at the age of 15, recounts the ways he stood out from his peers and the respect this earned him.

> *They [school staff] respected me. I wore, because I was so connected to church, I wore like these dressy pants and dressy shoes. Just my demeanor, they knew I was different from some of the other kids that were wearing jeans or tattoos or that kind of stuff… Then now I look in retrospective, in the area of adults, when there's someone that*

projects faith, commitment, determination, that is some values that it doesn't matter who brings them to the table, they are impressive and I think that's what it was.

Regardless of the school setting, available resources, and racial/ethnic student body composition, students found themselves in the position of the "good" kid. For example, Patricia (a leaver) attended a Chicago Public School (CPS) with a majority black student population. Arriving at the age of 15 from Mexico, Patricia was in disbelief over the interactions between students and teachers.

> *In Mexico school was very innocent. I did not know what drugs were, I did not know about anything bad ... We [the Mexican students] respected the teachers because we were used to that. And we saw that here they [the black students] would get in their [the teachers] face and come close to hitting them. We were shocked because, "how can you think about hitting a teacher?" That's sacred.*[55]

Unlike Patricia, John (a stayer) attended a well-resourced predominately white school in the suburbs when he arrived from El Salvador at the age of 13. Despite differences in the student body, John also saw his peers as troublemakers and preferred the more structured school setting in El Salvador.

> *The tradition, at least there in El Salvador, even in public schools, they have their criteria to put on uniforms. And as one has to be well dressed and groomed. And when it was my first day at school [in the U.S.], I got surprised at the people I saw there, the kids with Mohawks and all that. And so it was something very different... There were many problems, the boys were very rebellious. It was not a bad school, but the boys there because their parents have money they do not care much, and they get into trouble.*[56]

Standing out as the "good kid" brought positive attention from teachers. Stayers and leavers overwhelmingly described their teachers as patient, supportive, and helpful. With the exception of Mercedes, whose experience will be touched on later, examples of negative experiences were almost non-existent. Rather participants praised their teachers and provided various illustrations of encouragement, assistance, emotional support, and positive affirmation.

For example, Mia, a stayer who crossed the border clandestinely with her parents when she was 15, found teachers who motivated her to think beyond the limits she faced growing up.

> *They [teachers] get involved with what is going on with you, for example, they start asking you about your family. They see you a little shy and they ask you what is happening. For me that's important, because that did not exist in my family.... So, yes, my teachers saw me a little closed off in myself and always tried to open me a little more. To see beyond my limits or the limits that others put on me.*[57]

At times, as in the case of 13-year old arrival Daniela, adolescent arrivals were publicly praised and used as examples for other students to follow.

> *And one day we were in class, it was my senior year... And then he [Daniela's teacher] started talking and was saying things about a girl ... He finished talking and then said that it was me. And I was like, "why is he saying that?" I felt weird because he was talking about me in front of me. Like he was giving an example to others that you can learn. Even though I did not know English, but still I worked really hard.*[58]

Teachers also aided students who felt timid due to their English skills and provided additional assistance. For example, 15-year old arrival Cecilia (a leaver), after arriving from Mexico initially felt out of place in school. But with the help of her teachers, she eventually came out of her shell and attained good grades.

> *Then, for a full year, I think it was my sophomore year, I would go to classes, but I barely talked. And the teachers realized that my second language was English. But they really liked, I think, how I studied, that I applied myself. So that drew their attention. And they helped me. The teachers helped me ... and I had people who helped me so I could finish the homework correctly and didn't end up doing badly in school, because they saw my enthusiasm.*[59]

Similarly, Roberto whose experience moving out of ESL into advanced level courses were shared earlier, also felt that his teachers where ready and willing to provide assistance. As Roberto explains, "all" teachers, whether in ESL or higher level courses, were "attentive".

> *Yes, the truth is, most of the teachers were very attentive, very willing to help. I did feel I could count on them. For example, if I had difficulty with something, "I have problems with this, or I need help in this", they were very attentive, very good, all the teachers.*[60]

Relationships with school staff in low-level courses for ELL students (Conchas, 2001; Katz, 1999) and the Latinx undocumented 1.5 generation (Gonzales 2010, 2016) have been largely described as negative. Yet, my participants encountered supportive, attentive, and affirming teachers in these spaces. This difference suggests that school relationships within tracking are not experienced the same by all students. The mindset and attitudes of the 1.25 generation, I argue, explains the incongruity in these findings. As described, my participants presented themselves as the "good kid;" they worked hard, behaved, dressed properly, and respected their teachers. These highly valued norms and attitudes, as Stanton-Salazar (1997) and Bourdieu (1977, 1986) theorize, activated the positive attention and support of school staff. As 15-year old arrival Elena describes, being the "good kid" facilitated positive relationships with school staff despite their-low track placement.

> ***Elena:*** *I was a teacher's pet.*
>
> ***Daysi:*** *Why do you think that, I mean you talked about how your ESL teacher was supportive and sounds like there were others also?*
> ***Elena:*** *I really like to learn. I like to learn, I like school, I like doing projects. I mean school wasn't, school was easy. As long as I read the material I knew that I would get an "A". Teachers liked me because I was respectful, and I was nice, and I participated. So they treat you well and it was almost like, I'm not trying to be cynical, but it was almost like playing a game.*
>
> ***Daysi:*** *In what way?*
>
> ***Elena:*** *That, you know, as long as you play by the rules and give people what they want you move forward. But I didn't have any bad intentions. I knew that's what I needed. That was the recipe for me to go to college and be successful and get out of poverty and support my parents. Which ended up being not true.*

As foreshadowed by Elena, the "recipe" failed. Being a "good kid" activated the support and positive attention of school staff; however, these relationships were insufficient for overcoming the barriers imposed by their legal status. Playing by the rules, working hard and

respecting teachers, as I show later, did not result in access to college. First, however, I discuss how peer relationships also defied expectations for the 1.25 generation.

Peer Relationships and Resources

Tracking limits interaction between disadvantaged and advantaged peers and structures classroom climates that facilitate supportive peer relationships in high-tracks and promote conflict in low-tracks (Conchas, 2001; Gibson et al., 2004; Oakes, 1985; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). The general pattern of peer relationships within tracks did not hold for my participants. Participants who jumped tracks did not develop supportive friendships with high achieving classmates, and peer interactions in lower tracks were not characterized by conflict. Rather, three patterns emerged: 1) participants struggled developing friendships with native-born and 1.5 generation Latinx, 2) those in higher level classes felt distant from both their Latinx and non-Latinx peers, and 3) when peer belonging existed, it was with their like-minded ESL peers.

In general peer relationships where challenging for adolescent arrivals who struggled fitting in. As Jorge describes, developing close friendships from "scratch" in a new cultural setting was hard.

> *I'm a Latino, Hispanic, do I fit there? You start at some point building some relationships with white kids or black kids. Can I be close to them? It was kind of like an identity crisis at that point. You felt like you fitted well back in Honduras when everyone you knew, you built a relationship for a long time. And now this part is like building a relationship from scratch. I just felt it was hard. It was tough. Until this day, I can tell you that I probably -- friends that I make there [in high school] were like two. Out of the two of them, I don't speak to any of them.*

Cultural differences complicated cultivating intimate friendships. Unlike the 1.25 generation, the undocumented 1.5 generation largely resemble their documented and native-born peers

(Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2016; Perez, 2009). In describing their similarities, Perez (2009) states, "judged by their appearance, undocumented high school seniors are indistinguishable from their U.S. born classmates. They wear the same jeans and T-shirts and mingle in the hallways between classes gossiping and joking with their friends" (pg. xii). Arriving in adolescence, however, does not permit the same kind of cultural blending with other Latinx afforded to their younger arriving immigrants.

By adolescence, cultural differences between native-born and foreign-born Latinx become more evident and difficult to surpass in developing friendships. Arriving at the age of 14 from Mexico, Pedro's (a leaver) comment on native-born Mexicans highlights the cultural differences present.

> *I would see them, how they talked, their attitude and all that, and I thought, "They're born here." And they would all say, "I'm Mexican." But many are confused about that, why? Because you say, "I'm Mexican." Okay, but you are not totally Mexican, you are from Mexican parents. You are born here and your parents are Mexicans, if you understand me. So they say, "I am Mexican", but in blood they are not Mexican, they are Mexican-American.*[61]

Pedro found it frustrating when 2nd generation Mexicans claimed a Mexican identity because, from his perspective, they were culturally Mexican-American. These differences were immediately evident for Pedro, whose observations were sufficient to determine which Latinx were "born here."

While most participants did not challenge the ethnic identification of other Latinx, they nonetheless struggled connecting to native-born and 1.5 generation Latinx. In a couple of cases friendships developed between adolescent arrivals and other Latinx, but more common was a sense of cultural distance and lack of support from their Latinx peers. For example, 13-year old arrival Daniela found it difficult to form friendships with English dominant Latinx.

> *I had a friend here and there… but not that many friends. Because they spoke more English, and they had a life here very different from living in Mexico.*[62]

As Daniela notes, having lived in Mexico for a longer period of her life placed cultural distance between herself and other Latinx.

The cultural distance was at times experienced as a hierarchy, with more recent arrivals at the bottom. Both within school and with similar age cousins, adolescent arrivals found other Latinx unsupportive. Mia (a stayer), explains that when she arrived at the age of 15 from Mexico she had expected support from her native-born cousins but did not receive it.

> *The reality is that when I got here, I thought it was going to be a little less difficult because we have cousins who were born here. But, I don't know, I believe that since they do not have the same culture as us, there is that separation. That, "you are less, I am more because I was born here". I expected to receive a little support from my cousins, close cousins, that they would help me with the language, who would begin to introduce me to the culture of the United States. But that never happened. It was hard. I had to do it by myself.*[63]

Hence, whether in school or with family members, adolescent arrivals felt distant from their native-born and 1.5 generation Latinx peers.

Studies have shown that high achieving Latinx become isolated from Latinx in lower tracks; however, they develop friendships with high achievers of other racial/ethnic backgrounds (Conchas, 2001) or with other high achieving Latinx (Gonzales, 2016; Enriquez, 2011). Likewise, I found that participants who jumped tracks became isolated from their ESL peers. Unlike other studies, however, adolescent arrivals also felt socially isolated in their mainstream and high level courses. For example, Jorge's determination to excel academically enabled him to move out of ESL into mainstream classes but created difficulties fitting in socially; Jorge did not fit with his ESL peers nor Latinx in mainstream classes resulting in a lack of friendships.

> *For the most part, the main conflict was having friends, you know? At lunch, I would sit with nobody. Sometimes I would try to stay close to the Latino kids, but it was hard to even to adjust to them or make friends with them.*

Like Jorge, Roberto was not close to his peers in high school. In Roberto's majority white school there were only a handful of Latinx in high-level classes. Unfortunately, as Roberto recounts, he found these Latinx to be standoffish and arrogant.

> *At school I did not have many friends…. I was part of the National Honor Society, but I also did not feel very comfortable because there were only two Hispanics. Out of 50, we were only three Hispanics, and I said "Okay." And then, because they also were not very friendly, they were like, I do not know, they thought they were all that.*[64]

When adolescent arrivals located peer belonging in high school, it was generally in their ESL classes. For example, Fabian, a stayer who migrated at the age of 15 from Mexico, struggled fitting in with his native-born cousins who attended the same school. Compared to his cousins, Fabian brought a "more pure mentality."[65] His cousins, on the other hand, were into "music in English, fashion, and one or two,"[66] Fabian believed, were "in gangs."[67] Fabian, however, did get along with the other recently arrived immigrants in his ESL classes who supported each other to stay out of trouble.

> *Whether they [other ESL students] came from the city or if they came from the provinces, we had a mentality more – A better sense of clarity, that we did not come here to waste our time or to do - excuse my word - stupidities, right? In other words, it was hard for us to come here, and we are going to do things well. So, do not get in trouble, and we would help each other. "That guy sells drugs, do not mess with him", things like that.*[68]

Patricia, whose experience of culture shock in a Chicago Public School was previously discussed, also found peer support within her ESL program. Patricia, a leaver, enrolled in high school at the same time that a group of 20 other recent arrivals entered. As a result, Patricia found belonging in this group of students for the entire four years of high school; she even eventually married one of her classmates. Patricia recounts the support she felt from this group.

> *At that moment, a small group arrived. We were like about 20 Mexicans. So they [the school] managed to make a bilingual class. So we became friends, and the four years, the 20 of us grew up there ... So yes, we all tried be supportive, because at the time we all felt the same. We had classes together and we had a small group.*[69]

Patricia's group of friends were so close that when their school would not play Latin music during the prom, they protested by skipping the prom and creating a "Hispanic prom"[70] outside of the school.

Fifteen-year old arrival Benjamin (a leaver), who was brought from Mexico by his grandmother, also found comfort and support among his ESL peers. Upon entering high school, Benjamin felt "shy, scared" and like he "was walking into Mars." Yet, peer support from ESL students enabled Benjamin to ease into the transition from Mexico to the United States.

> *After I met a couple of kids I felt like I was at home. I think that they made me feel like, "Don't worry, I got another class with you or the next class I have it with you, so you go with me." I was like, "Ah. Thank God." I got to the room, and then there's mostly kids like me that don't know much English, they're just learning some. That made me feel like home again.*

Overall, peer relationships for the 1.25 generation were few and not as expected. Rather than the supportive peer relationships in higher level classes and negative relationships in lower level classes, the opposite was experienced among my participants. Indeed, when a sense of belonging was found, it was with their ESL peers. Yet, the peer relationships forged within ESL classrooms were unable to provide information to facilitate college enrollment.

College Transition and Persistence

High school relationships, structured by track placement, have been found critical in the transition to college among the undocumented Latinx 1.5 generation (Gonzales, 2010; 2016; Enriquez, 2011). These relationships, however, failed to facilitate college opportunities for the 1.25 generation. In other words, the supportive and affirming relationships with high school

staff and ESL peers did not translate into resources that enabled adolescent arrivals to transition and persist in college. Without school-based resources, family finances separated adolescent arrivals into stayers and leavers. In the next section, I first discuss how family resources instead of school relationships enabled stayers to transition and remain on path to completion and then describe how lack of family resources thwarted the college dreams of leavers.

Stayers

In Illinois undocumented immigrants are ineligible for federal and state financial aid. Hence, college enrollment heavily teeters on the ability of youth to access scarce private scholarships, their family financial resources, or a combination of these two sources of funding. With one exception, in transitioning to college after high school, stayers were unsuccessful at securing full-ride private scholarships. Hence, the financial sacrifices of their families emerged as the primary factor facilitating the transition to college from high school.

Brothers Jorge and Christopher, 26 and 24 at the time of the interview, both successfully transitioned to college as a result of the financial support of their parents. During high school their parents' financial circumstances made it possible for Jorge and Christopher to focus on academics rather than manage work and school. As the older brother, Jorge navigated the college transition first. Aspiring to become a doctor, Jorge began asking his teachers and counselors about college funding and quickly learned that staff lacked knowledge regarding legal status issues and that scholarships were scarce. As Jorge recounts, the efforts of high school staff to locate funding resulted only in a scholarship of $500.

> *I remember when I started talking about I don't have any papers, I am undocumented, and I really want to go to college, I really want to go study medicine… and I don't know*

what the steps are. I remember them [high school staff] scrambling around asking each other have you ever dealt with a case like this, what options do we have, what scholarships can we apply to. And at the beginning the first things that I heard from them was no we have nothing, we have never encountered this. And then, it was actually until like six months before I graduated I was actually able to apply to one scholarship, and I got a scholarship for $500. That was my only scholarship that I received from high school.

Given the lack of funding, Jorge adjusted his aspirations. Rather than a four-year university, he settled for a community college and changed his career aspirations to physical therapy and later to biomedical engineering. The $500 scholarship provided some assistance, but the bulk of tuition was covered by Jorge's parents. Additionally, Jorge's parents provided for his everyday financial needs making it possible for him to attend college full-time and forgo work. When family finances tightened and Jorge's parents were faced with the cost of college tuition for two children, he took a year off. When Christopher completed high school, the brothers attempted to enroll in a four-year university and went as far as registering, receiving their school IDs, and even purchasing a school t-shirt; however, the private loan their parents were counting on to pay tuition fell through. Hence, Jorge returned to a community college, and Christopher also commenced his college education at a 2-year institution.

The second disappointing attempt to enroll in a four-year institution led Jorge to become involved with an immigrant rights organization. After speaking at a high profile public event featuring well-known politicians, Jorge caught the attention of a university representative who offered the scholarship that funded his last two years of college. Brotherly assistance came in handy as Jorge immediately requested the offer also be extended to Christopher. With almost full-rides to a private four-year university, Jorge and Christopher completed college.

Jorge and Christopher's educational path show that despite strong academic records

and positive relationships with teachers, at the point of transition to college, family rather than school-based resources were key. Their parents provided the financial means to initiate their college career. It was only *after* they started their path and fortuitously activated the assistance of a college representative that they secured sufficient aid. Without the help of their parents to start college, they might have never accessed the aid existing in postsecondary institutions.

The financial resources of Jorge and Christopher's parents, however, could only support a non-traditional education. Both brothers started at a community college, and Jorge took a year off due to finances. Moreover, unable to afford living on campus, the brothers commuted for an hour and half from the suburbs to Chicago where their four-year university was located. Indeed, none of the stayers took a traditional route to college where they lived on campus and attended full-time. To varying extents, all took a non-traditional path which involved a bumpy road with stops along the way, and starts at two-year institutions. Although stayers often applied and were accepted to four-year universities, covering tuition without financial aid was simply unmanageable.

Twenty-year old Roberto, who moved out of ESL classes in one year into advanced level courses, with an ACT score of 29[8] was accepted to several universities and provided with partial scholarships. Yet, the scholarships provided by universities were insufficient.

> *They [universities] did offer me some financial help and everything, but only like half, say of $60,000, they helped me with like 30.... Yes, I applied to several of the universities, that were, prestigious. They accepted me and everything, but I said, "Financially I can't do it".*[71]

[8] ACT scores range from 1 to 36 with an average composite score of 21. A score of 29 is considered competitive as it places an individual in the 90th percentile (ACT, 2016).

With only partial funding and unable to locate additional scholarships even after "hours and hours[72]" of searching, in conversation with his high school counselor, Roberto decided to enroll in the local community college.

Regardless of their grades, involvement in extracurricular activities, and positive regard by school staff, stayers struggled with the financial aspect of pursuing their college goals. High school personnel successfully located scholarships for 4 out of the 10 ten stayers; however, ranging from $300 to $1000 these small scholarships only covered part of one semester of tuition at a community college[9]. Only one stayer, 16-year old arrival Liliana, received a full-ride scholarship straight from high school. Twenty-one year old Liliana fled Guatemala due to violence. Liliana had long ago decided to "focus on school"[73] and use education as a "weapon"[74] to end the cycle of violence she had witnessed. Her commitment to learning was rewarded as in high school she won the "Joy of Learning" scholarship which provided a full-ride to a two-year institution. During college Liliana lived with her parents and did not work outside of occasional tutoring and babysitting. Hence, Liliana benefited both from resources accessed in high school and the financial support of her parents. Liliana, however, was the only stayer who received full funding straight out of high school. Liliana has since earned an associates and enrolled in a four-year university with a full scholarship.

Only one stayer, 15-year old arrival Pepe, did not live with a parent once arriving from Mexico. Nonetheless, family support was instrumental in his educational path. Immediately after high school, Pepe moved from Texas where he was living with his aunt and uncle to live with his older brother in Illinois. While in Texas, the financial stability provided by his aunt and

[9] The average cost of Illinois community college tuition is $7,937 (Community College Review).

uncle enabled Pepe to engage in extracurricular activities at school and church. Once in Illinois, Pepe's older brother provided a rent free space to live while he attended community college. With this assistance, Pepe was able to put his earnings working in a factory towards tuition rather than living expenses. Pepe eventually transferred to a four-year public university on a full scholarship, and with the continued financial assistance of his brother, was able to stop working the last two years of college. Thirty-two at the time of the interview, Pepe had obtained a bachelors and master's degree.

That school relationships were not instrumental in the transition to college, does not mean that they were inconsequential. As Mariana's experience shows, school relationships enabled adolescent arrivals to overcome challenges that threatened to disrupt their high school education. When Mariana's grandfather, her father figure and provider, suddenly passed away Mariana sought to distance herself from the problematic family dynamics that ensued. Convincing her mother to "start all over" in the United States, she left Mexico at the age of 16. The first six months were fraught with difficulty for Mariana, her mother, and younger brother who moved into the living room of an old contact Mariana's mother had made on a previous trip. A less than ideal living situation grew worse when the man they lived with expected Mariana's mother to reciprocate his advances. One night, when he became enraged at being rejected, Mariana called a teacher who picked them up; the teacher offered her place for the night, and checked the family into a homeless shelter the following day. After two weeks in the shelter, another teacher delivered generous assistance by helping the family locate an apartment and paying for the deposit and first month rent.

She's an angel [Mariana's teacher], and she was like "Let's find an apartment and I'll pay for the deposit and the first month." And I was like, "Seriously, you are kidding me." And I was crying and I was like, "No, this is just a miracle, you're an angel."

This "angel" helped Mariana and her mother get on their feet, and probably kept Mariana from dropping out of high school. Yet, the relationships with her teachers and counselors did not alleviate the tuition burden when transitioning to college. Mariana, was accepted into two private universities but without funding delayed college enrollment for six months after high school. Eventually Mariana enrolled in her local community college and covered tuition by working "all the time." Mariana's mother became romantically involved with a man while Mariana was still in high school. When he moved in with the family, he paid half the rent and bills. A second earner in the household allowed Mariana to put her earnings towards school rather than assisting her mother financially. After getting involved in her community college, Mariana was awarded a $500 scholarship during her second term and full funding in a later term. Twenty-one when we talked, Mariana was one semester away from completing her associate's degree.

Positive school relationships for the undocumented 1.25 generation were insufficient to overcome the enormous barriers imposed by exclusionary immigration policies. While experiencing positive relationships in both low and high level courses, the benefits of these relationships were not fully realized for adolescent arrivals. Even Jorge and Roberto who jumped tracks did not benefit from the social capital existing in these spaces. Rather, to transition and stay in college required the financial support of the family. While college enrollment often opened up additional scholarship opportunities, the initial catalysts to commence college were not school-based but family resources. Family resources were present

both during high school and college. During high school, family finances provided time to focus on academics instead of working. Likewise in college, family support eased the burden of stayers to work or allowed them to use their earnings for tuition rather than to sustain themselves.

Leavers

A dearth of family financial resources and life challenges that drained existing resources, by and large, ended the college aspirations of leavers. Similar to stayers, leavers generally experienced high school positively, and found school staff and their ESL peers supportive. Yet, as reported earlier, only 4 leavers compared to 8 stayers lived in a two parent/caretaker household (see Appendix E). With less workers and financial resources in the home, 7 of the 11 leavers worked somewhere between 20 to 40 hours per week in high school. Their lower financial means impacted their high school experience by reducing the amount of time available to engage with academics and extracurricular activities.

Limited family resources also hindered leavers' ability to transition to college. Pablo, 25 at time of the interview and 13 at arrival, emigrated from Mexico to reunite with his mother. Graduating high school in 2011, Pablo's mother offered to help him financially so he could enroll in a community college.

> *Because my mom, she was going to help me get back to school. She just told me to get me a part-time job and help her with only 200 dollars or 300. And well to go to school.*[75]

The financial support of his mother, however, never materialized as she felt compelled to return to Mexico after Pablo's' father passed away in early 2012. Pablo's mother returned to ensure her ex-husband's property was properly distributed among the family. She attempted to re-enter the United States several years later but was caught, and Pablo does not want her to

attempt again. With his mother in Mexico, as Pablo recounts, he lost her emotional support and took on greater financial responsibility.

> *I don't know, I became depressed. I felt alone. I was left alone and I had to work. The apartment, everything had remained in my name. And the man my mother was with never paid the electricity. He just would give like $50 and the rest would accumulate. But it was 50 like in four months, five months, 50, 100 dollars. The expenses and all that accumulated almost $900. No, this time everything really came at me all at once. Yes I was like very pressured.*[76]

During these challenging times Pablo drank almost on a daily basis for about a year and half. Eventually he cut off friendships with his drinking buddies and now prefers to go to the gym or run for an hour. Eligible for DACA, Pablo now works as a mechanic where he fixes machines to resell. Hoping to enroll in college, Pablo has searched but been unsuccessful at locating financial assistance. As Pablo states, "as an immigrant they don't help you."[77] His mother's attempt to salvage his father's assets in Mexico depleted Pablo's family assistance. Without access to federal and state need-based aid, Pablo's college dreams were thwarted.

Similar to Pablo, the college trajectory of 15-year arrival Cecilia was derailed by family trials and declining financial and emotional resources. Thirty-two years old when we talked, Cecilia initially benefited from the financial support of her parents; she transitioned to a community college immediately after high school and continued on this path for a couple of years.

> *My parents helped me. For like a year basically, school expenses were on the part of my parents. The second year they told me they could not help me with everything. That I had to put in my part. That's when I started working full time, and I would pay part of my school.*[78]

When her family situation changed, however, Cecilia stopped out and has yet to return. Cecilia's college education came to a slow end when, around the age of 21, her mother

returned to Mexico to care for Cecilia's sick grandmother and struggled re-crossing the border. At the same time, Cecilia discovered that her father was cheating on her mother. Cecilia describes how the family stress diminished Cecilia's access to her mother's emotional support, increased her family and financial responsibilities, and brought on a period of rebellion.

> *My mom was over there at the border. We had no money for food. And my dad came out with this [cheating]. And I had a lot of rage, because I saw that he was not attending to us like my mother. And that I was taking more charge of my sister than him. And that was not my obligation.... It impacted me a lot, honestly, in many ways. At school, because I was a good student, I feel that I have always been a good student, but I did not care. My values, everything, like there they went, down the drain. Yes I was a person, a person I do not want to be again. Because then I rebelled, and most of all against them... So, that's when I went wild, so to speak. I worked hard, studied little, and went out a lot.*[79]

Cecilia's mother made it across the border after three attempts. But Cecilia's depleted family resources and loss of focus towards school terminated her college experience prior to obtaining a degree.

Fifteen-year old arrival Benjamin also transitioned to college after high school but was unable to sustain enrollment due to financial challenges. In high school Benjamin lived with his grandparents and worked 20 to 25 hours a week at a fast-food restaurant to send remittances to Mexico where his mother remained. Upon graduating high school, Benjamin's relatives helped him get a job at a casino where he received tuition reimbursement. The casino salary and tuition benefit enabled Benjamin to enroll in a community college and continue helping his mother financially. Unfortunately, about a year later, Benjamin lost his casino job. Sensing that he would never have another job "pay as much," Benjamin felt "the whole world just come down." As Benjamin describes, losing the casino job also meant the end of his college career.

> *I went back to the fast-food restaurant and I started working there. And the job was not full-time, and dropped out of college, three or four months after. I didn't have enough to*

sustain myself and to pay for the college classes that I was taking. I was taking so many classes at that moment.

Benjamin made a second attempt to enroll in college at the age of 23, but abandoned his college aspirations after his federal financial aid application was denied.

***Benjamin**: I was applying for [a private for-profit university]. They made me fill out a form that was requesting help from the government to pay for school which came back denied. That's when I put my feet in the floor and said, "Well, this is what I am, and it isn't going to be easy."*

***Daysi:** How did you feel about that?*

***Benjamin:** I felt really bad, I cried. Tears came out when I realized that school wasn't going to be an option anymore.*

Benjamin's attempts at pursuing college without the benefit of financial aid or assistance from parents resulted in various disappointments, and the understanding that life as an undocumented immigrant would not "be easy". At 31-years old, Benjamin, who never applied for DACA due to concerns about his eligibility, continues to work full-time in the fast-food chain where he worked while in high school.

While Benjamin did not receive help from school staff in transitioning to college, in other cases school staff tried but were unable to locate financial assistance. In the case of Daniela, school staff discussed college options and took students on college visits. Moreover, a school counselor, as Daniela explains, searched for scholarships specific to undocumented students but was unsuccessful.

When it was my junior [year], they would say, "Oh, what are you going to study?" Like they would tell us many things. Then when it was senior [year] they took us to visit schools, I went to different schools. But in all of them you needed a scholarship or something like that ... She [school counselor] was responsible for searching for scholarships and all that. She tried to help me find a scholarship, but in truth, she did not find one that was for me, more than anything, to help me cover what I needed.... Well, she did try to help me, but I had no choice but to work and figure it out on my own.[80]

Without financial aid, Daniela's only option was to cover tuition with her earnings working at a fast-food restaurant. Daniela's mother, who bore sole financial responsibility for Daniela and her three younger siblings could not financially support her college goals. Indeed, given the family's limited resources, Daniela started working full-time while in high school after her mother hurt her back and was unable to work for several months. Working did not stop Daniela from graduating in the top ten percent of her class and becoming a member of the National Honor Society. As she recalls, despite working, she labored to keep up her grades.

> *I started at 4:00pm. I left school at 3:30pm, at 4:00pm I started working. I left at 12:00am and I would take a bath, I would go to sleep. But it was never an impediment for having good grades. I got passing grades in my homework, like, I always tried to work [on homework] during my lunch, because I did not want to lower my grades.*[81]

Unable to afford to tuition and living expenses on a minimum-wage job, at the age of 21, Daniela has only completed one community college class.

> *I have not been able to go to school, because it is very expensive for me. I took a class and I paid $700 ... And then the books. So I spent almost 800 and something, because the books they are expensive. So, for one class, one semester, and I need many more classes. So yes it was a bit difficult for me. I only did that class and that is it.*[82]

Similar to stayers, school relationships were significant for high school completion but not college transition. Born in Honduras, Marvin was 13 years old when he made the trip to the United States with his mother. After moving in with his girlfriend during his senior year, Marvin let his grades slip and did not graduate. Years later, when a new high school completion program opened, a teacher who "remembered"[83]Marvin, encouraged him to enroll. A couple of years after dropping out of high school, school relationships enabled Marvin to receive a high school diploma.

Marvin provides an example of school relationships facilitating high school completion.

The case of Mercedes, which I alluded to earlier as the exception to mostly positive school relationships, demonstrates the consequences when schools fail to engage their resources. Arriving in the United States two weeks after her mother's unexpected death, 14-year old Mercedes wanted to study but felt unsupported by her sisters. After Mercedes' mother passed away, her sisters returned to Mexico and brought Mercedes into the United States clandestinely. Unfortunately, after years of separation the sibling bonds were non-existent. Initially enrolling in high school, Mercedes felt compelled to drop out after six months to care for her sister's children. But, as Mercedes explains, she might have returned if school staff had reached out.

> ***Mercedes:*** *I think they [school staff] forgot because they never called the house to ask for me.*
>
> ***Daysi****: Never.*
>
> ***Mercedes****: No one said anything. I think it was my destiny. Maybe if they had looked for me, I would have returned.... I think they forgot.... I think my sisters got lucky, and I took the bullet.*[84]

Although consequential for high school completion, positive school staff relationships, developed even within low tracks, were not instrumental in the transition to college. Need-based aid exclusion, combined with family challenges that created emotional distress and reduced limited resources, derailed the college pathways of leavers. Immigration policy by restricting access to federal and state financial aid made it nearly impossible to persist in college without the substantial support of family and/or large private scholarships. Limited family resources impacted leavers in high school by prompting them to work significant hours during high school, or as in the case of Mercedes, compelling them to drop out. There was a domino effect in that limited resources and significant hours of work in high school meant less

time for academics and extracurricular activities. In turn, leavers had less access to scarce scholarships, even those that only provide a couple hundred dollars. Thus, a dearth of family resources, lack of access to scholarships, and low-wage jobs placed college out of reach for leavers.

Discussion

Despite being tracked into ESL and concurrent low-level courses, undocumented adolescent arrivals experienced positive relationships with school staff, and supportive relationships with their ESL peers. Although beneficial during high school, these positive relationships and embedded resources failed to facilitate access to postsecondary education. These findings stand in contrast to scholarship on the Latinx undocumented 1.5 generation which has identified school-based resources as the "primary factor" demarcating their college paths (Gonzales, 2016, pg. 83). In high school, the 1.5 generation who transitioned to college "were explicitly encouraged to continue their education and were provided resources to do so" (Gonzales, 2016, pg. 88). The different patterns suggest that school sorting mechanisms and the benefits of positive school relationships and embedded resources are not experienced equally by undocumented youth.

The timing of immigration, at least in part, provides an explanation for why the benefits and downsides of tracking are experienced differently among the 1.25 and 1.5 generations. As recent immigrants, adolescent arrivals sought to take advantage of available opportunities in the United States and stood out in ways that brought them positive attention from school staff; they worked hard, stayed out of trouble, and respected their teachers. Low-level tracking, however, took a toll in the transition to college. Adolescent arrivals spent most of their high

school years in ESL classes and lower level mainstream courses with little time for advanced level options. Hence, regardless of positive student-teacher relationships, low track settings simply did not contain the resources present in high-tracks.

It is noteworthy, however, that even participants who jumped tracks struggled accessing school-based resources in transitioning to college. It might be that due to less time in the United States, the types of relationships the 1.25 generation developed were somehow different than those the 1.5 generation formed. For example, less time in the United States might result in positive but somehow less committed relationships with school staff; the strength of the relationship might then activate different levels of assistance. It is also possible that the 1.25 generation's inability to locate substantial scholarships while in high school was a result of their relatively short U.S. school records. In other words, the 1.25 generation might face a disadvantage when competing for scholarships due to limited time to build strong U.S. academic records. Finally, the 1.25 generation possesses less knowledge of how the U.S. system works which may hinder their ability to activate the resources embedded in relationships in high achieving settings. Another potential explanation is that school-based resources function differently in California where most studies (Abrego, 2006; Enriquez, 2011; Gonzales, 2016) on the undocumented 1.5 generation have been conducted. Undocumented students in California, for example, have access to state-based financial aid through AB540. Yet, the role of AB540 as an explanation is not satisfying as the studies mentioned collected their data prior to AB540's passing and implementation. Truly teasing out differences in how sorting mechanisms and school relationships function between the 1.5 and 1.25 generation warrants further examination and direct comparison with immigrants in the same local context. Nonetheless,

the differences found suggest that the timing of immigration in conjunction with tracking might shape how school relationships function in shaping the educational pathways of undocumented childhood arrivals.

Tracking and the timing of immigration also shaped peer relationships and access to peer resources. As Enriquez (2011) points out, school staff often lack knowledge specific to undocumented students which elevates the significance of peer knowledge and support. The distance that adolescent arrivals experience with other Latinx, however, robs them of this rich source of information. Unfortunately, supportive ESL peers do not possess the information on navigating college enrollment that is found among high achieving peers. For example, Patricia, who formed close friendships with her group of 20 ESL peers, did not benefit from these networks when it pertained to college. "None" of her classmates, Patricia explains, were "able to have a career. None was able to follow their dream."[85] The 1.25 generation simply misses out on the ability to benefit from peer networks that their younger arriving counterparts have built over time and can more easily access due to cultural similarities.

Unable to benefit from the resources embedded in school staff and peer relationships, the educational pathways of the undocumented 1.25 generation were premised on the most rudimentary stratification factor—family finances. When parents scrounged together enough money to pay for community college tuition or provide for their major financial needs, stayers pursued a non-traditional and bumpy college path. Limited resources and family circumstances that strained what resources existed, placed college out of reach for leavers. In elucidating differences in the mechanisms demarcating the educational pathways of undocumented childhood arrivals, I show that the timing of immigration is an important analytical

consideration that leads to both expected and unexpected findings. Moreover, by understanding how the benefits and downsides of tracking and school relationships are differently experienced, educators and other stakeholders can better support the educational goals of all undocumented childhood arrivals.

Chapter 5: "I Came to Work and to Help My Family:" Aspirations, Illegality, and the Transition to Adulthood of the Undocumented 1.25 Generation

I really did not come to [study], like my plans were not to, "Oh, I want a better future or something for me personally." I came to work and to help my family get ahead. And I think that's why maybe I do not identify with them [the Dreamers].[86]

Elmer, 15-year old arrival, Guatemala

Undocumented childhood arrivals transition to adulthood in the United States under the cloak of illegality—the conditions, constraints, vulnerabilities, and deportability produced by exclusionary immigration policies (De Genova, 2002). Indeed, in transitioning to adulthood, undocumented childhood arrivals simultaneously "transition into illegality" (Gonzales, 2011, pg. 605). Prior to adolescence, these young people are protected from the full extent of their legal exclusion due to their constitutional inclusion in the K-12 system[10] and may lack awareness of their legal status (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2016). Yet, during adolescence—as they attempt to drive, work, and apply to college—illegality emerges as salient (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011, 2016). Consequently, as undocumented youth come of age, they come face to face with their legal exclusion.

The process of coming of age and transitioning to illegality for undocumented youth, as Gonzales & Burciaga (2018) explain, "requires them to discard earlier aspirations and retool their lives so as to adjust to their new circumstances" (pg. 183). Chief among the aspirations disrupted by illegality are their college ambitions. Barred from federal and state financial aid[11],

[10] The 1982 *Plyler vs. Doe* U.S. Supreme Court Decision guarantees a free public K-12 education to immigrant minors regardless of legal status.

[11] Undocumented immigrants are excluded from federal financial aid. State financial aid policies vary with only a handful of states providing state aid. In Illinois, private scholarships serve as the main source of funding as undocumented youth are excluded from state and institutional aid in public universities (Gonzales, Luna-Duarte, Diaz-Strong, Rivas, & Brant, 2016).

illegality places the educational aspirations of undocumented youth in peril and creates frustration over their ability to access, pay for, and complete college (Abrego, 2006; Diaz-Strong, Gomez, Luna-Duarte & Meiners, 2011; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Enriquez 2011; Gonzales, 2016; Perez, 2009; Silver, 2012).

Importantly, scholarship on the coming of age experiences of undocumented immigrants arriving as minors, has centered on the plight of the 1.5 generation—those who arrive prior to the age of 13 (Abrego, 2006; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Enriquez 2011; Gonzales, 2016; Perez, 2009; Silver, 2012). Within this literature, the focus and significance of educational aspirations makes sense; the 1.5 generation, often referred to as "Dreamers," immigrates prior to adolescence and largely develop their aspirations within the U.S. school context which promotes academic achievement as the route to success (Gleeson & Gonzales, 2012). We know little, however, about the ways illegality impacts the transition to adulthood of the 1.25 generation—those who immigrate between the ages of 13 to 17.

As Elmer's opening quote shows, the 1.25 generation many not always aspire to a "better future" in the United States through education. Rather, some adolescent arrivals immigrate with the desire to "work" and "help" their families. In addition, as the increasing attention to Central Americans fleeing violence highlights, others are driven to the United States out of fear for their lives. Unlike the 1.5 generation, the 1.25 generation form their visions for their future, at least in part, outside of the U.S. school context. Moreover, while generally the 1.5 generation is not involved with the decision to migrate, the 1.25 generation possesses greater agency in the decision to immigrate. For these reasons, their aspirations and

notions of success vary more widely and result in different experiences, fears, constraints, and concerns related to their legal status as they come of age in the United States.

The gap in knowledge on the coming of age experiences of the 1.25 generation carries practice implications. Currently, social workers, educators, and immigrant-serving organizations, are operating from a limited understanding of how undocumented immigrants arriving as minors experience illegality at a critical point of transition in the life course. At best, the lack of knowledge hinders stakeholder's ability to develop supports and services that are inclusive of the needs of all undocumented youth. At worse, operating from the dominant narrative derived from knowledge on the educational aspirations of the 1.5 generation may serve to further marginalize undocumented youth who do not fit the dominant story. When barriers to post-secondary education are unwittingly assumed to be the most salient concern encountered, the needs, experiences and challenges of others may go unrecognized. Borrowing a line from psychologist Margaret Beale Spencer, developing supports that are actually experienced as supportive requires understanding how context is experienced and interpreted (Spencer & Swanson, 2013).

The experiences of undocumented adolescent arrivals also have implications for immigration scholarship. Immigration scholars generally acknowledge that undocumented immigrants are not a monolithic population, and that "the diversity and widespread differential effect of illegality" has not been fully explored (Abrego, 2014, pg. 141). Various factors are theorized to shape the heterogeneity of undocumented immigrants' experience such as gender, race, ethnicity, generation, and local context. I contend that in addition to demographic and geographical factors, we must also consider how immigrants' identities—including their desires,

aspirations, and fears—shape their subjective experience of illegality. To that end, because the 1.25 generation immigrates at a point in the life course where who they want to become is salient, their plight provides insight into how aspirations shape the experience of illegality.

This chapter draws on possible selves theory (Oyserman & Markus, 1990) to examine how the 1.25 generation experience the transition to adulthood and illegality in light of their aspirations. To that end, I discuss the experiences of adolescent arrivals with 1) college aspirations, 2) aspirations to work and provide for their families, and 3) Central Americans fleeing violence. Across these three groups, I make two comparisons. I first compare their experiences transitioning to adulthood against knowledge based on the 1.5 generation. Second—drawing on the evaluative function of possible selves—I compare how attained versus blocked aspirations influenced how illegality was experienced. Through these comparisons, I demonstrate that aspirations shaped the frustrations brought on by illegality and how they evaluated their life in the United States.

Prior to discussing these findings, I provide background on the possible selves framework, summarize scholarship related to the transition to adulthood of the 1.5 generation, and describe the sample and analysis for this chapter. I then discuss the experiences of adolescent arrivals with 1) college aspirations, 2) aspirations to work and provide for their families, and 3) Central Americans fleeing violence. I conclude by arguing that paying attention to the aspirations of immigrants can contribute to developing more inclusive supports and provide insight into what shapes the diversity of immigrants experience across the life course.

Possible Selves Theory

Possible selves are the "selves we could become, would like to become, or are afraid of becoming (Oyserman & Markus, 1990, pg. 143). While possible selves are individual, they are socially created in comparison to meaningful others and against societal narratives that situate certain selves as possible, desirable, and normative (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006). Possible selves are directly tied to the aspirations of individuals and the threats against those aspirations. Indeed, Markus and Nurius (1986) define possible selves as "the cognitive manifestation of enduring goals, aspirations, motives, fears, and threats" (pg. 954).

Possible selves have been categorized into hoped-for, expected, and feared-selves (Oyserman & Markus, 1990). Hoped-for selves are fantasies which are not necessarily viewed as attainable and mostly innocuous if unachieved (Oysterman & Markus, 1990). In contrast, expected selves provide real possibilities for the future, and are composed of positive (desired) and negative expected selves (selves that appear inevitable) (Oysterman & Markus, 1990). Finally, feared-selves are the future self-images individuals seek to avoid (Oysterman & Markus, 1990). For clarity and flow, I refer to positive expected selves as desired-selves and use feared-selves to denote negative envisioned selves.

Possible selves matter because they carry motivational and evaluative significance (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Motivationally, possible selves "frame behavior" and guide action as they provide a vision to strive towards or to avoid (Markus & Nurius, 1986, pg. 955). Moreover, the theory asserts that a balance between desired and feared selves provides "maximal motivational effectiveness" (Oyserman & Markus, 1990, pg. 146). Stated differently, the motivation to guide behavior towards achieving a desired-self is greatest when it is "offset" by a feared-self in the same domain (Oyserman & Markus, 1990, pg. 146). For example, the desire to

graduate college when offset by the fear of dropping out provides the motivation to engage in actions that promote college graduation (i.e. studying and asking for help).

In terms of evaluation, possible selves provide a lens through which the current self is assessed; they "furnish criteria against which outcomes are evaluated" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, 955). In other words, the current self in not evaluated in isolation but takes on meaning and is interpreted through ideas of what is possible, desired, and feared (Markus & Nurius, 1986). A student aspiring to become a physician, as Markus and Nurius (1986) describe, will evaluate an A in organic chemistry differently than a student without that aspiration. Possible selves, as a part an individual's self-structure, provide a way to "organize the individual's interpretation of the world" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, pg. 955). Hence, the aspirations, desires, and fears of individuals provide criteria against which their life outcomes and experiences are interpreted and evaluated.

Mainly used within the field of social psychology, scholarship employing possible selves has examined how the likelihood of attaining a possible-self impacts current well-being and outcomes. For instance, scholars have examined how the belief that a possible-self can be attained impacts self-esteem (Knox, Funk, Elliott, & Bush, 1998), depression (Penland, Masten, Zelhart, Fournet, & Callahan, 2000), and academics (Oyserman et al., 2006; Yowell, 2002). In addition, scholars have considered how societal narratives influence the possible selves youth develop across race and ethnicity (Kao, 2000; Gonzalez, Stein, Prandoni, Eades, Magalahaes, 2015). Another chief line of work has delved into how the balance of possible selves motivates behavior and impacts self-regulation (Manzi, Vignoles, & Regalia, 2010; Oyserman et al., 2006; Oyserman & Markus, 1990). These lines of work have in common that they examine future

oriented possible selves and how they impact the current self. Less attention, as Manzi et al. (2010) explain, has been paid to the implications of attaining versus failing to attain a desired-self.

Only one study to my knowledge has drawn on the theory of possible selves in relation to undocumented immigrants. To examine how societal messages influence possible selves, Gonzalez et al. (2015) asked Latinx adolescents (1.5 and 2nd generation) what they believed was possible for a "typical" Latinx and for an "undocumented" Latinx. While Latinx students provided mixed views of the possible selves of the "typical" Latinx, they overwhelmingly expressed that undocumented immigrants face a bleak future with little possibility for educational success and an overall difficult life (Gonzalez, et al., 2015). Viewed through a U.S. lens where educational success is a highly valued possible-self, the fate of undocumented youth is viewed as dismal by Latinx youth. While this study sheds light on how Latinx youth perceive the future of their undocumented peers, the theory has not been used to understand the possible selves of undocumented immigrants themselves.

The possible selves, or aspirations, of undocumented immigrants—because of their evaluative significance—can contribute to understanding how undocumented immigrants interpret exclusionary immigration laws. Hence, I draw on possible selves to frame and unpack how the aspirations of the undocumented 1.25 generation influence how illegality is experienced. In doing so, I depart from the traditional ways possible selves have been studied; rather than measure possible selves with an instrument, I draw on in-depth interviews. Moreover, in analyzing the interviews, I pay attention to both retrospective possible-selves (what they had desired and feared) and future-oriented possible selves. By considering

retrospective possible selves, I pay attention to the implications of attaining or failing to attain a desired-self, an area which has been underexplored within the possible selves scholarship.

The Coming of Age Experience of the 1.5 Generation

The 1.5 generation experiences a harsh awakening to the limitations imposed by illegality in the transition to adulthood. As a result of constitutionally protected access to K-12 education regardless of legal status, the 1.5 generation is initially incorporated in an inclusive fashion (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011, 2016). Hence, they develop aspirations in line with their native-born and documented peers that involve college education and professional employment rather than low-wage work (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2016). During adolescence, as they attempt to drive, work, and apply for college, their educational aspirations are rattled by the realities of their legal exclusion (Abrego, 2006; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Gonzales, 2011).

The awakening to the constraints of illegality disrupts their educational aspirations, provokes a reorientation of their previously held beliefs regarding their futures, and creates distress as they come of age (Abrego, 2006; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales, 2016). In some cases, undocumented youth truncate exploration of their futures and lower their educational aspirations (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, Suarez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguienti, 2013). Others, after an initial awakening, "rebuild" their educational goals (Ellis & Chen, 2013). Whether temporarily or permanently, the recognition of their legal exclusion destabilizes the lives they grew up envisioning and forces them to grapple with the potential of being relegated to low-wage work (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2016). During this period of awakening, the 1.5 generation struggle to "image themselves in the future" (Gonzales et al., 2013, pg. 1188). As Abrego (2006) notes, they "do not look forward to becoming mechanics, housekeepers, and

dishwashers" (pg. 43).

Given the salience of the 1.5 generation's educational aspirations, the frustrations they experience in transitioning to adulthood center around barriers to college and high skill employment. Indeed, after high school, the experiences of the 1.5 generation have been shown to diverge based on whether they transition to college (Gonzales, 2011, 2016). Those unable to transition to college struggle assimilating to a life of low-wage work which they had not envisioned (Gonzales, 2011, 2016). Those who manage to pursue college, on the other hand, are temporarily suspended from the full impact of illegality and often have "positive and affirming experiences" in college (Gonzales, 2016, pg. 15). Nonetheless, even when able to pursue their college aspirations, undocumented youth continue experiencing significant emotional distress as a result of the financial challenges and uncertainty created by illegality that create bumpy college pathways (Abrego, 2006; Diaz-Strong & Meiners, 2007, Diaz-Strong et al., 2011, Enriquez, 2011; Gonzales, 2011, 2016; Silver, 2012). Moreover, once graduating from college, undocumented youth find themselves facing the reality of low-wage work (Gonzales, 2011, 2016). Although as Gonzales (2011, 2016) shows, some 1.5 generation young adults eventually come to terms with their situation and focus on more accessible goals such as relationships and job stability, "acceptance" can be most "elusive for respondents who achieved the highest level of educational attainment" (pg. 615).

Scholars have not conceptualized the disruption experienced by the 1.5 generation in transitioning to adulthood through possible selves. Nonetheless, their coming of age story is a possible selves story. Indeed, as Gonzales (2016) explains, "As they come of age, they experience dramatic ruptures in their expectations and their possibilities. Adolescence initiates

a period of intense turmoil, uprooting their identity, their future goals and plans" (pg. 12). Framed through possible selves, the 1.5 generation, starting in adolescence and continuing through adulthood, confront a breach in the selves they desired and face the potential of living a feared-self. Additionally, the frustrations brought on by illegality are connected to their aspirations; they experience frustration around access to higher skill employment and financial aid restrictions.

Sample

The purposive sample consists of 40 undocumented and DACAmented young adults (ages 18 to 35) who immigrated between the ages of 13 to 17. As shown in Table 4 (see Appendix A for the characteristics of each participant), the sample consists of 24 Mexicans and 16 Central Americans. The respondents' average age at the time of the interview was 26, and the mean age-at-arrival was 15. The sample consists of slightly more men (22) than women (18). Fifteen respondents were beneficiaries of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) [12] or possessed a non-DACA related work permit; 25 were ineligible or had not applied for DACA. Defined as traveling to the United States without a parent, 29 participants were unaccompanied minors; however, 9 of those individuals reunited with a parent in the United

[12] DACA is an executive action signed by President Obama in June 2012 that provides relief from deportation and a two-year work permit. To be eligible, undocumented immigrants must have entered the United States before the age of 16, lived continuously in the U.S. since June 2007, have completed an eligible education program, and have not been convicted of a significant misdemeanor. On September 5, 2017, President Trump rescinded the DACA program allowing work permits to begin expiring in March 2019. However, several federal court re-instated the DACA program by issuing injunctions. In February 2018, the Supreme Court rejected by-passing other courts before taking up DACA and left the injunction in place. The Supreme Court, however, is expected to eventually take up the issue of DACA. At the time of this writing, those who at some point had DACA can renew, but new applications are not being accepted.

States. After arriving in the United States, 21 participants enrolled in K-12 schooling and graduated high school or completed a GED. At the time of the interview, 7 respondents had graduated college, 15 were either married or living with their partner, and 17 were parents.

Table 4: Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	**Number**
N	40
Mean age at interview	26
Mean age at arrival*	15
Male	22
Mexican	24
Have DACA/Work Permit	15
Unaccompanied*	29
Lived with parent on arrival	20
Fulltime Employment	35
Married/Cohabitating	15
Parent	17
Enrolled in K-12 in the U.S.	21
Graduated HS/GED	21
Graduated College	7
Interview in Spanish	34
Low English Competency	11
Among the respondents, 13% arrived at the age of 13, 15% at 14, 38% at 15, 20% at 16, and 15% at 17.	

Analysis

In recounting their life stories participants described the lives they had desired (how they saw themselves), the life they sought to avoid (how they did not see themselves), and their future aspirations. In line with narrative inquiry and my interview approach, their aspirations emerged naturally as they told their story across the six interview domains of 1) their pre-migration experiences, 2) their immigration journey, 3) their experiences after arriving in the United States, 4) their transition to adulthood, 5) the impact of their legal status, and 6)

their current life and future aspirations. Though not exclusively, their aspirations and fears often emerged around discussing their reasons for immigrating, their experiences post high school (among the enrolled), and the impact of illegality. As per my interview approach, when participants did not bring up their aspirations, I inquired about their aspirations as a follow-up question.

Their aspirations and disruptions in their envisioned selves were coded in ATLAS.ti as possible selves, feared selves, and disrupted selves. To identify patterns in how illegality was evaluated, in light of their desired and feared-selves, the analysis also drew on the categories of 1) Identity, 2) Belonging, and 3) Impact of Legal Status. Throughout the analysis, I also paid attention to "how" illegality was brought up in the story. To that end, I sensitized my analysis by asking the following questions: 1) is illegality a main conflict in this story, and 2) at what point in the story does illegality emerge as a central conflict. Finally as needed, and as allowed by the IRB protocol, I contacted participants to clarify or obtain additional details regarding their experiences.

Findings

Three primary types of motivations that shaped how illegality was experienced emerged from the narratives of the undocumented 1.25 generation. Accordingly, in this section, I proceed by illustrating the experiences of adolescent arrivals with 1) college aspirations, 2) aspirations to work and provide for their families, and 3) Central Americans fleeing violence. Across these groups, I compare how adolescent arrivals experienced legal exclusion to what has been documented for the 1.5 generation. In addition, I compare how attained vs. blocked

aspirations shaped the frustrations brought on by illegality and whether they evaluated their life in the United States positively or negatively.

College Aspirations: College vs. Low-Wage Work

Among the 40 undocumented adolescent arrivals interviewed, approximately half held college aspirations upon arriving in the United States. Respondents, as expected given the salience of identity development in adolescence, immigrated with existing images of the life they desired. For instance, 15-year old arrival Mia, prior to leaving Mexico already envisioned herself pursuing a college education.

> *I think that since I was a child I focused on that [a college education]. I focused on that because I saw poverty around me, more than anything, the lack of education. I saw my aunts that they became teachers and I wanted—at that time as a child—I wanted to be like them.... "Just like them I want to be," "I want to have an education". It excited me a lot. It always excited me to see people who had an education... It excited me to envision myself that way.*[87]

Although the hope that the United States would offer greater educational opportunities was expressed by those with college aspirations, the primary motivation to immigrate was family reunification (migrating to reunite with a parent) or family unity (migrating with a parent). The financial support and stability provided by living with a parent in the United States facilitated enrollment in K-12 schooling where they further nurtured their college aspirations. Regardless of where developed, the college aspirations of participants who enrolled in K-12 schooling shaped how they experienced their legal exclusion in ways similar to and different from the 1.5 generation.

Two aspects related to timing are worth mentioning before continuing. First, none of the respondents with college aspirations benefited from DACA during high school. DACA was either

announced too long after they graduated high school or they were ineligible for DACA due to their age at arrival (older than 15) or year of arrival (arrived after 2007). Consequently, they graduated high school without any legal protection and grappled with uncertain futures that threatened to thwart their college aspirations and expose them to low-wage work. Second, the age of participants with college aspirations at the time of the interview ranged from 20 to 33 years old. Hence, they were at different points in their trajectories; some had graduated college, others were still enrolled, some never transitioned to college, and others transitioned but had since stopped out. Regardless, they share the experience of graduating high school without legal protections and transitioning or failing to transition to college prior to the rollout of DACA. Moreover, high school graduation, and the next couple of years after, were crucial to their ability to follow and stay on path towards attainment of their college aspirations. Hence, at the time of the interview, these respondents articulated a sense of attained or blocked college aspirations.

The 1.25 generation with college aspirations experienced the transition to adulthood and illegality in a similar fashion to the 1.5 generation. As Christopher's story illustrates, the shared experience stems from parallel desires and fears in transitioning to adulthood—the desire for a college education and fear of being relegated to low-wage work. Christopher left Honduras when he was 13 to reunite with his mother and father. As long as Christopher can remember, he desired to be college educated. Moreover, Christopher's desire was expressed in opposition to graduating high school and ending up in "a minimum wage job."

> *Since I was little, I was good at school. I knew it was going to take me somewhere. I didn't feel like I was going to drop out and get a minimum wage job. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I knew I was going to do something…. I didn't want to graduate high school and go to a minimum wage job.*

The realization that illegality might thwart his college aspirations first emerged for Christopher during high school when he "was thinking about going to school" and realized that he "wouldn't be able to get a job or wouldn't be able to apply for financial aid." Indeed, adolescent arrivals with college aspirations became aware of their legal exclusion in similar ways to the 1.5 generation—around the inability to drive, apply for financial aid, receive a scholarship, or start working. Jorge, for example, "started discovering" what being undocumented meant when he realized he would not be eligible "for federal funding," Marianna when her "friends started to apply for college," Daniela when she "could not get a scholarship,"[88] and Cecilia when she "started to see barriers to working correctly."[89]

Despite the similarities between the 1.25 generation with college aspirations and the 1.5 generation, one central difference existed; the 1.25 generation did not encounter the stark awakening that has been documented for the 1.5 generation. Rather, adolescent arrivals experienced a more gradual awakening to the implications of illegality. The more gradual awakening resulted from awareness that their migration was unauthorized, which sometimes 1.5 generation youth do not possess until their legal exclusion creates barriers. In making the long trek from Honduras to the United States, for instance, Christopher understood he was "going around the system" and "was going to be undocumented." Thus, Christopher was not jolted with the news of his legal status. More slowly becoming aware of the full implications of illegality, Christopher did not describe the same loss of motivation, lowered aspirations, and social isolation described by scholars for the 1.5 generation (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011, 2016). Although Christopher "felt limited," he continued to pursue his college aspirations

“hoping that it was going to work out at the end.”

Likewise, 15-year-old arrival Fabian described two key moments when he more fully realized what it meant to be undocumented. When leaving Mexico Fabian knew that he “didn’t have papers”[90] but did not understand that his legal status carried implications beyond the inability to return to Mexico. Fabian’s first moment of awakening came when upon asking his mother for his social security card, she explained that his social security number was “fake.”[91] The second moment, as he describes, was when a high school counselor inaccurately informed him that he could not attend college due to his legal status.

> *I remember that she took me down to her office and said, "Before we start looking into colleges, do you have a social?" And I said, "No". She told me, "then there is no point to look into colleges, because you will not be able to go. You will be a great college student, but unfortunately you will not be able to go.” I don’t know, like I did not get very demoralized ... Like it feel bad, but I said, "There has to be a way." Like deep inside, I was like, "There has to be way."*[92]

In describing the moments when he learned about the implications of illegality, Fabian did not recount the stark awakening experienced by the 1.5 generation. Indeed, as he states, he did not “get very demoralized” and figured there must be “a way.” Immediately after graduating high school, Fabian’s confidence led him to quit the restaurant job where he had worked throughout high school; he resolved to “never go back to work at a restaurant.”[93] After trying factory work at the insistence of his mother, where he lasted two days, Fabian also promised himself to never “work in a factory.”[94] Low-wage work was simply not what Fabian envisioned for his life. As Fabian states, “I think working in a restaurant is very dignified, but I wanted to do something different and something that would influence the world.”[95]

After high school and over the next couple of years, some adolescent arrivals achieved their college aspirations; they transitioned to college and either completed or were on path

towards college completion. The college dreams of others, however, never materialized. Movement, or lack of, towards their desires and fears impacted how illegality was experienced. The selves they had envisioned provided "criteria against" which their legal exclusion was interpreted and evaluated (Markus & Nurius, 1986, pg. 955). In particular, attained and blocked college aspirations influenced the frustrations they experienced with illegality in adulthood and whether they evaluated their lives in the United States positively or negatively.

Christopher and Fabian, despite the constraints of illegality, attained their college aspirations and avoided permanent low-wage work. The financial support of Christopher's parents, and later a scholarship, made it possible to complete a bachelor's degree. Moreover, benefiting from DACA in his early 20s, Christopher commenced a career in his field after graduation. Fabian became involved with community organizing where he accessed resources that enabled him to eventually enroll in college. When we met, Fabian was enrolled in a master's program and had started a non-for-profit that serves youth. Christopher, 24 at the time of the interview, draws positive implications from his struggle with illegality; he "started from the bottom," but was able to "persevere and actually do something, get a degree." In other words, despite his legal exclusion, Christopher became "something" deemed valuable in society. Consequently, Christopher evaluates his life positively in comparison to his native-born peers who have citizenship but are "just sitting on that and not doing anything with their lives." Similarly, Fabian feels positive about his ability to have "done something extraordinary"[96] despite his legal status. At the age of twenty-seven, Fabian consciously chooses to "be led by hope"[97] rather than "lead by fears."[98]

Adolescent arrivals whose college aspirations were disrupted, on the other hand,

struggled drawing positive implications from their legal exclusion. Indeed, at the age of 30, Patricia continued to feel the sting of blocked college aspirations. Patricia left Mexico at the age of 15 to reunite with her mother. In Mexico, Patricia dreamt of becoming a pre-school teacher; a dream which she carried into the United States. After high school, Patricia was accepted into a four-year university, but her dreams never came to fruition; Patricia's single mother was unable to locate the resources to pay for college. Shortly after high school Patricia took on adult responsibilities; she married her high school boyfriend and had her first child. In the 12 years post high school, Patricia has cared for her four children and sporadically worked low-wage jobs. Patricia qualified for DACA but never applied due to limited financial resources; it was "either pay DACA or pay the rent."[99]

At the time of the interview, Patricia no longer saw college as a possibility and was focused on her family. Nonetheless, Patricia's inability to attain her college aspirations impacts the distress created by illegality and how she evaluates her life in the United States. From her perspective, migration and illegality disrupted the life she envisioned. Indeed, in evaluating her life in the United States, Patricia assesses her life negatively compared to her Mexican peers.

> *If I had been there [in Mexico], I would have been someone. Easy I would have had a career, I could have done things ... I could have continued studying there. And I have friends that I had there since kindergarten, I have seen them here [in the U.S]. And I feel bad because they can come and go. And here I am stuck, I did not manage to achieve my dreams ... So seeing my friends, who did achieve their dreams in Mexico, is sad because my friends, all of us who graduated here, none had a career.*[100]

Like Patricia, other adolescent arrivals whose college aspirations were blocked, also concluded that life in their country of origin would have been better. For instance, thirteen-year old arrival Daniela believed, that if she had not migrated, she might "have studied, not just worked"[101] low

wage-jobs. Likewise, 14-year old arrival Mercedes explained that in the United States "there is no support,"[102] but in Mexico she "might have studied something."[103]

Beyond blocked college aspirations, respondents who became parents—such as Patricia—experienced a sort of cumulative impact of illegality throughout the transition to adulthood. While only one participant who attained their college aspirations had children, five respondents whose college aspirations were unfulfilled became parents somewhere in their late teens or early 20s. Hence the transition to adulthood and illegality was accompanied by the transition to parenting, and compounded the concerns and frustrations encountered due to illegality. In Patricia's case, that the possibility of deportation threatens her children's futures, compounds her frustration by adding new anxieties. "I swear to you that there are days that I do not sleep. I get like nervous. I'm scared,"[104] Patricia explains. Deportation, Patricia fears, would be devastating for her children who have special needs. Patricia's oldest son was diagnosed with ADHD, her 9 year-old daughter with developmental delays, and her youngest was born prematurely at 29 weeks. Patricia's transition to adulthood and illegality involved blocked college dreams and incessant concern for her children's future. Hence, throughout adulthood, Patricia experienced a cumulative effect of illegality. Consequently, Patricia feels "locked in a world that shouldn't be."[105] Reflecting on her life, Patricia states, "What I'm living is not what I desired. I never imagined this. I never desired to live what I have lived."[106]

Blocked college aspirations, for the most part, resulted in deep frustration with their legal exclusion and a negative evaluation of their life in the United States. Yet, as the story of 15-year old arrival Edgar illustrates, redefined aspirations can attenuate the distress created by illegality. Unlike the other participants with thwarted college dreams, Edgar distanced himself

from his initial college aspirations and developed a new desired-self that allowed him to experience a sense of success. Edgar left Mexico to reunite with his parents and after high school enrolled in a community college. Yet, after one semester, Edgar decided that the "stress" of school combined with work was not the life he desired.

> *When I started college, I went to classes asleep, I had to work, I had to study, it was bad…. Never in my life had I experienced the word stress..... I started thinking, "I can continue like this for five or six years, it can cause me health problems, I do not know, I do not want to find out. Or I can find a way to work and make good money."*[107]

Rather than fearing lacking a college education, Edgar's fears shifted to living a stressful life that may lead to nowhere. For evidence, Edgar tells the story of an undocumented friend who has spent seven years pursuing an education and has yet to finish. Letting go of his prior aspirations to become a computer programmer, Edgar re-envisioned a life where work and entrepreneurship could provide economic mobility.

> ***Edgar**: I had the dream [of college], I tried it, believe me I do not want to return.*
> ***Daysi**: You would not go back, even if say tomorrow the university is free.*
> ***Edgar**: Not even then... Have you seen on Facebook, YouTube, whatever, there are people who did not even finish high school and are millionaires ... But there are many things that can be done. You do not have to have an education to have a business.*[108]

Twenty-nine when we talked, Edgar has benefited from DACA and earns $55,000 a year. Moreover, Edgar purchased a home; a dream he "never thought" [109] was possible. Redefining his desired-self to attain economic mobility through work as opposed to education, provided Edgar with a sense of agency over the limitations imposed by illegality. With his aspirations redefined and DACA in hand, Edgar attained his desired-self. In transitioning to adulthood, Edgar accomplished the milestones of having "good" job and owning a home. Moreover, having re-defined his aspirations, Edgar did not experience the same level of frustration that was prevalent among the 1.25 generation whose educational aspirations were blocked. Other

participants whose college aspirations were blocked also benefited from better employment as a result of DACA. Nonetheless, frustration over blocked college aspirations remained.

Aspirations to Provide: Provider vs. Stagnation

Although nuances exist in how the 1.25 generation with college aspirations awakened to the limitations of illegality, their experiences remain a familiar story in which legal exclusion was experienced around threats to their college aspirations and frustration over access to and funding for college. Taking a sharper turn from the familiar story surrounding educational aspirations are 1.25 generation young men who migrated primarily to work and provide for their families in their country of origin. As I demonstrate, for these young men, the transition to adulthood and illegality was fully in force during adolescence. These young men never experienced the early inclusion provided by K-12 schooling but immediately entered into exclusion. Yet, despite the sharp transition to legal exclusion, they did not initially experience illegality as disruptive to their aspirations. Rather, their coming of age story involved movement towards their desired-self. Nonetheless, highlighting the evaluative nature of possible selves, conflicting aspirations shaped the frustrations they experienced and how they evaluated their life in the United States.

A segment of adolescent arrivals migrated mainly for work opportunities in the United States. Working in the United States was envisioned as a way to "earn dollars"[110] that would enable them to attain their aspirations to provide financially for their families. The desire to provide was offset by the fear of stagnation; working to barely get by, getting stuck with limited opportunities, and powerlessness in lifting their families out of poverty. Aspirations to provide manifested mainly among male participants. Only two adolescent women migrated with the

desire to work, and in both cases, gender oppression and violence was experienced as the main disruptor to the life they envisioned. [13] Consequently, I only discuss the experiences of adolescent men who never enrolled in school at arrival.

The desire to provide and fear of stagnation motivated the migration of Daniel, who left Mexico at the age of 14. In Mexico he did not continue schooling after the 9th grade and had never learned how to work in "agriculture."[111] Without schooling and unprepared for work in the fields, Daniel set out to carve another path. Describing his thought process prior to immigrating, Daniel comments on his desires and fears in light of what he saw was possible for young men like him in Mexico.

> *From that age [age 14], I was already like starting to focus a bit on seeing the future. More than anything, I looked at the young men a little older than me, that they never left or that they never fought for a dream. I would always look at them and saw that the years passed and they stayed in the same place. And I said I do not want that life for me. Maybe it will not be easy, but I want something different for me.*[112]

Daniel was driven to migrate by the desire to be "different" from his older counterparts who "stayed" and never "fought for a dream." When first arriving, Daniel's "mentality"[113] was to "come to make money."[114] Hence, when Daniel's uncle offered to enroll him in school and assist him financially, Daniel rejected the offer; earning money rather than attending school

[13] I elaborate on the experiences of women who never enrolled in school in another chapter and show that gender norms and oppression constrained their agency and autonomy and exposed them to gender violence. Hence in transitioning to adulthood they were not able to pursue the life they truly desired—independence and autonomy. Often gender constraints commenced prior to immigrating and continued in the United States through gender violence. For these young women, while illegality exacerbated their vulnerability and hindered access to crucial supports, illegality was not experienced as the main culprit disrupting their lives as they came of age. Rather it was gender violence that disrupted their desired-selves of autonomous and independent individuals. Because this chapter is focused on the how illegality is experienced in light of aspirations at the point of leaving adolescence into adulthood, I do not discuss in a separate section the experiences of women who never enrolled in school.

was the life Daniel envisioned. Likewise, Luis was motivated to immigrate because he "wanted to help"[115] his family, and Sebastian left Honduras to "lift"[116] his family out of poverty. As 14-year old arrival Esvin explains, the motivation to immigrate was tied both to the desire to help their families but also to the lives they envisioned for themselves.

> *Because I always had the dream of having something better in life and getting ahead. But when I was there [Guatemala], I saw that there was no way to progress, to improve my life. Especially, to help my parents.*[117]

Once in the United States, adolescent men did not benefit from inclusion or temporary protection from legal exclusion because they never enrolled in K-12 schooling. Rather, they immediately entered the low-wage labor market and faced the reality of locating work without legal documents. Indeed, the "first day" in the United States, 15-year old Rafael focused on "paying the rent and looking for work."[118] Their boyish appearance made finding work harder. Manuel, for example, felt frustrated that "no place would give him work"[119] because he was "little."[120] Potential employers informed 16-year old arrival Luis that he should be in school.

> *I would go look for work. They would not give me work because they told me I had to go to school, but I had needs.*[121]

Likewise, Elmer who arrived at the age of 15, had trouble convincing potential employers to even provide him an application.

> *They would tell me, "If it's [the employment application] for you, we are not going to give it to you, because you're a child and here we need a man". And you became disillusioned.*[122]

As illustrated, adolescent men immediately experienced the frustration of legal exclusion around difficulty finding work. They often noted with exasperation that it took two, three and even four weeks to locate employment. Moreover, they understood that their legal exclusion meant they must "take the worst job,"[123] where they would have to "endure abuse"[124] and face

being fired at any point.

Another area where their legal exclusion was experienced, was around their ineligibility to obtain a driver's license.[14] The lack of driving privileges, complicated their main goal of earning money and providing for their families. For the 1.5 generation, the milestone of getting a driver's license has been demonstrated to create a moment of awakening. Young men who sought to provide for their families, however, immediately experienced the exclusion from driving as a barrier to their goal since getting to work required reliable transportation. While some risked driving, others took the bus, rode a bicycle, or got rides to work.

Young men also experienced frustration with illegality around the inability to travel back to their country of origin; the inability to travel meant potential permanent separation from their parents and siblings. Indeed, the permanence of leaving their families at a young age, was a source of great emotional distress. As Rafael explains, "It's one of the most difficult things that I have gone through. Because all my youth I spent it away from my parents, after the age of 15."[125] Similarly, when Jesus's brother passed away in Mexico from a work accident, he felt "a lot of rage"[126] that he could not" attend to be in "family unity"[127] during "those moments."[128]

The transition to illegality for the undocumented 1.5 generation does not fully occur until after high school or after college (Gonzales, 2016). Adolescent men with aspirations to work and provide, however, immediately face legal exclusion. They must take the worst jobs, put up

[14] Prior to 2013 undocumented immigrants were not eligible to obtain a driver's license in Illinois. Illinois' law changed in early 2013 enabling undocumented immigrants to apply for a temporary visitor driver's license (TVDL). While many of my participants had a driver's license at the time of the interview, they were not eligible to obtain a license when they first arrived.

with bad treatment at work, experience difficulty getting to work, and deal with permanent family separation. Thus, the transition to "adulthood" and illegality occurs while they are still adolescents. Despite their immediate legal exclusion and challenges experienced as a result, these young men did not experience a rupture to their expectations and aspirations in transitioning to adulthood. More so than those whose immigration was primarily motivated to be with family and held college aspirations, these young men who came to work had a clearer sense of what illegality entailed. Consequently, during adolescence and as they came of age, they did not awaken to unexpected limitations or futures they had not envisioned. For instance, prior to immigrating, Juan knew what "he was going to do."[129] Likewise, Luis understood that in the United States he would "live with that fear that at any moment one can get caught and be deported."[130] These messages, as Andres describes, were shared by brothers, uncles, and other male family members who described "more or less how life was"[131] in the United States.

As young men learned the ropes of working and living in the United States without authorization they grew in their understanding of how hard life would be in the United States. Nonetheless, while life was harder than they imaged, it was not the complete disjuncture in expectations that has been demonstrated for the 1.5 generation. Moreover, their endurance, as Esvin describes, resulted in reaching their aspirations to progress economically and provide for their families.

> *I feel very happy because I am helping them ... That they don't lack anything, and that I don't lack anything either. Although it's difficult, right? But they are okay.*[132]

Expressing a similar sentiment, Elmer contends that life in Guatemala would have been "overly hard,"[133] because he would have faced a "future without hope."[134] Immigrating to the United States, "Changed my life about 200%[135]" Elmer explained. Elmer's attainment of his aspirations

to provide for his family matters to how he assesses his life in the United States.

> *I feel good ... My mom no longer has to be washing, my mom no longer has to be looking for some way to survive. She does not have to worry about that anymore. That for me, makes me feel good.*[136]

Attainment of their employment aspirations also had implications for how they evaluated their path in comparison to meaningful others. For example, at the age of 18, Daniel risked returning to Mexico to see his mother again. True to his vision prior to migrating, Daniel felt "different" from his Mexican peers. Compared to those who "stayed in the same place,"[137] Daniel assessed himself as better off both "economically" and in "mindset".

> *Economically, I mean I was well-off when I returned. In my short years, at my age, I was compared to the boys, the young men of my age, well, I was something very different. I was a little more economically prepared and in my mindset as well. So I practically went to vacation there for a whole year. Yes, and that's when I met my wife.*[138]

After a year in Mexico, Daniel returned to the United States with his pregnant wife. Despite his legal status, twenty-eight year old Daniel feels he has accomplished his goals—to earn money, to be different from his Mexican peers, and to provide for his family in Mexico. From Daniel's perspective, illegality did not thwart his aspirations. Indeed, he has accomplished more than "even imagined."[139]

While not initially experienced as disruptive, however, parenting created a moment of awakening to the implications of illegality and brought on new anxieties. Four young men who migrated to provide for their families became parents at exactly the age of 20. Once a parent, as Daniel explains, legal status emerged as salient. Responding to when he understood what it would mean to live in the United States without legal status, Daniel states:

> *That [the implications of illegality] one begins to learn more than anything when you have a family. When I was alone, it didn't faze me, not anymore ... And that is when one*

begins to realize how necessary it is to be in this country legally.[140]

As a parent, Daniel feels more strongly the implications of illegality. Daniel, and other parents, expressed frustration that they did not quality for tax benefits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. In addition, the fear of deportation became salient and was tied to their children's future. Daniel now worries about deportation because he is "well aware"[141] that his "children will not have the quality of life"[142] in Mexico that is possible in the United States. Other young men also noted that parenting brought on changes in their fear of deportation. For instance, 17-year old arrival Jesus states:

> *Yes, right now it [deportation] worries me. I'll tell you why. Because now I have a son. Maybe, if I was single, I would even say, "No, you know what, I will leave by myself. You don't have to kick me out"… Now it worries me a little because I say, "Well, what is going to happen with my son?"*[143]

The desired-self of 1.25 generation men who migrated for work opportunities expanded once becoming parents to include aspirations their children's future. As their aspirations changed across the life course, so did their experience with legal exclusion. Early in the transition to adulthood, Daniel did not experience illegality as disruptive. Initially unfazed by illegality, Daniel now fears that legal exclusion could unsettle his children's future.

As discussed, for the most part, young men who migrated primarily for work felt positive about their accomplishments. Yet, further illustrating the significance of aspirations to how illegality is experienced, competing aspirations created a deep sense of frustration for a couple of the young men. Rafael left Mexico at his "short age"[144]out of "hunger"[145] to provide for his family and to "get ahead."[146] Although primarily migrating for work opportunities, Rafael also had "the dream of studying."[147] Enrolling in high school, however, was impossible as once in the United States Rafael became financially responsible for himself and his family; since the

age of 15, Rafael has sent a quarter of his monthly earnings to Mexico. Hence, in transitioning to adulthood, Rafael moved towards the desired-self of provider but also towards the feared-self of educational stagnation. In his late 20s, DACA provided renewed hope to move out of stagnation and prompted Rafael to enroll in a GED program. Unfortunately, Rafael left the GED program when it conflicted with work. Twenty-nine when we talked, Rafael expressed frustration with his inability to attain an education and "progress."

> *You cannot develop in your life here because you cannot grow as a person. You cannot grow in jobs ... Like you're blocked because it's not like other people who can lose the fear. I mean, others can say, "Okay, I'm going to do it. And if this time I don't succeed then I will try again 10 more times. And I know eventually it will happen." I mean, I don't have those opportunities. I mean, even after 10 times, I can't.... No, it feels very bad. Because you feel frustrated at times. That you cannot progress as a person, as a human.*[148]

Although Rafael attained his aspirations to provide, he was unable to fulfill his educational aspirations and avoid one type of stagnation. Hence, Rafael expressed frustration with immigration policies because they keep him from growing as a "person." Rafael feels stuck and powerless; no matter how many times he tries, illegality will have its way and block his path. The feared-self of stagnation appears inevitable.

Both Rafael and Daniel were motivated to immigrate to provide for their families. Yet, while Daniel evaluates his life positively in the United States compared to his peers in Mexico, Rafael evaluates his life negatively compared to U.S. citizens who "don't really value what they have" but "have everything."[149] Although Daniel and Rafael shared the same path and for similar reasons, they nonetheless experienced illegality differently. Daniel successfully carved out a life different from his Mexican peers while Rafael was unable to pursue his educational aspirations. The level of frustration Daniel and Rafael experienced with illegality was connected

to the extent that legal exclusion disrupted their desired-selves and brought them near to their feared-selves.

Importantly, none of the men who migrated for work were eligible for DACA. Even adolescents who arrived prior to the age of 16 (the cutoff for DACA), were ineligible because they did not graduate high school or complete a GED program. Their exclusion from DACA, in part, is a result of the dominant narrative that highlights the educational aspirations of childhood arrivals and marginalizes other aspirations and forms of progress.

Central Americans Fleeing Violence: Constant Uncertainty

The decision to immigrate for a segment of Central American participants was undergirded by violence. In addition to aspirations related to college and providing for family, six Central Americans fled direct experiences of violence or threats that endangered their lives. For 1.25 generation Central Americans fleeing violence, the dynamic created by their aspirations and fear of potential death shaped how they experienced the transition to adulthood and illegality. Specifically, because they led uncertain lives prior to migration, the uncertainty that permeates illegality (De Genova, 2002) was not experienced as new. Consequently, they experienced the transition to adulthood and illegality as an opening up of agency rather than an awakening to limitations. Moreover, regardless of the violence experienced in their country of origin, when migration was not "chosen" as a way to attain a desired-self and avoid potential death, the reality of violence went understated.

A life of instability began for Manuel at the age of 10, when he left his rural Guatemalan town to find work in a nearby city and provide for his mother. For the next six years, Manuel lived in various homes with other children and young men and worked selling bus tickets and

loading luggage. At the age of 12, Manuel began moving further and further away from his hometown as a result of intensifying gang recruitment.

> *They [the gangs] would tell me to stop working, that we were just going to work a little and then would dedicate ourselves to the streets. They would say, "You will learn many things, and you will have a better life." They tell you this like three or five times. Then they look for you in a bigger group and they come and say, "No, you know what? You have to join because you have to join."*[150]

In addition to gang threats, throughout his mid-teens, Manuel resisted offers of drugs and alcohol by his coworkers and roommates. Manuel's refusals to participate in substance use impacted his living arrangements and resulted in being left outside to sleep on various occasions. After years of moving to different cities within Guatemala, and as it became harder to work amidst the substance use and gang recruitment, Manuel decided to leave for the United States. His brother, who had already migrated, told Manuel that in the United States he could work without fear of being forced into "bad steps."[151]

After a harrowing trip lasting three months, 16-year old Manuel arrived in Illinois to live with his brother. Within a few days of arriving Manuel began to feel a sense of relief; "this is going to be a real life"[152] he remembers thinking during a meal out with his brothers. Twenty-five during the interview, Manuel's pride at having provided for his mother and avoided a life of gangs and early death is palpable during the interview.

> *That dream [to provide] has come true ... Yes. Because I already made her [his mother] a home, I already gave her money for a business. Now she has it easy. So sometimes she tells me, "What would have happened if you had not thought about leaving, if you hadn't decided to leave? You would have gotten lost in the gangs, and if you were here, I simply do not know if you would be alive or dead."*[153]

Moreover, Manuel evaluates his life in the United States positively. Explaining why he feels a

sense of belonging in the United States, Manuel indicates:

> *The United States [is where he belongs] because it has given me everything. The United States has even helped me get ahead. Maybe it has freed me from everything that today I could have been. Because of that, the United States means a lot to me, and I want to stay in United States.*[154]

Although immediately faced with legal exclusion in the United States, Manuel experienced his new life in the United States with relief. Indeed, working low-wage jobs was not a new experience; Manuel started working at the age of 10. What was new, rather, was the increased sense of stability. In the United States, he lived with his brothers rather than strangers who pressured him with drugs and left him outside to sleep, and he no longer had to move due to gang threats. Consequently, rather than experiencing the transition to adulthood and illegality as limiting, Manuel felt "freed from everything" he "could have been." In other words, immigrating freed him from his feared-self and enabled him to provide for his mother.

Manuel's positive feelings about accomplishing his goals do not negate the difficulties he has experienced in the United States. In particular, like other young men who sought to provide for their families, Manuel experienced frustration around the challenges illegality creates around work.

> *Well it's been hard. It hasn't been easy because one doesn't have papers. And wherever one goes, yes they give you a job, but it doesn't take long and they figure it out and they tell you that you can't work.*[155]

Additionally, the threat of deportation has always been present and intensified with Trump's presidency. These challenges notwithstanding, Manuel evaluates his life in the United States positively when compared with the "only two options"[156] in Guatemala which are to "join [a gang] or die."[157]

Similar to Manuel, 16-year old arrival Liliana fled Guatemala due to gang threats and

faced uncertainty early in life. Liliana's parents left Guatemala due to extortion threats when she was 10; leaving Liliana and her younger sisters in the care of their grandparents. The threats towards the family did not cease with the departure of her parents. When Liliana's grandparents reported the threats, the Guatemalan government sent Liliana and her sisters to an orphanage and attempted to place them for adoption. When the family rejected adoption, the state removed protections for the family causing them to move internally four times to escape gang threats. Eventually Liliana's mother returned to Guatemala and fled back to the United States with her daughters; a trip that would last six months. Liliana was apprehended when she reached the U.S.-Mexico border for three days, and then sent to a child detention center where she spent a month before being released to her parents.

Prior to immigrating, Liliana possessed a clear vision for her life that involved education as the solution to the violence surrounding her.

> *I was in sixth grade, it was my graduation, we did a minute of silence for all the classmates we had lost. So, we were in this battle, we were 12 years old, and they were already killing my classmates because of the violence.... And many [classmates] decided to take revenge on their own. Despite everything that was happening, I said, "No." I am a person that likes school very much. So, I decided to focus all of my strength on school. And I said, "There has to be some way to see justice without getting your hands dirty." Because they would get involved and start the cycle again, of revenge, of violence and there was no end to it. So, I said, "I have to put a stop to it, otherwise the chain will continue". So, since I was little, I had this mentality of, "No, I'm going to focus on school, I'm going to study, I'm going to be someone who's going to make some change." I took my education as a weapon for myself; it became a weapon.*[158]

At the age of 21, Liliana is on path towards attaining her aspirations to use "education as a weapon" to impact change; she is in college and actively involved in advocacy and school leadership activities. Similar to the 1.5 generation, during high school Liliana experienced frustration with her legal exclusion around applying and paying for college. Arriving at the age

of 16, Liliana did not qualify for DACA; a fact she had to explain to high school counselors who assume all students are eligible for DACA.

Despite experiencing the limitations of illegality in similar ways than the 1.5 generation, Liliana's awakening to the full implications of illegality first came when apprehended by the border patrol.

> *I knew it [the significance of immigrating unauthorized] to a certain extent. I knew it was going to be difficult. But then when I entered and they [border patrol] handcuffed me, everything fell apart... For me it [migrating] was the best decision I had made in my life. They [border patrol] made it seem like the worst decision that someone can make... Because when I arrived, they began to scream at me, to treat me badly.*[159]

While Liliana understood she was immigrating unauthorized and would face challenges, the actions of the border patrol created the realization that her desire to save her life and pursue her aspirations would be criminalized in the United States. Moreover, the apprehension placed the possibility of deportation disturbingly near. Five years after her apprehension, Liliana received a notice to appear in immigration court. After seeking legal counsel, Liliana learned that she missed the one-year period provided to apply for asylum. Despite missing the one year mark, her attorney will fight for asylum as it provides the only option for relief.

Liliana experienced uncertainty both in Guatemala and in the United States. Yet, within Liliana's precarious life, the transition to adulthood and illegality was experienced as in increase in agency and ability to pursue her desired-self and avoid her feared-self. As Liliana explains, in the United States, she at least has a "fighting" chance.

> *If I could not return [to Guatemala], I would not mind to tell you the truth. I have family there, but I feel that what I lived there, and that there is not much that can be done. Here at least I'm in the battle, I'm fighting, but I can do something. There they can easily take my life for doing something like that.*[160]

Liliana also described a parallel between the experience of being in the shadows in Guatemala and the United States.

> *I am a person who likes to talk and say who I am, because I do not want to hide anymore. I hid in Guatemala being my own country. For me to come here and come to hide, I do not want to do that anymore.*[161]

In Guatemala, Liliana encountered various forces that hindered reaching her desired-self; her life was threatened, the government failed to protect her, she was forced to hide, and she felt that her advocacy was fruitless. Because these challenges left Liliana extremely vulnerable, in transitioning to adulthood and illegality in the United States, Liliana experienced an increase in self-efficacy and visibility rather than an awakening to limitations.

In the stories just illustrated, adolescents fleeing violence evaluated the conditions in the United States positively compared to their country of origin. I contend that, at least in part, attainment of their aspirations provided the criteria for their positive assessment. As Daphne's story illustrates, when migration and legal exclusion are perceived as disrupting their aspirations, the reality of violence goes understated.

Daphne left Honduras when she was 15 with her uncle for what she thought was a vacation. As Daphne explains, her brother would later tell her to stay.

> *My brother told me, "No, you're already here, why are you going to leave?" "There are a lot of people who want to be here, and you now have the opportunity." And I was like, "No, because I want to go back", because I was going to continue studying there ... And they didn't want to.*[162]

Although Daphne desired to return and "continue studying," her concerned mother preferred Daphne remain in the United States to keep her away from negative peer influences.

> *I was very involved with older girls. We would use alcohol, sometimes even drugs, and she [Daphne's mother] once saw me ... And I had a boyfriend, and she told me that he was not going to be good for me, because he was very jealous. One time at the gate he*

> *pushed me. So she saw that and she said, "I prefer that you are there [in the U.S.] with your brothers as opposed to here where that man might hit you, or will kill you here.*[163]

Once in the United States, Daphne avoided additional problems with substance use but was unable to escape domestic abuse. At the age of 17, Daphne moved out of her brother's home to live with a 30-year man she met in the United States. The physically abusive relationship lasted four years before Daphne left the relationship. She later met her current partner and now has a six-year-old daughter.

The lack of agency in migration and connection to a desired-self shaped how Daphne evaluates her life in the United States. Although on a troubling path in Honduras, Daphne envisioned herself attending beauty school and owning a beauty salon. In the United States, Daphne never enrolled in high school and feels frustrated that she does not "know anything."[164] Hence, like other participants whose desired-selves were blocked, Daphne evaluates her life in the United States negatively compared to Honduras. Indeed, at the age of 32, Daphne holds on to the dream of owning a beauty salon and having a "peaceful" life in Honduras.

> *My dream is to have a beauty salon in my country. Yes, have a beauty salon there. Go live a peaceful life there… Yes, I would like to leave… Because if I remain illegal, it's the same. Better to be in my country where I know nothing will happen. I will live calmly there.*[165]

The fact that her home town of San Pedro Sula has been infamously referred to as "murder capital of the world," does not faze Daphne. Despite the violence that Daphne remembers and now hears about in the news and from family, she believes she would have more "freedom"[166] in Honduras and could pursue her dream of owning a beauty salon. From Daphne's perspective, her aspirations where disrupted by unplanned migration and legal exclusion, and she evaluates the uncertainty and fear created by illegality as worse than the

violence in San Pedro Sula. Nonetheless, Daphne's dream of owning a beauty conflicts with the future she seeks for her daughter. For the sake of her daughter, Daphne does not plan to leave the United States.

Discussion

This chapter drew on the evaluative function of possible selves to understand how the undocumented 1.25 generation experienced the transition to adulthood and illegality in light of their aspirations and fears. Based on the plight of the 1.5 generation, it is generally assumed that illegality disrupts the lives undocumented youth envisioned as they come of age in the United States. The 1.25 generation, however, does not always experience illegality as a dominant disruption in their transition to adulthood. Rather, the transition to adulthood and illegality was experienced differently as a result of their desires and fears.

Adolescent arrivals with college aspirations experienced the transition to adulthood and illegality in similar ways to the 1.5 generation. During high school, illegality endangered their college aspirations, created frustration around paying for college, and threatened to relegate them to low-wage work. Despite these similarities, they did not experience the stark awakening described during adolescence for the 1.5 generation but encountered a more gradual awakening to the implications of illegality. Adolescent arrivals who attained their college aspirations drew positive implications from their struggles. Conversely, those with blocked college aspirations struggled drawing positive implications to their legal exclusion and believed that they would have fared better in their country of origin. Nonetheless, when college aspirations were redefined, the distress created by illegally was attenuated. Finally, for a segment of adolescent arrivals whose college aspirations were blocked, the transition to

adulthood and illegality was accompanied by the transition to parenting which compounded the concerns, frustrations, and limitations created by illegality.

The 1.25 generation who migrated primarily to work and provide for their families never experienced the early inclusion provided by K-12 schooling but immediately entered into exclusion. Transitioning to illegality as adolescents, they experienced the frustration of legal exclusion around difficulty finding and getting to work and separation from their parents and other family members. Yet, despite the sharp transition to legal exclusion, rather than rupture to their expectations for the future, their coming of age story involved movement towards their desired-self. Consequently, they mostly evaluated their life positively in the United States and felt pride in their accomplishments. In a couple of cases, the desire and need to provide conflicted with educational aspirations and increased frustration with their legal exclusion. Moreover, while illegality was not initially experienced as disruptive, parenting created a new moment of awakening to the implications of illegality and brought on new anxieties.

In addition to aspirations related to college and providing for family, some adolescent Central Americans fled violence that endangered their lives. For these adolescent arrivals, the uncertainty created by illegality was a continuation of the precarious lives they led prior to migration. Despite their fragile status in the United States, they evaluated their condition positively because they were able to attain their aspirations and avoid early death. Consequently, they experienced the transition to adulthood and illegality as an opening up of agency rather than an awakening to limitations. When aspirations were not attained, however, the reality of violence in their country of origin went understated and the distress experienced with illegality heightened.

Understanding differences in how undocumented childhood arrivals experience illegality can assist social workers, educators, and immigrant serving organizations to develop better supports. At a recent conference I attended focused on unaccompanied minors, the hosting organization presented preliminary findings on the needs of this population. Assessment of their needs was developed from the perspective of the service providers. One need highlighted was that the pressure families place on youth to work hindered academics for unaccompanied youth. Yet, for the undocumented youth that prioritized work over education, it was not a path forced by their families (as if adolescents always follow their family's wishes), but an internalized desired-self. To be sure, their aspirations were socially constructed and structurally constrained. Nonetheless, these desires shaped their actions and how illegality was experienced. Without taking seriously the agency and aspirations of undocumented youth, service providers will struggle to develop supports that meet the diverse needs of undocumented childhood arrivals. Indeed, social workers have an ethical responsibility to "respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients in their efforts to identity and clarify their goals" (NASW Code of Ethics).

The 1.25 generation, like the 1.5 generation, faces challenges as a result of exclusion from federal and state financial aid, and stakeholders must continue to address these barriers. In addition, stakeholders must engage in discussion over how to serve the needs of adolescents who immigrate to work and provide for their families and those who flee violence. For example, while work and providing was prioritized, some young men also desired to study. Yet, without flexible education options, they were unable to pursue both goals. Moreover, while some adolescent arrivals will benefit from information regarding college applications and

scholarships, others need information on workers' rights. To develop supports that are actually experienced as supportive, stakeholders must center the aspirations of young people and support their goals and desires rather than impose one narrative of success.

In addition to practice implications, the plight of the undocumented 1.25 generation provides insight into how illegality is differentially experienced as a result of aspirations. The lives immigrants envision, desire, and fear provide criteria under which their legal exclusion is experienced and interpreted. Importantly, that illegality is not always subjectively experienced as the dominant disruptor does not imply that legal exclusion does not create immigrant vulnerability and deportability. It must be noted, for example, that U.S. laws have a role in creating both the pre-migration uncertainty experienced by Central Americans fleeing violence and the fragility they encounter in the United States. Nonetheless, paying attention to how illegality is experienced in light of their aspirations can contribute to unpacking the sources of variation in experience and the sources of distress and endurance. Moreover, across the life course, aspirations and deeply held longings expand and change. Indeed, as Markus and Nurius (1986) explain, "development can be seen as the process of acquiring and then achieving or resisting certain possible selves" (pg. 955). Hence, paying attention to the aspirations and changing aspirations of immigrants may provide insight into how immigration laws are experienced across the life course.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Exclusionary immigration policies impact the day to day lives and coming of age experiences of undocumented childhood arrivals. Over the past decade, a growing body of literature has examined their plight and increasingly sought to understand the factors that explain variation in their lived experiences and the impact of illegality. Yet, within this burgeoning scholarship, the lives of the undocumented 1.25 generation and their transition to adulthood have been missed. Moreover, the timing of immigration—the point in the life course when an individual immigrates—has not been considered as a source of differentiation. The gap on the undocumented 1.25 generation and neglect of timing has limited our understanding of the trajectories of childhood arrivals, the agency minors have in the migration process, the role of K-12 education in shaping their pathways, and the disruptions experienced due to illegality.

Addressing the gap on the undocumented 1.25 generation, this dissertation examined their pathways to adulthood, what shaped their pathways, and their subjective meanings. Drawing on interviews with 40 undocumented and DACAmented Mexican and Central American young adults who immigrated between the ages of 13 to 17, I found that their pathways initially diverged into the *enrolled* and *never enrolled* based on whether they accessed K-12 schooling in the United States. Gender furthered demarcated the lives of the never enrolled, while the ability to stay on path towards college completion separated the enrolled into *stayers* and *leavers*. In elucidating the experiences and varied trajectories of adolescent arrivals, I highlighted the role of the timing of immigration.

In Chapter 3, I demonstrated that gender norms and oppression played a salient role in shaping the lives of never enrolled adolescent arrivals and proposed that the timing of

immigration intersects with gender to shape their challenges and access to supports. Once in the United States, never enrolled men transitioned to financial independence and encountered challenges around on adapting, locating work, getting to work, and paying their debt. Young men navigated these challenges with the help of male networks who provided emotional and instrumental support. Never enrolled women, on the other hand, remained financially dependent either on their spouse or another family member and were exposed to gender oppression and violence. They had fewer family networks to draw on and were less often engaged in work outside the home. Moreover, while adolescent men were relatively free to make choices about socializing, attending church, or enrolling in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, the autonomy of women was significantly constrained. As a result, women lacked meaningful engagement with contexts outside of the home and struggled accessing supports. Through creating fear, illegality exacerbated these challenges and further hindered access to supports. Thus, young women were closed in by both gender oppression and immigration policies.

Suggesting that the timing of immigration matters, my finding on the role of gender differs from existing knowledge on the 1st and 1.5 generation. Indeed, studies have found that 1st generation undocumented immigrant women are better positioned than men to forge ties outside the family (Menjivar, 2000), and that the migration process increases women's decision making power (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Moreover, among the undocumented 1.5 generation, gender norms have been found to more detrimentally impact men's family formation process (Enriquez, 2017a). These differences suggest that the timing of immigration differentially structures the challenges immigrants face at arrival, the contexts they interact with, and the

supports available within these contexts. Indeed, upon arriving in the United States, undocumented 1.5 and 1st generation women more readily interact with contexts outside of the home. The 1.5 generation benefit from early inclusion in K-12 schooling which creates interaction with school staff and peers. First generation women interact with contexts outside of the family because they are largely responsible for their children's school and health care needs (Menjivar, 2000). Never enrolled adolescent women, conversely, do not benefit from school-embedded resources and, for many years, lack meaningful interaction with other institutional contexts. Hence, at a key point of development and transition in the life course, they experience a dearth of resources that exacerbate their vulnerability to gender oppression and violence.

As discussed in Chapter 4, I also found that the timing of immigration shaped the school experiences and educational pathways of the undocumented 1.25 generation who enrolled in K-12 schooling. Rather than the negative school relationships expected in low level courses, 1.25 generation youth experienced positive relationships in these spaces as a result of "standing out" in ways that brought positive attention; they worked hard, stayed out of trouble, and respected their teachers. These positive relationships, however, were insufficient to facilitate the transition to college. Thus, family resources were the decisive factor in their college pathways. This finding stands in contrast to the 1.5 generation for which supportive relationships and school-embedded resources have been identified as the primary factor demarcating their college pathways (Enriquez, 2011; Gonzales, 2010, 2016). The different pattern suggests that undocumented youth do not experience school sorting mechanisms and

the benefits of positive school relationships equally.

The different pattern, I contend, can be explained by the timing of immigration. In transitioning to college, the 1.25 generation faced various disadvantages to accessing school-embedded resources. Arriving during adolescence, they lacked knowledge of the "hidden" tracking system (Lucas, 1999) and had little time to move out of low level courses. Moreover, although developing positive school relationships, the ESL and low level courses they were placed in did not contain the resources present in high-tracks. Those who managed to eventually access some higher level coursework, struggled fitting in with their high achieving peers and were unable to benefit from the college knowledge possessed by their classmates. As a result, the 1.25 generation struggled accessing resources for college both within low and high track courses.

In addition to the timing of immigration, I propose that paying attention to the aspirations of immigrants can provide insight into how illegality is experienced across the life course. Highlighting the role of aspirations, in Chapter 5, I show that adolescent arrivals experienced the simultaneous transition to adulthood and illegality differently as a result of their desires and fears. For those with college aspirations, illegality was experienced in ways similar to the 1.5 generation; illegality created frustration around transitioning to and paying for college and threatened to relegate them to low-wage work. Yet, although encountering similar challenges, the 1.25 generation experienced a more gradual awakening to the implications of illegality as opposed to the stark awakening faced by the 1.5 generation. Moreover, while adolescent arrivals who attained their college aspirations drew positive

implications from their struggles, those with blocked college aspirations believed that they would have fared better in their country of origin.

The 1.25 generation who migrated primarily to work experienced a sharp transition to illegality during adolescence. Yet, despite the sharp transition to legal exclusion, their coming of age story involved movement towards their desired-self. Consequently, they mostly evaluated their life in the United States positively. Although illegality was not initially experienced as disruptive, in early adulthood parenting created a new moment of awakening to the implications of illegality and brought on new anxieties. In addition to aspirations related to college and providing for family, some adolescent Central Americans fled direct violence that endangered their lives. For these adolescent arrivals, despite their fragile status in the United States, they evaluated their condition positively because they were able to attain their aspirations and avoid early death. Consequently, they experienced the transition to adulthood and illegality as an opening up of agency and increasing stability rather than an awakening to limitations.

Limitations

This study contains several limitations. First, as a qualitative study, my findings cannot be generalized across the undocumented 1.25 population. In particular, the experiences and pathways of my participants may differ from undocumented adolescent arrivals not sampled. Participants in this study lived in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. As Illinois is considered a friendly state for undocumented immigrants, the findings of this study may not fully apply to other local and state contexts. Additionally, although I purposely sampled from varied networks, my study was unable to capture the full range of experiences among undocumented

adolescent arrivals. For example, the never enrolled adolescent men I interviewed, for the most part, avoided interaction with the criminal justice system. Yet, my male participants sometimes shared that they knew adolescent arrivals in their networks who had fallen prey to legal trouble. Likewise, the husband of one female participant, who suffered from alcoholism and had previously physically abused her, was an adolescent arrival. Unfortunately, my attempts to recruit adolescent arrivals who experienced substance abuse, propagated violence, or encountered legal trouble were unsuccessful. As a result, my sample excludes the lived experiences of these men, and more research is needed to understand the pathways of this segment of the 1.25 generation.

Another sampling limitation was the relatively small group of Central Americans in the study. The difference in sample size between Mexican (N = 24) participants and Central American (N = 16) participants reflects the small Central American immigrant population in Illinois (about 3%). Nonetheless, provided that Central Americans are a growing segment of the 1.25 generation, this study was unable to capture the full extent of their experiences and interactions with the immigration system. Clearly, more research focused on the coming of age experiences of Central Americans remains necessary.

Beyond sampling restrictions, my study incorporated a retrospective view of the experiences and trajectories of adolescent arrivals. As narratives change over time, the stories my participants shared, including what they remembered and highlighted as significant, are subject to shift. Nonetheless, these socially situated narratives provide important windows into their lived experiences and meaning making. Additionally, while well-suited for narrative inquiry, the current experiences of adolescent arrivals may look different given changes in the

sociohistorical context. Most of my participants arrived and transitioned to adulthood under the Bush and Obama administration. The Trump administration has brought a significant increase in anti-immigrant rhetoric and restrictive practices that might impact the coming of age experiences of the 1.25 generation. Hence, in applying the findings of my study to newly arrived adolescents, the implications of the current sociohistorical moment must be considered.

Practice Implications

By elucidating the experiences and pathways to adulthood of the 1.25 generation, I contribute to providing a more complete picture of how undocumented childhood arrivals experience illegality at a critical point of transition in the life course. Awareness of the plight of the 1.25 generation can assist stakeholders to better serve their needs and promote their well-being. For example, I show that for the never enrolled 1.25 generation, barriers to educational attainment vary based on gender. Adolescent men who never enroll enact some agency—albeit constrained—in the decision not to enroll in K-12 schooling as work rather than educational opportunities motivated their migration. In serving these young men, educators must consider their financial needs and priorities and provide flexible educational options rather than creating a zero sum scenario between work and education. Adolescent women, on the other hand, possess less agency in their lack of enrollment; enrollment was hampered by lack of information on childcare services, barriers imposed by the school, and residential instability. A different approach then must be taken for young women that involves removing school-based barriers to enrollment and creating awareness of their right to K-12 education and the resources within schools.

The experiences of the never enrolled also highlight that resources for undocumented childhood arrivals must extend beyond those centered on education. Instead, workers' rights information and domestic violence awareness might be of higher priority. Also, since the never enrolled do not interact with the school system, outreach and services for the never enrolled must extend beyond school settings. Because some never enrolled adolescents are disconnected from any type of institutional setting, the task is challenging. Young women, in particular, were exposed to gender violence while simultaneously isolated in their homes. Due to pregnancy, the institutional setting they most readily engaged was the health care context and public aid office. This presents an opportunity for social workers in health care and public aid settings to provide resources to young immigrant mothers around educational access and domestic violence.

My findings also carry implications in serving the enrolled 1.25 generation. As I suggest, adolescent arrivals may experience a disadvantage when competing for the small number of private scholarships for undocumented students. Much effort has been put forth by advocates and allies to create private funding resources for undocumented youth; however, these efforts are often merit based rather than need based and lack awareness that the timing of immigration creates disadvantages for older arrivals. School personnel, by understanding disparities in access to resources and information among undocumented youth, can make improvements in the dissemination of resources. For example, adolescent arrivals who took some high level classes failed to benefit from peer resources as they struggled connecting with their high achieving peers. Armed with this knowledge, school personnel can target information to high achieving recent arrivals in their high schools. Moreover, adolescent arrivals generally

were placed in beneath level courses as a result of their language skills, reliance on single placement tests, and lack of knowledge of the U.S. education system. While this issue is larger in scope than this study, the experiences of undocumented adolescent arrivals highlight the long-term impact of broken and biased sorting mechanisms.

Finally, this study has implications for advocacy as it challenges the central narratives circulated to advance policy change for undocumented childhood arrivals. In some cases, the youth in my study fit the "Dreamer" narrative; they were not involved in the decision to immigrate (hence rendering them innocent), are high achieving, and possess college and professional career aspirations. Others, however, land far from this image. Instead, they made the decision to immigrate, and their priorities do not revolve around educational aspirations. These young people more closely reflect the image of first-generation low-wage workers than that of "Dreamers." Yet, regardless of their path, aspirations, and agency in the migration process, they share the vulnerability of immigrating during a developmentally sensitive period in the life course. Advocacy efforts, however, have yet to incorporate a nuanced understanding of childhood migration that resists reinforcing educational success and "innocence" in the migration process as the standard for deserving protection and relief. By these standards, a segment of undocumented childhood arrivals, will fail the deservingness test. It is my hope that awareness of the varied experiences and aspirations of the undocumented 1.25 generation can shift the frames and narratives used in advocating for immigration reform.

Immigration Scholarship

The experiences of the undocumented 1.25 generation also have implications for immigration scholarship. As noted earlier, immigration scholars agree that undocumented

immigrants are not a monolithic population (Abrego, 2014; Enriquez, 2017a; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). I argue that the timing of immigration, in addition to the generally acknowledged factors, contributes to variation in the lived experiences of undocumented immigrants. The role of the timing of immigration, however, has not received analytical consideration within immigration scholarship.

In examining the experiences of undocumented immigrants, immigration scholarship has adopted a generational approach that creates a child versus adult binary. In referring to differences by generations, scholars draw distinctions only between immigrants arriving in childhood (under the age of 18) and those arriving in adulthood (after the age of 18) (Abrego, 2011; Abrego, 2014; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). Even Abrego (2011), who has argued for the importance of life stage at arrival, employs a child versus adult binary. Abrego (2011) compares the legal consciousness of young adults arriving prior to the age of 8 (the 1.5 generation) to 1st generation immigrants ranging in ages from 25 to 55 years old. Rather than fully considering the implications of life stage at arrival, Abrego (2011) employs a generational binary that ignores nuances in human development and paints a broad brush over the experiences of childhood and adult arrivals. As evidenced by the quote below, Abrego's approach to life stage at arrival is limited to childhood versus adulthood.

> One of the most notable distinctions in the undocumented immigrant population is immigrant generation. First-generation immigrants, who migrated as adults, understand and experience illegality very differently than 1.5 generation undocumented immigrants who migrated as children (Abrego, 2011). Because they feel different levels of responsibility for migrating, remember their migration journeys differently, and are socialized into U.S. society through work versus school, they view illegality through different lenses. Given how responsible they feel for choosing to migrate, how clearly they remember the often-horrific details of the migration journey, and the exploitative working condition that surround them, undocumented first-generation immigrants experience illegality mainly as great fear of deportation (Abrego, 2014, pg. 145).

In the quote above, Abrego defines the 1.5 generation as those "who migrated as children". Neither in this quote nor elsewhere in the chapter does Abrego qualify the age-at-arrival for the 1.5 generation (a common missing detail in immigration work). The lack of qualification leaves open the assumption that the 1.5 generation includes all immigrants arriving under the age of 18. Yet, the sample, from which Abrego's (2011) interpretations emerge, mostly includes children arriving under the age of 8. For these children, it is indeed accurate that they hold little responsibility for immigrating, hold vague memories of their journey, and are mainly socialized through school. But as I have shown, this is not the case for all childhood arrivals. Rather, more in line with Abrego's description of the 1st generation, some adolescent arrivals make the decision to immigrate, all remember their journeys clearly, and many encounter exploitative working conditions upon arrival rather than school inclusion.

The generational binary employed ignores important developmental differences that shape the experiences of childhood arrivals *and* adult arrivals. Indeed, I contend that the importance of the timing of immigration also has relevance for the 1st generation. The challenges, needs, and vulnerabilities of a 20-year-old arrival likely vary in some capacity from that of an immigrant arriving at the age of 40. Moreover, how illegality is experienced may differ across the life course. The challenges and frustrations created by illegality for a 20-year-old may shift for that same person at the age of 40 or 60.

Human development is much more nuanced than the child and adult generational distinctions made in immigration scholarship. Consequently, I urge immigration scholars to incorporate the dimension of time—both in terms of the timing of immigration and changes across the life course. Including the dimension of time opens up a plethora of research that

could provide a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of undocumented immigrants across the life course (early and middle childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and elderly). At the very least, consideration of the timing of immigration and how life stage might impact the experiences of immigrants, should be questions pondered when considering sampling and interpreting results. By incorporating the dimension of time into immigration scholarship, we can begin to tease out differences both by the *timing of immigration* and by *changes across the life course*.

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Appendix A: Characteristics of Full Sample

Pseudonym	COO	Age	Arrival Age	Arrival Year	Migration Reason	Legal Status at Interview	Age Received DACA	Family Lived with on Arrival	Highest Education Completed	Relationship Status	Number of Children	Work Status
Alejandra	MEX	34	16	1999	Work Opportunities	Undocumented		Cousins	9th grade	Single	2	FT
Andres	MEX	32	16	2001	Work Opportunities	Undocumented		Brother	6th grade	Cohabitating	3	FT
Arely	MEX	27	16	2006	Follow spouse	Undocumented		Spouse	9th grade	Married	3	PT/Carework
Benjamin	MEX	31	15	2001	Family reunification	Undocumented		Grandparents	some college	In relationship	0	FT
Cecilia	MEX	33	15	1998	Family reunification	DACA	26	Parents	some college	Divorced	0	FT
Christopher	HON	24	13	2006	Family reunification	DACA	20	Parents	Graduated BA	In relationship	0	FT
Daniel	MEX	28	14	2003	Work Opportunities	Undocumented		Uncle	9th grade	Married	2	FT
Daniela	MEX	21	13	2009	Family reunification	Undocumented		Mother	some college	Single	0	FT
Daphne	HON	32	15	2001	Family reunification	Undocumented		Brother	9th grade	Cohabitating	1	FT
Edgar	MEX	29	15	2003	Family reunification	DACA	24	Parents	some college	Single	0	FT
Elena	MEX	28	15	2004	Family unity	DACA	25	Mother & Stepfather	Graduated BA/in MA	Single	0	FT
Elmer	GUA	24	15	2008	Work Opportunities	Undocumented		Friend/friend's father	4th grade	Single	0	FT
Elsa	HON	18	14	2013	Violence	Undocumented		Mother	6th grade	Single	0	FT
Esvin	GUA	22	14	2010	Work Opportunities	Undocumented		Family friend	enrolled in GED	Single	0	FT
Fabian	MEX	27	15	2005	Family unity	DACA	22	Parents	Enrolled in MA	In relationship	0	FT
Fernanda	MEX	25	17	2009	Follow spouse	Undocumented		Spouse	9th grade	Married	2	FT
Jasmin	HON	31	17	2002	Family reunification	Work Permit		Mother	enrolled in GED	Single	0	FT
Jessica	GUA	23	17	2011	Violence	Undocumented		Parents	8th Grade	Cohabitating	1	Carework
Jesus	MEX	24	17	2010	Work Opportunities	Undocumented		Brother	9th grade	In relationship	1	FT
John Smith	SAL	25	13	2005	Family reunification/education opp't	DACA	21	Parents	Close to transfer	Single	0	UE
Jorge	HON	26	15	2006	Family reunification/education opp't	DACA	22	Parents	Graduated BA	Married	0	FT
Juan	MEX	25	17	2009	Work Opportunities	Undocumented		Aunt	8th Grade	Single	0	FT
Laura	MEX	27	16	2006	Follow spouse	Undocumented		Spouse	9th grade	Cohabitating	1	FT
Liliana	GUA	21	16	2012	Violence/Education opportunities	Undocumented		Parents	Assoc/transferring	Single	0	FT student
Luis	GUA	25	16	2008	Work Opportunities	Undocumented		Friends	6th grade	In relationship	0	FT
Manuel	GUA	25	16	2009	Violence/Work Opp't	Undocumented		Brother	2nd grade	Cohabitating	0	FT
Mariana	MEX	20	16	2012	Trajedy & education opp't	Undocumented		Mother	Close to transfer	Single	0	FT
Marvin	HON	26	13	2004	Family unity/work opp't	Undocumented		Mother	High School	Cohabitating	1	FT
Mercedes	MEX	28	14	2003	Trajedy/family reunification	DACA	23	Older sister	GED	Married	1	FT
Mia	MEX	26	15	2006	Family unity	DACA	23	Parents	Assoc/close to BA	Divorced	2	FT
Pablo	MEX	25	13	2005	Family reunification	DACA	20	Mother	some college	In relationship	0	FT
Patricia	MEX	30	15	2002	Family reunification	Undocumented		Mother	High School	Cohabitating	4	FT
Pedro	MEX	26	14	2005	Family reunification/work opp't	DACA	21	Mother	High School	Separated	1	FT
Pepe	MEX	32	15	2000	Education opportunties	DACA	26	Aunt and Uncle	MSW	Single	0	FT
Rafael	MEX	29	15	2003	Work Opportunities	Undocumented		Brothers	enrolled in GED	Married	0	FT
Roberto	SAL	20	15	2013	Family unity/education opp't	Undocumented		Mother	Assoc/transferring	In relationship	0	FT student
Sebastian	HON	22	15	2010	Violence/Work Opp't	Undocumented		Girlfriend's parents	9th grade	Cohabitating	1	FT
Veronica	MEX	27	14	2004	Family unity	DACA	22	Mother & Stepfather	some college	Cohabitating	2	FT
Yefry	HON	22	15	2010	Violence/Family Reunification	Visa (SIJ)		Older sister	some college	In relationship	0	FT
Zafiro	MEX	32	17	2003	Work Opportunities	Undocumented		Aunt/brother	6th grade	In relationship	6	FT

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Examining the Transition to Adulthood of Undocumented Adolescent Arrivals

Introduction to Study (said to participants)
This interview focuses on your story as an undocumented adolescent arrival and how you experienced the transition to adulthood. Although I have prepared some topics to discuss, the purpose of this interview is to understand your experiences and what you see as important to your life as an undocumented immigrant and your transition to adulthood.

Discussion Domains
I have several topic areas that I will ask you about. We will begin by talking about your life before coming to the United States and then move into your experiences in the United States, your life now, and your plans for the future. I want to remind you that the goal of this interview is to understand what is most important to your experiences.

1. **Pre-migration background:**
   Base question: Tell me about your life in [country of origin] before coming to the United States.

   Sub-questions: Questions to ask if not addressed by the participant from the base question.

   a. Was there anything about the way you grew up that was hard for you?

   b. What was your family life like in [country of origin]
   (*PROBE: family composition/separation, family expectations, family responsibility, important relationships)*

   c. What were your school experience in [country of origin]

   d. What were your work experiences in [country of origin]
   (*PROBE: age when started to work*)

2. **Immigration Journey:**
   Base question: Tell me about your journey to the United States?

   Sub-questions: Questions to ask if not addressed by the participant from the base question.

   a. How was the decision made to move to the United States?
   (*PROBE: who made the decision, was it made quickly or did it take time, what prompted the decision, how did they feel about the decision*)

   b. Who did you travel with?
   (PROBE: family separation)

c. Did you encounter any issues during the journey?

d. What were you thinking about or feeling during the journey?

e. Before arriving in the U.S., what did you think the U.S. would be like? (*PROBE: where did these expectations come from*)

3. Experiences in the United States:
Base question: When you arrived in the United States what was your life like?

Sub-questions: Questions to ask if not addressed by the participant from the base question.

a. What were your first days in the United States like? (*PROBE: first impressions, events, struggles, help received, thoughts, differences from expectations)*

b. What was your family life like in the United States when you first arrived? (*PROBE: who where they living with, family separation, support, challenges*)

c. Tell me about any experiences you have had in school in the United States? (*PROBE: If never enrolled, why not? Belonging and fitting in, relationships with school staff, academic experiences/challenges, parental support, school involvement)*

d. Tell me about working in the United States? (*PROBE: age when started working, types of jobs, job stability/instability, issues with discrimination in jobs*)

e. Tell me about your experiences with learning English? (*PROBE: formal/classes or informal learning, confidence and perceived level of competency, issues or challenges due to language*)

4. Transition to adulthood:
Base question: When in your life did you start feeling like an adult?

Sub-questions: Questions to ask if not addressed by the participant from the base question.

a. What types of things cause you to feel or not to feel like an adult? (*PROBE: times, circumstances or people that do or do not make them feel adult*)

b. If you don't feel like an adult, do you feel like an adolescent or something else?

c. When did you start making decisions on you own?

d. Do you feel that you are independent? Why or why not?

e. At what age did you start feeling responsible for yourself?
(*PROBE: financially or in any other way*)

f. When did your family first start treating you as an adult?
(*PROBE: What signaled to them that their family viewed them as an adult or don't view them as an adult*)

g. When you first arrived in the United States, at the age of #, did you feel like an adult?
(*PROB*E: *How were they feeling at the time? Why does an increased level of responsibility not make them feel like an adult?)*

h. Describe your responsibilities at this point in your life?
(*PROBE: types of responsibility/obligation, feelings about obligations, ability to meet obligations, who they have responsibility to, remittances, people who depend on them*)

i. What does adulthood mean to you? What makes someone an adult?
(*PROBE: what makes someone an adult?*)

j. If you could, is there anything that you would change about your transition to adulthood?
(*PROBE: timing of transition, expectations, opportunities*)

5. Experience and impact of legal status:

Base question: How has being undocumented impacted your life in the United States?

Sub-questions: Questions to ask if not addressed by the participant from the base question.

a. What challenges, if any, have you faced a result of your immigration status?
(*PROBE: challenges reaching aspirations, work, relationships*)

b. Before immigrating, where you aware of the limitations your status would have to your life in the U.S.?
(PROBE: *How did they know? When did they become aware, what created awareness of the implications?)*

c. What does your legal status mean to you?
(*PROBE: emotions/feelings about status, how they manage feelings, when do feelings about status emerge*)

d. How would your life have been different if you arrived in the United States with legal status?

e. Do you feel that you belong in the United States? Have you felt welcomed in the United States?
(*PROBE: examples of feeling welcomed or not, where do they feel/don't feel welcome, any changes, and feelings about being welcomed/unwelcomed*)

f. What are your feelings regarding the election of President Trump?
(PROBE: *worries concerns, expectations of what he will do, where information comes from, strategies to address fears, feelings of whether their life will change and how, impact on belonging*)

k. Have you ever felt discriminated against in the United States? Can you give an example?

Sub-questions only for those without any status

g. How would having some type of legal status change your life?
(*PROBE: driver's license, access to jobs, educational opportunities, fear, mental health, goals and aspirations*)

Sub-questions only for those with a temporary status (DACA, TPS)

h. Has having [temporary status] changed your life in any way?
(*PROBE: driver's license, access to jobs, educational opportunities, fear, mental health, goals and aspirations*)

6. Current life and future aspirations:
Base question: At this point in your life, what is your daily life like?

Sub-questions: Questions to ask if not addressed by the participant from the base question.

a. Tell me about who you currently live with?
(*PROBE: Who do they live with, why, their feelings about arrangement*, *lives with or without parents, when did they move out, what prompted move, if living at home why do they stay and their feelings about living at home*)

a. Tell me about your family and your relationship with them?
(*PROBE: family dynamics, current family relationships and dynamics, current family support and challenges, spouse/partner, marriage, children, feelings closeness, support, challenges*)

b. At this point in your life what things make you sad or anxious?
(*PROBE: family, work, future, legal status*)

c. At this point in your life what things make you optimistic?
(*PROBE: family, work future, legal status*)

d. Tell me how you see yourself?
(*PROBE: how do they identify, their roles (student, worker, immigrant, parent), differences in how they see themselves and how others see them, changes in how they see themselves*)

e. What would you say made you the person you are today?
(*PROBE: what constrained or enabled them to become who they are, level of exploration, feelings about who they are and how they got there*)

f. What are your goals and dreams for the future?
(*PROBE: education and career plans, financial, family, motivation for goals*)

g. How attached do you feel to the United States versus where you were born?
(*PROBE: feelings of belonging/not belonging, when do they feel that they fit or not fit? What makes them feel that way? Ask for examples*)

h. If there was one thing you wanted others to know about your immigration experience, what would that be?

i. Is there anything else that is important to your story as an undocumented immigrant that I didn't ask you about?

Appendix C: Intake Sheet

RESPONDENT INTAKE SHEET

Interview Information:

Date: _____

Interview ID: _____

Interviewee pseudonym: _____

Location (city/type of location): _____

Recruited through: _____

Respondent Socio-Demographic Information:

Gender: _____ Race/ethnicity: _____

Current age: _____ City of Residence: _____

Currently lives with: _____

_____

Migration Background:

Country, state/province or city/municipality of birth: _____

Number of times entered: _____

Age of first arrival to U.S: _____

Age of subsequent arrivals: _____

Current legal status: _____

Migrated with: Both Parents ☐ Mother ☐ Father ☐ Neither ☐

Upon arriving in the U.S. lived with: _____

_____

Labor Force Information:

Current employment status:

Employed full-time ☐ Employed part-time ☐ Unemployed ☐ Homemaker ☐

If employed, type of job: _____

Educational Attainment:

Did you ever attend school in the U.S.? Y ☐ N ☐

Did you graduate high school in the U.S.? Y ☐ N ☐

Did you graduate high school in your country of origin? Y ☐ N ☐

Are you currently enrolled in school? Y ☐ N ☐

If currently enrolled:

Institution and level: _____

Type of program: _____

Full time or Part-time: _____

Seeking degree? If so, what type of degree? _____

Highest level of education ever enrolled: _____
Highest level of education/degree completed: _____

English Skills: Please rank the following on a scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

Level of spoken English: 1 2 3 4 5
Level of written English: 1 2 3 4 5
Level of English reading comprehension: 1 2 3 4 5
Other language competencies: _____

Family Background:

Parental Information

	Place of birth	Educational attainment	Occupation of Parents Growing Up	Place of Current Residence	Status
Mother					
Father					

Spouse/partner information:

What best describes your marital status: Married ☐ Engaged ☐ Divorced ☐ Separated ☐ Widowed ☐ In a relationship ☐ Single ☐ Other ☐_____

	Place of birth	Educational attainment	Occupation	Place of current residence	Status
Partner					

Children Information

Child	Age of child	Gender	Place of birth	Lives w/Child
1				
2				
3				
4				

Appendix D: Characteristics of Never Enrolled Participants

Characteristics of Never Enrolled Participants by Gender											
Pseudonym	COO	Age	Arrival Age	Arrival Year	Migration Reason	Legal Status @ Interview	Family Lived w/on Arrival	Highest Education Completed	Relationship Status	Number of Children	Work Status
NEVER ENROLLED MEN											
Rafael	MEX	29	15	2003	Work Opportunities	Undocumented	Brothers	enrolled in GED	Married	0	FT
Jesus	MEX	24	17	2010	Work Opportunities	Undocumented	Brother	9th grade	In relationship	1	FT
Juan	MEX	25	17	2009	Work Opportunities	Undocumented	Aunt	8th Grade	Single	0	FT
Manuel	GUA	25	16	2009	Violence/Work Opp't	Undocumented	Brother	2nd grade	Cohabitating	0	FT
Luis	GUA	25	16	2008	Work Opportunities	Undocumented	Friends	6th grade	In relationship	0	FT
Daniel	MEX	28	14	2003	Work Opportunities	Undocumented	Uncle	9th grade	Married	2	FT
Sebastian	HON	22	15	2010	Violence/Work Opp't	Undocumented	Girlfriend's parents	9th grade	Cohabitating	1	FT
Andres	MEX	32	16	2001	Work Opportunities	Undocumented	Brother	6th grade	Cohabitating	3	FT
Esvin	GUA	22	14	2010	Work Opportunities	Undocumented	Family friend	enrolled in GED	Single	0	FT
Elmer	GUA	24	15	2008	Work Opportunities	Undocumented	Friend/friend's father	4th grade	Single	0	FT
NEVER ENROLLED WOMEN											
Fernanda	MEX	25	17	2009	Follow spouse	Undocumented	Spouse	9th grade	Married	2	FT
Laura	MEX	27	16	2006	Follow spouse	Undocumented	Spouse	9th grade	Cohabitating	1	FT
Jessica	GUA	23	17	2011	Violence	Undocumented	Parents	8th Grade	Cohabitating	1	Carework
Zafiro	MEX	32	17	2003	Work Opportunities	Undocumented	Aunt/brother	6th grade	In relationship	6	FT
Alejandra	MEX	34	16	1999	Work Opportunities	Undocumented	Cousins	9th grade	Single	2	FT
Arely	MEX	27	16	2006	Follow spouse	Undocumented	Spouse	9th grade	Married	3	PT/Carework
Jasmin	HON	31	17	2002	Family reunification	Work Permit	Mother	enrolled in GED	Single	0	FT
Daphne	HON	32	15	2001	Family reunification	Undocumented	Brother	9th grade	Cohabitating	1	FT
Elsa	HON	18	14	2013	Violence	Undocumented	Mother	6th grade	Single	0	FT

Appendix E: Characteristics of Enrolled Participants

Characteristics of Enrolled Participants by Educational Pathway

Pseudonym	COO	Age	Arrival Age	Arrival Year	Time in U.S.	Highest Education Enrolled/Completed	Legal Staus @ Inteview	Family Lived With on Arrival	Worked During Academic Year in HS	Relationship Status	Number of Children	Work Status
STAYERS												
Jorge	HON	26	15	2006	11	BA	DACA	Parents	No	Married	0	FT
Mariana	MEX	20	16	2012	4	Close to Associates	Undocumented	Mother	No	Single	0	FT
Christopher	HON	24	13	2006	11	BA	DACA	Parents	No	In relationship	0	FT
Elena	MEX	28	15	2004	13	BA / enrolled in MA	DACA	Mother & Stepfather	No	Single	0	FT
Mia	MEX	26	15	2006	11	Close to BA	DACA	Parents	No	Divorced	2	FT
Pepe	MEX	32	15	2000	17	MA / enrolled in 2nd MA	DACA	Aunt and Uncle	No	Single	0	FT
Fabian	MEX	27	15	2005	12	Enrolled in MA	DACA	Parents	Yes	In relationship	0	FT
Liliana	GUA	21	16	2012	5	Associates/ transferring	Undocumented	Parents	No	Single	0	UP
John Smith	SAL	25	13	2005	12	Close to Associates	DACA	Mother	Yes	Single	0	UP
Roberto	SAL	20	15	2013	5	Associates/ transferring	Undocumented	Parents	No	In relationship	0	UP
LEAVERS												
Patricia	MEX	30	15	2002	15	For-profit college certificate	Undocumented	Mother	No	Cohabitating	4	FT
Veronica	MEX	27	14	2004	13	2 semesters, 1 class each	DACA	Mother & Stepfather	No	Cohabitating	2	FT
Pablo	MEX	25	13	2005	12	1 semester, also CDL program	DACA	Mother	Yes	In relationship	0	FT
Benjamin	MEX	31	15	2001	16	2 semesters	Undocumented	Grandparents	Yes	In relationship	0	FT
Daniela	MEX	21	13	2009	8	1 semester, 1 class	Undocumented	Mother	Yes	Single	0	FT
Cecilia	MEX	33	15	1998	18	2 years (various classes left for Associates)	DACA	Parents	Yes	Divorced	0	FT
Edgar	MEX	29	15	2003	14	1 semester	DACA	Parents	Yes	Single	0	FT
Yefry	HON	22	15	2010	7	2 semesters/ESL (non-credit)	Visa (SIJ)	Older sister	No	In relationship	0	FT
Pedro	MEX	26	14	2005	12	High School	DACA	Mother	Yes	Separated	1	FT
Marvin	HON	26	13	2004	13	High School Completion Program	Undocumented	Mother	Yes	Cohabitating	1	FT
Mercedes	MEX	28	14	2003	14	GED	DACA	Older sister	No	Married	1	FT

Endnotes

[1] Entonces ahora te lo platico. Antes no podía platicarlo porque era muy traumático.

[2] Miraba a mi papa. Me dijo que se iba a venir. Y, a mis 15 años, pues ya no pensaba en mí. Pensaba en mis papas, y pensaba en mis hermanas. Que tiene que llegar el día en que alguien tiene que tomar las riendas a aportar, aportar a la familia.

[3] Quería mucho a mi familia, y quería mucho a mi mamá, quería ayudarla. Le dije, "No, pues voy a trabajar, tengo que ayudar, si por eso salí de la casa". Y le dije a ella, llegué y le dije a ella, "¿Sabe qué?, me están buscando y me dicen esto y esto. Que si no le entro pues que a juro tengo que entrar, y que me van a buscar"… le digo, "No, ellos saben que soy de acá". Tarde o temprano, pues a esa edad es muy difícil. Y le dije, "No, pues mejor me voy a trabajar a otro lado".

[4] Fernanda: Pero yo ya estaba como aburrida de estar en la casa y estar viéndolos siempre pelear… Fue como una salida, como decir, "Aquí sí voy a ir a los bailes, voy a salir".
Daysi: ¿Ibas a los bailes, salías?
Fernanda: Solamente fui como dos veces. De ahí ya no.
Daysi: ¿Fue la salida que querías?
Fernanda: No, fue la más fácil. La que encontré y dije, "Bueno, pues vámonos de aquí".

[5] Si entro a estudiar

[6] ¿Quién me va a mantener?

[7] Daysi: ¿En algún momento quisiste entrar a high school?
Rafael: Sí, siempre.
Daysi: ¿Y qué pasó? Cuéntame por qué no sucedió.
Rafael: No sucedió porque, pues yo pienso que también falta del conocimiento de mis hermanos. De que ellos tampoco tuvieron la educación como yo. Si yo tuviese poca educación, ellos no tuvieran la verdad absolutamente nada. Falta de conocimiento, falta de--, económicamente, porque ellos tampoco pudieron hacerse cargo de mí. Yo nada más no pensaba en mí, yo ya tenía una familia en México que ayudar, que eran mi papá y mi mamá…. Entonces pasan dos o tres años, a veces no hay quien le recuerde a uno que tiene que seguir sus metas en la vida. Y vamos a lo que vamos, ahí es donde a veces la gente se pierde. Porque no hay quien te guíe, no hay quien te recuerde que tienes que echarle ganas.

[8] Ganar dólares

[9] Mi tío siempre me dijo, “hijo no trabajes”. Te voy a meter a la escuela. Vas hacer como un hijo más aquí en la familia. Yo me voy a encargar de tus gastos hasta donde puedas llegar a estudiar… Y ya después pues yo me conformo cuando ya seas grande que tú me veas o te

acuerdes de mí. Era lo que él me decía. Pero pues empecé a trabajar, empecé a ver dinero y me deje ir por el dinero, menos me importo el estudio.

[10] La responsabilidad de los niños

[11] Yo tampoco sabía que todavía podía estudiar la high school…entonces yo nunca tuve información como que, "Oh, pues vete a la escuela", "Vete a la escuela un año y ahí van a cuidar a tu hijo". Entonces como que yo dije, "Si yo hubiera sabido, me voy".

[12] Camioneta

[13] A lo mejor ahorita lo estoy contando porque ya se me ha olvidado un poco y se te va el miedo. Pero cuando vienes, sí llegas como traumado. No sé cómo llegas. Que dices ""Híjole, me pude haber muerto y ni quien se dé cuenta."

[14] Rutina

[15] Aburrida

[16] Me decían "No te pongas así. Échale ganas. Piensa todo lo positivo. Piensa que a papá le va a gustar que tengas tu casa propia. Y pues llegas no sé, a lo mejor te llegas a un carro. Que valga la pena los años que vas a estar aquí…O sea, échale mejor ganas y ya cuando te vas para allá te llevas un dinero.

[17] Poco a poco

[18] Pues, esos días, creo que esos días son los que más busca uno a mama más que nada. Yo estaba acostumbrado a mama, a mi hermana. Pues nunca los había dejado. Pero bastante tristes, pues yo me sentía bien solo.

[19] Para que te muevas

[20] Si pues como al momento llega uno no conoce a nadie. Pero empiezas a trabajar, empiezan a conocer más gente y poco a poco se va uno desenvolviendo y termina uno conociendo a fulano, zutano y así…. si llega el tiempo donde pues ya el día de descanso ya no estaba en la casa, ya pasan por uno que, si al mall, o vamos a comer, cosas que pues, poco a poco se van dando.

[21] Hasta que un señor me dijo que tenía 8.000 dólares. Y me dijo, "Tengo 8.000 dólares y no me pagas intereses. No más cuando tú termines de pagarme los 8.000, ahí tú ves cuánto me das". Y ya le dije, "¿En serio? Sí". El señor vivía ahí. Y dice, "¿Sabes qué? Están muy jóvenes. Están luchándose la vida. Trabajan honrado, no se dedican a cosas malas aquí…. Y el señor me daba muchos consejos.

[22] Se quebró por complete

[23] Cuando estaba viviendo con él, pues estaba un señor de respeto que tiene orden en el apartamento, todos lo respetábamos. Y luego cuando él se fue, el muchacho con el que yo estaba no tenía compromiso de nada, y ya comenzó a tomar. El apartamento se hizo un desorden por completo, se echó a perder todo. Ya no era lo mismo… Y ya el otro muchacho comenzó a tomar y comenzó a llevar a más amigos del trabajo a la casa, hacían desorden. Como tomar casi desde del sábado. Pasaban sábado y domingo tomando.

[24] No, yo solo juego futbol

[25] Luego ahí también conocí a unos muchachos que ahorita son casi como parte de mi vida, mis amigos. Y ya de ahí de la iglesia me rentaron un cuarto una familia, y ahora estoy viviendo desde el tiempo que conocí a ellos ya no me he movido más.

[26] Trabajaba y llegaba y me encerraba porque no tenía con nadie a quien salir. A nadie quien conociera. Después fui conociendo personas pero igual trabajaban. Encerrado trabajo y en la casa. Lo más difícil era que yo no sabía leer ni escribir. Entonces fue muy difícil para mí porque estando aquí mucha gente dice, “Okay vamos a ir allá, vamos a tomar esta calle" y uno no saber leer. Es como estar encerrado en un mundo que no sabes leer ni escribir.

[27] Y ahí conocí a esta persona que me ayudó mucho. Conocí personas muy amables ahí que me dijeron "vete a estudiar, te llevamos a una escuela, te inscribimos y vienes a trabajar, te estudias… Y yo le digo "No, pues, que no sé nada." Y dice "para eso es la escuela, es para ir a aprender."

[28] Que si puedes

[29] No importa cuántas veces falles lo que importa es que nunca te rindas."

[30] Yo sabía que no me quería casar que yo quería estudiar.

[31] ¿Cómo lo hago?, ¿no? O sea yo digo, en ese momento estaba bien encerrada. Yo después decía, "Bueno, tal vez si hubiera conocido alguien que me abriera los ojos, o que me orientara bien, a lo mejor yo me hubiera quedado con un hijo." Pero al final las cosas no fueron así.

[32] Si tu esposo no te quiere llevar, tu vete

[33] Hasta que un domingo yo recuerdo que dije, "Bueno, pero si ya puedo llevarme el carro, pues, ¿por qué no lo hago?", ¿no?, porque todavía me daba nervios…. Entonces yo recuerdo que agarre los niños y nos fuimos, y que me voy. Y pues ya que me estaba marcando porque no vio el carro. Entonces yo me acuerdo que fui a Kohls.

[34] El año pasado empecé a ir a la escuela de inglés pero fue porque dije, voy a ir. Porque yo siempre le decía, yo quiero ir y yo quiero ir, y no podía porque no era libre de mis propias decisiones. Y entonces el año pasado le dije, “sabes qué voy a ir a apuntarme a clases de inglés, tengo 10 años y no puede ser posible que no sepa hablar inglés.”

[35] Empiezo a vivir

[36] Golpes

[37] Yo dije, “ésta es la oportunidad, otra vez se me presenta. Volveré a ir porque pues éste un día me va a matar aquí”.

[38] Nunca le puse quejas

[39] Porque no sabía. Era como de casa al trabajo, del trabajo a la casa… Entonces cuando él me decía, "Si tú llamas, te voy a quitar a mi hijo. Yo sé inglés, tú no. Yo sé manejar, tú no. Yo puedo decir que tú eres mexicana". O sea, y como obvio, veía mucho en las noticias de que no podías decir ni de qué y todo. Entonces dije, "No, a mí no me conviene, porque yo necesito estar aquí por él". No, me van a quitar a mi hijo. Y yo no sé ni inglés. Yo no estudié aquí, no nada, y él sí. O sea, él manejaba bien el idioma y había estudiado aquí. Entonces nunca se me cruzó.

[40] Es feo

[41] A veces te están diciendo que, si eres burra, tonta, y tú dices, "Sí"

[42] Laura: Después de todo eso mi niño sale que ya no puede ni hablar, se le fue el habla, está traumado.
Entrevistadora: Porque él veía.
Laura: Sí, veía tantas cosas. Y como era pequeño, pues no hablaba. Se le fue el habla. Y entonces desde ese tiempo el niño ha estado yendo a escuelas especiales. Batallé bastante, y todavía le sigo batallando, porque es un niño muy como agresivo.

[43] No sé por qué lo recuerdo eso. Le dice a mi hermano y a mi tía, "Tú hermana y yo vamos a vivir en el cuarto, vamos a ocupar el cuarto, ustedes van a ocupar la sala." Era solo de una recámara y la sala. De verdad, no sé, hasta el día de hoy solo me pregunto, ¿por qué acepté?... Sí, así fue. Si no lo he vivido yo, no lo creo que haiga sido así.

[44] Tengo algo bloqueado en mi cabeza que no me deja acordarme más

[45] No sé. Creo que hasta apenas estoy empezando a ser yo realmente.

[46] Nos llevaban a clases como para prepararnos cómo ser madres. Todas las jovencitas nos juntábamos embarazadas. Teníamos como actividades, como juegos, nos enseñaban cuáles eran las etapas del embarazo, los primeros días del bebé. Una de las trabajadoras iba a estar en nuestro parto con nosotros, si nosotros quisiéramos. Y sí, el día del parto que llegó, ahí estuvo conmigo apoyándome, echándome porras.

[47] Daysi: ¿Cómo te describirías a ti misma? O sea, ¿quién es Alejandra?
Alejandra: Es la mujer más fuerte que pueda haber en este mundo?
Daysi: Se describe como fuerte, ¿verdad?

Alejandra: Sí, siempre lo he dicho, que yo soy una de las mujeres más fuertes que puede haber en este mundo. Porque en agosto cumplo cuatro años que no necesito tener un hombre a mi lado para poder criar esos seres humanos que estoy criando.

[48] Creo que las escuelas creen que solo porque un estudiante es inmigrante no va poder estudiar bien, que no lo van hacer bien. Como que subestiman al estudiante y yo me sentía así. Entonces, yo dije: “tengo que aprender inglés” porque no me sentía bien en la clase. Yo decía: “No estoy aprendiendo nada y no puede ser”. O sea, a parte sí estaba aprendiendo el inglés, pero esta clase no me está enseñando nada.

[49] El nivel de educación en la high school [in the U.S.] estaba muy mal. Desde que me vine de Mexico yo no me sentí en la escuela hasta el colegio. Ahí ya dije tengo que hacer tarea. Porque toda la escuela, toda la high school yo la sentí como un juego. O sea, de verdad yo decía, "pinches gringos ignorantes, ¿no?", así literal. Porque yo trabajaba tiempo completo, nunca hacía tareas y yo estaba on point.

[50] Muy buenas calificaciones. Porque todo lo que estaban enseñando aquí, ya lo sabíamos de allá. ¿Por qué? No sé. Por eso pienso que a veces tal vez estábamos más avanzadas.

[51] La mayoría de cosas pues ya las había visto en México… Ya casi como de social science, así como de todo eso ya. Bueno ya nomás era como un review para mí.

[52] Ellos [in Mexico] se dan cuenta cuál es tu capacidad y te ponen de acuerdo a tu capacidad, nada más, nada menos… [in the U.S.] No tenía mucha opción. Entonces, me impactó mucho la facilidad con que aquí el estudio se hizo.

[53] No tenía que tomar ninguna de esas clases.

[54] Me dije "al fin, al fin." Ya me sentía bien porque ya entendía todo y escribía, o sea, ya no me sentía mal. Ya había aprendido, y pues, ya me sentía más tranquilo, porque empecé a tomar de honores y después las de AP. O sea, que ahora sí me siento donde debería de estar.

[55] En México la escuela era muy sana. No sabía yo lo que era drogas, no sabía yo lo que era nada malo…. Respetábamos a los maestros porque así veníamos acostumbrados. Y veíamos que aquí se les ponían, se paraban y casi los querían golpear. Nos asustábamos porque, "¿Cómo se le ocurre golpear a un maestro?" Era sagrado.

[56] La costumbre, al menos de allá en El Salvador, incluso en las escuelas públicas, tienen su criterio de poner uniformes. Y como uno tiene que andar bien vestido y arreglado. Y cuando fue mi primer día a la escuela, uno se sorprende de las personas que ve ahí, que muchachos con mohawk y todo eso. Y entonces fue algo muy diferente…. Había muchos problemas, luego los muchachos eran muy rebeldes. No era una escuela mala. Pero los muchachos ahí, por el hecho de que sus papas tienen dinero, no les importa mucho, y se meten en problemas.

[57] Ellos se involucran con lo que te ha pasado a ti, por ejemplo, que te empiecen a preguntar de tu familia. Que te vean un poco tímido y te pregunten qué está pasando. Para mí eso es importante, porque no había eso en mi familia…. En México, obviamente, tus padres tienen una educación muy diferente, muy cerrada. Y para mí es muy triste eso. Ahora lo veo que es triste que haya esa falta de educación y un poco de, ¿Cómo se le dice la palabra? Ignorancia, un poco de ignorancia. No solamente por la falta de educación, sino por la educación de alguna creencia [religiosa] que tú tienes…. Entonces, sí, mis maestros me veían un poco encerrada en mí misma y siempre trataron de abrirme un poco más. De que viera más allá de mis límites o los límites que los demás me ponían.

[58] Y un día estábamos en la clase, era mi senior year… y luego él [Daniela's teacher] empezó a hablar y estaba diciendo cosas de una muchacha… Terminó de decir y luego dijo que yo. Y yo me quedé, "¿Por qué está diciendo?". Me sentía rara porque estaba hablando de mí enfrente de mí. Como dándoles un ejemplo a los demás de que sí se puede aprender. Aunque no sabía inglés, pero sí le echaba todas las ganas.

[59] Entonces, por un año completo, que fue creo que mi sophomore year, yo iba a las clases, pero casi no hablaba. Y los maestros se daban cuenta que mi segundo idioma era el inglés. Pero les gustaba mucho, creo, mi forma de estudiar, que era aplicada. Entonces, llamaba la atención eso. Y me ayudaron. Me ayudaban los maestros… y tenía personas que me ayudaban para que yo pudiera terminar las tareas bien y no saliera mal en la escuela, porque veían mi entusiasmo.

[60] Si, la verdad si, la mayoría de los profesores muy atentos, muy dispuestos a ayudar. Si sentí que podía contar con ellos. Por ejemplo si tenia dificultad para algo, "tengo problemas con esto o necesito que me ayuden en esto", si estaban muy atentos, muy bueno, todos los profesores.

[61] Yo los veía, cómo hablaban, su actitud y eso y yo dije, "Son nacidos de aquí", y todos decían, "Soy Mexicano." Pero muchos se confunden ahí, ¿Por qué? Porque dices, "Soy Mexicano". Okay, pero no eres totalmente Mexicano. Eres de padre Mexicano. Eres tú nacido aquí y tus padres son Mexicanos, ¿si me entiendes? Entonces ellos se refieren que, "Soy Mexicano", pero en la sangre no son Mexicanos, son Mexicanos-Americanos.

[62] Tenía una que otras amigas… pero no tantas amigas. Porque ellas hablaban más inglés, y ellas tenían una vida aquí muy diferente a vivir en México.

[63] En realidad, yo cuando llegué aquí, yo pensé que iba a ser un poquito menos difícil porque aquí tenemos primos que fueron nacidos aquí. Pero, no sé, yo creo que, como ellos no tienen la misma cultura que nosotros, hay ese apartamiento. De que, "Tú eres menos, yo soy más porque nací aquí". Entonces, yo esperaba recibir un poco de apoyo de mis primos, primas cercanas, que me ayudaran al idioma, que me empezaran a introducir a la cultura de lo que es Estados Unidos pero eso nunca pasó. Eso fue un poco más difícil, tuve que hacerlo yo sola.

[64] En la escuela no tenía muchos amigos, pero sí tenía amigos en la iglesia… Fui parte de National Honor Society, pero también no me sentía muy cómodo porque no más habíamos dos hispanos

más. De 50 nada más éramos tres hispanos y yo dije "Okay." Y pues, como que también no eran muy amigables, eran como, no sé, se creían como muy muy.

[65] Mentalidad más pura

[66] La música en inglés, más de modas. Uno o dos

[67] En gangas

[68] Aunque vinieran de la ciudad, aunque vinieran de provincia, teníamos una mentalidad más-- Una claridad más, que no vinimos aquí a perder nuestro tiempo o a hacer -disculpa mis palabra- pendejadas ¿no? O sea, nos costó trabajo venir aquí y vamos a hacer las cosas bien. So, no te metas en problemas, y nosotros nos ayudábamos, "Ese vende drogas, no te metas con él", así.

[69] En ese momento, llegó un grupito. Éramos como algunos 20 mexicanos. Entonces lograron hacer la clase bilingüe. Entonces, ya empezamos a hacer amistad y los cuatro años, los 20 crecimos ahí…. Entonces sí, todos nos tratábamos de apoyar porque en su momento sentimos lo mismo. Tenemos las clases juntos y teníamos un grupito.

[70] Prom Hispano

[71] Sí me ofrecían cierta ayuda financiera y todo, pero casi como la mitad, digamos, de $60.000, me habrían ayudado como con 30…. Pues sí, apliqué a varias de las universidades, digamos, prestigiosas. Sí me aceptaban y todo pero yo dije, "Financieramente no puedo".

[72] Horas y horas

[73] Enforcar en la escuela

[74] Arma

[75] Porque mi mama, ella me iba a ayudar a regresar a la escuela. Nomás me digo que me buscara un part-time y que la ayudara nomás con 200 dólares o 300. Y pues que fuera yo a la escuela.

[76] No sé, me deprimí yo. Me sentía yo solo. Bueno, me quedé solo y tenía yo que trabajar. El apartamento, se había quedado todo a mi nombre. Y pues con el que estaba mi mamá nunca pagaba la luz. Nada más daba como 50 dólares y se iba acumulando lo demás. Pero daba 50 como digamos en cuatro meses, cinco meses, daba 50, 100 dólares. Los cargos y todo eso se acumularon casi $900. No, ahora sí que se me juntó todo. Si estaba yo como muy presionado.

[77] Como un inmigrante no te ayudan

[78] Mis papás me ayudaron. Como un año básicamente los gastos de la escuela fueron por parte de mis papás. Al segundo año ya me dijeron que no podían ayudarme con todo, que yo tenía

que poner por mi parte. Entonces fue ahí cuando yo empecé a trabajar full time, y ya pagaba parte de mi escuela.

[79] Mi mamá estaba allá en la frontera. No teníamos dinero para la comida. Y mi papá salió con esto [cheated on her mother]. Y me dio mucho coraje, porque yo vi que no estaba atendiéndonos como mi mamá. Y que yo me estaba haciendo más cargo de mi hermana que él. Y que no era mi obligación…. Me impactó mucho, sinceramente, en muchos aspectos. En la escuela, porque era buena estudiante, siento que siempre he sido buena estudiante, pero no me importó. Mis valores, todo, como que ahí se fue, por un caño. Sí fui una persona, una persona que no quiero volver hacer. Porque pues me revelé, ante todo con ellos… Entonces, ahí fue cuando entré en la loquera, por así decirlo. Trabajaba mucho, estudiaba poco y también paseaba mucho.

[80] Cuando era mi junior, pues sí nos decían, "Oh, ¿qué van a estudiar?", o sea nos decían muchas cosas. Ya cuando fue el senior nos llevaban a visitar colegios, fui a diferentes. Pero pues en todos casi necesitabas una beca o algo así…. Ella [school counselor] se dedicaba a buscar becas y todo eso. Ella trató de ayudarme a buscar una beca, pero en verdad pues no encontró una que fuera para mí, más que nada, que me ayudara a cubrir lo que yo necesitaba…. Pues ella sí trató de ayudarme, pero no tenía otra opción más que trabajar y yo agarrarlo de mi propia manera.

[81] Entraba a las 4:00 PM, salía de la escuela como 3:30 PM, a las 4:00 PM empezaba a trabajar, salía a las 12:00 AM y ya me iba a bañar, me iba a dormir. Pero nunca fue un impedimento para que tuviera buenos grados. Pasé mis tareas, o sea, trataba siempre de hacer en mi lonche, porque mis grados no los quería bajar.

[82] No he podido ir a la escuela, porque se me hace muy caro. Tomé una clase y pagué $700…. So, aparte los libros. O sea, me gasté casi 800 y algo, porque los libros sí estaban caritos. So, por una clase, un semestre, y necesito muchas más clases. So, sí se me hacía un poco difícil. Solamente hice esa clase y ya.

[83] Se acordó

[84] Mercedes: Y yo creo que se les pasó, porque nunca llamaron a la casa para preguntar por mí.
Daysi: Nunca.
Mercedes: Nadie dijo nada. Yo creo que era mi destino. A lo mejor si me hubieran buscado, hubiera regresado…. Yo creo que se les olvidó…. Yo creo que tocó suerte a mis hermanas, y a mí, la bala.

[85] Ninguno pudo hacer una carrera. Ninguno pudo hacer un sueño.

[86] Realmente yo no vine, como mis planes no eran para, "Oh, quiero un futuro mejor o algo para mí personalmente." Yo vine por trabajo y por sacar adelante a mi familia. Y creo que eso

es lo que tal vez no me identifico con ellos [Dreamers].

[87] Yo creo que desde niña yo me enfoqué en eso [a college education]. Yo me enfoqué porque yo veía alrededor de mí la pobreza más que nada, la falta de educación. Vi a mis tías que ellas se hicieron maestras y yo quería -en ese momento de niña- yo quería ser como ellas…. "Así como ellas quiero ser", "quiero tener una educación". Me ilusionaba mucho. Siempre me emocionaba ver a personas que tuvieran educación… Me ilusionaba yo verme de esa manera.

[88] No podía agarrar beca

[89] Empecé a ver las barreras para trabajar correctamente

[90] No tenía papeles

[91] Chueco

[92] Me acuerdo que me bajó a su oficina y me dijo, "Before we start looking into colleges, do you have a social?" Y le dije, "No". Me dijo, "then there is no point to look into colleges, because you won't be able to go. You'll be a great college student but unfortunately you never going be able to go. Y ya me salí de ahí y dije, No sé, como que no me desmoralicé mucho…. Como que yo sí sentí feo, pero yo dije, “there has to be a way”. Like deep inside, I was like, “there has to be a way.”

[93] Jamás volver a trabajar en un restaurante

[94] Voy a trabajar en una fábrica

[95] Creo que el trabajo en un restaurante es muy digno, pero yo quería hacer algo diferente y algo que influyera al mundo.

[96] Hacer algo extra a lo ordinario

[97] Dirigido por esperanzas

[98] Dirigido por temores

[99] O pago el DACA, o pago la renta

[100] Si hubiera estado allá, hubiera sido alguien. Fácil yo hubiera tenido una carrera, ya hubiera podido hacer mis cosas…. Yo hubiera podido seguir estudiando allá. Y tengo amigos que tenía allá desde el kínder, que los he visto aquí. Y yo me siento mal porque ellos pueden ir y venir. Y yo aquí estoy como estancada, como que no logré hacer mis sueños…. Entonces, ver a mis amigos que sí lograron sus sueños en México es triste porque mis amigos, todos los que nos graduamos aquí, ninguno pudo hacer una carrera.

[101] Estuviera estudiando, no solamente trabajando

[102] No hay apoyo

[103] A lo mejor hubiera estudiado algo

[104] Se lo juro que hay días que no duermo. Ahorita me pongo como nerviosa. Estoy asustada

[105] Me encerré yo en un mundo que no debería

[106] Que esto que estoy viviendo no es lo que yo deseaba. Nunca lo soné. Nunca dese vivir lo que eh vivido

[107] Cuando empecé al colegio, iba a las clases dormido, tenía que trabajar, tenía que estudiar, era feo.... Jamás en mi vida había sentido la palabra estrés…. Me puse a pensar, "Puedo seguir así por cinco o seis años, me puede causar problemas de salud, no sé, no lo quiero averiguar", "O puedo buscar la manera de trabajar y hacer buen dinero.

[108] Edgar: Si tenía la ilusión, lo traté, créeme que no quiero regresar.
Daysi: Tú ya no regresarías aunque digamos si mañana es gratis la universidad.
Edgar: Ni aun así… Tú has mirado en Facebook, YouTube, lo que sea, hay gente que no terminó ni siquiera la high school y es millonaria… Pero hay muchas cosas que se pueden hacer. No tienes que tener una educación para tener tu empresa.

[109] Yo nunca pensé

[110] Ganar dólares

[111] Agricultura

[112] Desde esa cierta edad yo ya como que empezaba a enfocarme un poco en ver a el futuro. Más que nada, miraba a los jóvenes un poco más grandes que yo, que nunca habían salido o que nunca lucharon por un sueño. Pues siempre los miré que pasaban los años y seguían en el mismo lugar. Y dije yo no quiero esa vida para mí. A lo mejor no va hacer fácil pero yo quiero algo diferente para mí.

[113] Mentalidad

[114] Venir a hacer dinero

[115] Queria ayudar a ellos

[116] Sacar a mi familia adelante

[117] Porque yo siempre tuve el sueño de tener algo mejor en la vida y salir adelante. Pero yo estando allá, yo veía que no había forma de salir, de superarme. Especialmente, ayudarles a mis

padres.

[118] Pagar la renta y buscar trabajo

[119] Querían dar trabajo en ningún lado

[120] Chiquito

[121] Yo iba a buscar trabajo, no me daban trabajo porque ellos me decían que tenía que ir a la escuela, pero yo traía necesidades.

[122] Me decían, "Si es para ti, no te la damos, porque tú estás niño y aquí necesitamos hombre". Y te decepciona.

[123] Agarrar el peor trabajo

[124] Aguantarse de maltratos

[125] Es una de las cosas más difíciles que he pasado, porque toda mi juventud, me la pasé casi fuera de mis papás, después de los 15 años.

[126] Mucho coraje

[127] Union de familia

[128] Esos momentos

[129] Lo que iba a hacer

[130] Vivir con ese temor de que en cualquier ratito a uno lo cachan o lo departan

[131] Más o menos cómo era acá la vida

[132] Me siento muy contento porque les estoy ayudando…. Que no les falta nada y que tampoco a mí me falta nada. Aunque esté difícil ¿verdad? pero están bien.

[133] Demasiado duro

[134] Futuro sin esperanza

[135] Cambiado mi vida un 200%

[136] Me siento bien… Mi mamá ya no tiene que estar lavando, mi mamá ya no tiene que estar buscando algo para sobrevivir, ya no se preocupa por nada de eso. Eso creo que para mí me siento bien.

[137] Seguían en el mismo lugar

[138] Económicamente pues estaba bien cuando yo regresé. A mis años, a mi edad, yo era al lado de los muchachos o jóvenes de mis años, pues era algo bien diferente. Andaba un poco más preparado económicamente y en los pensamientos también. Pues prácticamente fui como a vacacionar parte de todo un año. Sí, y fue cuando conocí a mi esposa.

[139] No imagine hacer

[140] Eso lo va uno aprendiendo más que nada cuando tiene la familia. Cuando estaba solo me daba igual, ahora ya no…. Y ahí es donde empezándose empieza uno a dar cuenta de la falta que hace estar legalmente en este país.

[141] Y estoy bien consciente

[142] Hijos no van a tener la calidad de vida

[143] Sí me preocupa, ya ahorita un poco, le voy a decir por qué. Porque ya tengo un hijo. A lo mejor, si estuviera soltero hasta yo dijera, "No, ¿saben qué?, pues yo me voy solo. No me tienen que mandar"… Ahorita si me preocupo un poco porque digo, "Bueno, ¿y qué va a pasar con mi hijo?"

[144] Corta edad

[145] Hambre

[146] Salir adelante

[147] La ilusión de estudiar

[148] No te puedes desarrollar en tu vida aquí porque no puedes crecer como persona. No puedes crecer en los trabajos…. Como que estás bloqueado porque no es como cualquier persona que puedes perder el miedo. O sea, que dices, “Okay, voy a hacerlo. Y si esta vez no lo logré, pues lo vuelvo a intentar 10 veces más. Y sé que alguna vez va a venir”. Entonces, yo la oportunidad no la tengo. O sea, así sean 10, no puedo…. No pues se siente muy mal. Porque se siente uno a veces frustrado. De que no puedes caminar como persona, como humano.

[149] las personas que en verdad no valoran lo que tienen, son los que siempre tienen todo

[150] Me decían que dejara de trabajar, que nomás íbamos a trabajar por un rato y después nos íbamos a dedicar a las calles. Dice, "Vas a aprender muchas cosas y vas a tener a tener mejor vida". Te dicen unas tres o cinco veces. Ya después te buscan entre más y llegan y dicen, "No, ¿sabes qué?, tienes que entrarle porque tienes que entrarle."

[151] Malos pasos

[152] Esto si va a ser vida

[153] Ese sueño ya se hizo realidad…. Si. Porque ya le hice casa, ya le di dinero para el negocio. Ya ella se la pasa bien fácil. Entonces ella me dice a veces "¿qué sería si no hubieras pensado irte, no te hubieras decidido irte? Te hubieras echado a perder en las pandillas, y acá simplemente no se si estuvieras vivo o muerto".

[154] Estados Unidos porque me ha dado todo, incluso me ha sacado Estados Unidos adelante, tal vez me ha librado de todo lo que hoy en día yo fuera, por eso es que Estados Unidos para mi significa mucho, y si quisiera quedarme en Estados Unidos.

[155] Pues ha sido difícil. No ha sido fácil porque, pues porque uno no tiene papeles. Y donde quiere que uno vaya si le dan trabajo, pero no tardan mucho tiempo y ya se dan cuenta y le dicen no pues no puedes trabajar.

[156] Dos opciones nomas

[157] Entras o te mueres

[158] Ya estaba en sexto grado, fue mi graduación, hicimos un minuto de silencio por todos los compañeros que ya habíamos perdido. Entonces estábamos en esta batalla, teníamos 12 años, y ya estaban matando a mis compañeros por la violencia…. Y muchos decidían tomar venganza por su cuenta. Entonces, yo a pesar de todo lo que estaba pasando, yo dije, "No". Yo soy una persona que me gusta mucho la escuela. Entonces decidí enfocar todas mis fuerzas en la escuela. Y yo decía, "Tiene que haber alguna manera de que se haga justicia sin meter las manos". Porque ellos se metían y empezaba el ciclo otra vez, de venganza, de violencia y no había ningún paro. Entonces yo dije, "Yo tengo que hacer el paro, si no la cadena va a continuar". Entonces yo desde pequeña tenía esta mentalidad de, "No, yo me voy a enfocar en la escuela, voy a estudiar, voy a hacer alguien que va a hacer algún cambio". Mi educación la tomé como un arma para mí; se convirtió en un arma.

[159] Lo sabía hasta cierto punto. Sabía que iba a ser difícil. Pero luego cuando yo entré y me esposaron, todo se me vino abajo…. Para mí era la mejor decisión que había tomado en mi vida. Ellos me hicieron ver como la peor decisión que alguien puede tomar… Porque cuando yo llegué, me empezaron a gritar, a tratar mal.

[160] Si no pudiera regresar, no me importaría, la verdad. Tengo familiares allá, pero siento que lo que viví allá y eso, no es mucho lo que se puede hacer. Acá de alguna manera estoy en la batalla, estoy peleando, pero puedo hacer algo. Allá fácilmente me pueden quitar la vida por hacer algo así.

[161] Yo soy una persona que me gusta hablar y decir quién soy, porque ya no quiero ocultarme. Me oculté en Guatemala siendo mi propio país, y yo venirme acá y venirme a ocultar, ya no quiero hacer eso.

[162] Mi hermano ya me dijo, "No, ya estás aquí, ¿para qué te vas a ir?" "Hay mucha gente que desea estar aquí, y tú ya tienes la oportunidad." Y yo, "No, pues yo me quiero regresar", porque yo iba a seguir estudiando allá… Y no quisieron.

[163] Yo era muy engaviada con muchachas ya adultas. Me metían alcohol, a veces hasta droga, y ella una vez me vio…. Yo tenía un novio, y me dijo que ese muchacho no iba a ser bueno para mí, porque él era muy celoso, y ella miraba. Una vez en el portón él me pegó un empujón. Entonces ella vio eso y me dijo, "Yo prefiero que estés allá con tus hermanos a que estés aquí, que ese hombre te vaya a pegar o te vaya a matar aquí".

[164] No sé nada

[165] Mi sueño es tener un salón de belleza en mi país. Sí, tener un salón de belleza allá. Irme a vivir tranquila allá… Sí, me gustaría irme… Porque si sigo ilegal, lo mismo. Mejor estar en mi país que yo sé que no va a pasar nada. Voy a estar tranquila allá.

[166] Libertad