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ALWAYS IN THE BACK OF YOUR MIND: EXPERIENCES OF LATINA/O U.S. CITIZENS
FROM MIXED-IMMIGRATION STATUS HOUSEHOLDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By

Alicia Dominguez

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ALWAYS IN THE BACK OF YOUR MIND: EXPERIENCES OF LATINA/O U.S. CITIZENS
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University of Nebraska, 2014

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This qualitative research explores the experiences of students who are United States citizens, first-generation students, and members of mixed-status households. The aim of the research is to understand the complex experiences of navigating higher education as a student from a mixed-status household. Through a semi-structured interview protocol interviews were conducted with six Latina/o identifying students who were first-generation students and members of mixed-status households. All participants were enrolled at a Midwestern, predominantly white institution (PWI). Through LatCrit (Bernal, 2002) and Counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2002) these students were given the space and opportunity to tell their stories and experiences as U.S. citizens who are first-generation college students and members of mixed-status households. This research provides insights into the experiences of students from mixed-status households and brings awareness to the complex issues of immigration, immigration status, and immigration reform.

Dedication

I dedicate this research to the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the shadows of the United States. To my mother who has never stopped praying for me, and to God who has never stopped listening. To my father who came to this country as an undocumented immigrant and those in my family who are still undocumented, I have learned fortitude, work ethic, and perseverance from all of you. My privilege as a United States citizen has been purchased by your sacrifice and I remain forever grateful and will continue to honor such a sacrifice with my work for compassionate and Comprehensive Immigration Reform. I love you, and I stand with you. For all the United States citizens who are related, touched, and connected to the 11 million, stay strong! *Somos gente que nunca se raje! We are people who never give up!*

In memoriam of the lives of mixed-immigration status households, the mothers, fathers, children and partners, which are shattered with every passing day Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deports 1100 undocumented immigrants. Lastly, to the rich history of Mexican corridos that have validated my student experience as a Latina in higher education. As Jose Alfredo Jimenez wrote, "*Despues me dijo un arriero, que no hay que llegar primero, pero hay que saber llegar.*" In English, "*A mule herder told me, you don't have to get there first, you just have to know how to get there.*" I may not have arrived first or fit the majoritarian definition of success, but I know how to get to where I am going and my desire is to assist others, like myself, get there as well.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1—Introduction	1
Purpose Statement.....	2
Significance of Study	3
Research Questions.....	4
Research Design.....	4
Definition of Terms.....	5
Delimitations.....	5
Limitations	5
Conclusions.....	6
Chapter 2—Literature Review	8
Introduction.....	8
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.....	9
Mixed-Status Literature	11
Theoretical Framework.....	17
Intersectionality in Mixed-Status Households	21
Chapter 3—Methods.....	22
Introduction.....	22
Study Rationale.....	23
Research Questions.....	24
Methodology Rationale.....	24
Epistemological and Theoretical Perspective	24
Participants.....	28

Institutional Review Board Approval	29
Research Site.....	29
Data Collection	31
Data Analysis	31
Conclusion	32
Chapter 4—Findings.....	32
Introduction.....	32
Introduction to Participants.....	33
Jennifer.....	35
Vivian	37
Denise	38
Frank	39
Samuel.....	40
Lucy	41
Research Themes: Four Major Themes	42
Theme I: Immigration Status Complexities.....	43
Stressors	43
Navigating Financial Aid.....	47
Theme II: Immigration Raids, Deportations, and Removals	49
Theme III: Importance of Education and Academic Motivation.....	55
Theme IV: Immigration Reform.....	57
Conclusion	60

Chapter 5—Discussion	62
Introduction.....	62
Summary of Findings.....	63
Summary of Themes and Links to Literature	66
Fear and Anxiety.....	66
College Persistence	69
Implications of Current Study for Future Practice.....	71
Recommendations for Future Research	72
Final Thoughts	75
References.....	76
Appendices.....	82

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Informed Consent.....	83
Appendix B	Recruitment Emails.....	87
Appendix C	Interview Protocol.....	90
Appendix D	IRB Approval Letter	93

Chapter 1

“Talvez me dijo un arriero, que no hay que llegar primero, pero hay que saber llegar”- Jose Alfredo Jimenez

“Once a mule driver told me, you do not have to get there first, you just need to know how to get there”- Jose Alfredo Jimenez

Introduction

Immigration and immigrants, taken in the wake of the political climate of the United States today, is an issue of contention and debate on both sides of the aisle in Washington D.C. This debate has shaped the nation. These hot topics and keywords have ignited a debate and for approximately 11 million people it is hoped comprehensive reform will bring them out of the shadows and into the light. However, the most recent chance of immigration reform has stalled in Congress. While legislative relief is not anticipated in the near future the enforcement based immigration raids, deportations, and removals of individuals continue (Androff, Ayon, Becerra, Gurrola, Salas, Krysik, Gerdes, & Segal, 2011). The many faces of these 11 million undocumented resonate with most as Latino. While they are not all Latino a majority of them do identify as Latino or are from Latin America countries. It is estimated that 31% of the foreign-born population is comes from Mexico (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). What’s more is that it is not just the undocumented themselves who must face stress and anxiety when it comes to their immigration status but also those who are U.S. citizen born members of families where there are undocumented non-citizens living in the household.

The increasing number of Latina/o students in institutions of higher education has forced administration, faculty, and staff to become more aware of the importance of the diversity that these students represent. However, what are institutions of higher education

doing about students who identify as Latina/o, are first-generation students and are members of a mixed-status household? According to a Fact Book (2013) of the Midwest institution where the research took place the fall enrollment of Latino students at a similar institution was 742. This was a 4.1% increase from the year before. In addition, Latinos are the fastest-growing immigrant group in the Midwest today (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

The increase in Latino enrollment within the institution of higher education is merely a reflection of the changing demographic of the United States itself. This increase warrants the further attention to how immigration and immigration status impact the experiences of U.S., born citizens who are in institutions of higher education and are members of families that include undocumented non-citizens. This population is understudied and with the current political climate surrounding immigration and immigration status further insight is needed to equitably serve the students who are affected by these processes and identities.

Purpose Statement

This research study seeks to understand the experiences of United States citizens who are members of mixed status households. For the purposes of the research the term mixed-status household is based on Fix and Zimmermann's (1999) terminology as cited in Ojeda and Brown (2005). Their language specifies mixed-immigration status families as, "those that include any combination of citizens and non-citizens" (Ojeda & Brown, 2005, pp. 559). There have been many issues relating to immigration reform and the undocumented population living in the United States. Much of the emphasis has been on

the undocumented community itself. While there is much more research that needs to be done in order to address the needs of this underserved population there is one area that has had little or no attention. This area is of mixed-status households and the citizen members of these families.

For the purposes of this research study the group that is specifically studied are Latina/o students. These students are United States citizens born into families with members who are undocumented non-citizens. According to Baum and Flores (2011) “approximately one in eight U.S. residents today is an immigrant, while nearly a quarter of all the nations children are the children of immigrants.” This population has been rarely discussed when it comes to access to higher education and the overall experience which holding the privileged identity of a United States citizen in a mixed-status household has on their college experience. “The children of undocumented citizens make up an estimated 7 percent of elementary and secondary school students in the United States” (Baum & Flores, 2011, pp. 173).

Significance of Study

There has been an increase in research conducted on the experiences of undocumented students and their experience in institutions of higher education (Covarrubias & Lara 2013; Munoz 2013; Yosso 2006). Yet, there is a gap when it comes to students who are from mixed-status households. This research is significant in that it attempts to fill that void. In addition there is research about the experiences of first-generation Latino college students but again the research falls short in exploring the experiences of these students who identify as Latina/o, are first-generation and are citizen

members of households of mixed-status families. This is an important area of further insight and research because this population is growing and the enrollment of Latina/o students in higher education is due to increase (Torres, 2003) and with the increase in this population there should also be an increase in the literature in regards to their needs and experiences.

This study is unique in that it is attempting to listen to these students and provide them a manner in which to voice their experiences. Whatever their experiences may be whether ranging from anxiety and stressors to persistence this population has yet to be heard. This study will enhance the body of literature that currently exists when discussing the experiences of Latino students in higher education and will also bring awareness to the large-scale impact of immigration, immigration reform, and immigration status on mixed-status students in college.

Research Questions

To understand the experiences of Latina/o students who are first-generation and members of mixed-status families the following research question has been developed:

- What is the experience of Latina/o college students who are United States citizen members of mixed-status households?

Research Design

The methodology for this study was a qualitative semi-structured approach and employing LatCrit (Bernal, 2002) and Counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2002). A qualitative research approach was chosen to address the experiences, which may vary in comparison to most other first-generation Latina/o students who are not members of a mixed-status

household. Also, a qualitative approach was selected in order to convey the very complex issue of immigration and immigration status that would not be captured with a quantitative approach. LatCrit (Bernal, 2002) and Counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2002) were chosen to provide the participants with a safe space where they could speak to the serious nature of how immigration, immigration status, and membership in a mixed-immigration status household has framed their college-going experience. Counterstorytelling (2002) assists in providing them with a space to share their experiences that, for the most part, are not shared by the majority of the students at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) and to challenge the dominant discourse to make room for their narrative.

Definition of Terms

- Mixed-status or Mixed-immigration Status families/households- “those that include any combination of citizens and non-citizens” (Ojeda & Brown, 2005, pp. 559)
- Undocumented Non-citizens- Those individuals who are in the United States unauthorized and unaccounted for.
- United States Citizens- Those individuals born in the United States with U.S. citizenship or those who had become citizens through naturalization.

Delimitations

For the purpose of the research I sought out participants who were first-generation Latina/o identifying students who were also United States citizens of mixed-immigration

status households. In order to recruit this population those were the specific criteria agreed upon by my advisor and myself. Additionally, due to the sensitive nature of this research participants were 19 years of age or older. All participants studied at a Midwestern predominantly white institution (PWI) that placed a further delimitation on the research.

Limitations

Time was a limitation in this research study. There was initial planning to complete this research over the course of two academic semesters. However, due to the sensitive nature of immigration and immigration status IRB approval was not given until the beginning of the spring semester. Due to the delay in time the data that was collected and analyzed was not as rich as it may have been had the process been done over the length of two academic semesters. Nonetheless, the data collected is substantive and very informative about the experience of U.S. citizens who are members of mixed-status families and their college-going experiences. Based on the qualitative nature of this research, generalizability was not a goal of this study. Readers should not assume that the findings presented here are representative of all Latino, first-generation college students who are citizen members of mixed status households.

Researcher Positionality

In discussing status and immigration privilege and oppressions comes into play with a need for further exploration. As a United States citizen who grew up in a household of mixed-status knowing I had a privileged identity which shaped the way in

which I navigated my postsecondary experience. By allowing a channel for students, like myself, to discuss their experiences they may bring further awareness to the complexities of immigration, immigration status, and immigration reform that might not have been there if there was only a focus on undocumented individuals in postsecondary institutions.

Conclusion

In Chapter 2, a literature review explores the state of immigration reform within the United States. There is also exploration of the complexity of immigration status for undocumented non-citizen students within higher education. The literature available is very in-depth and more is being published about the struggles and perseverance of undocumented students in higher education. However, there is little literature about the experiences of individuals who are citizens and members of mixed-status households. Chapter 3 provides further insight and detail into how the study was planned out and executed. Chapter 4 includes a description of thematic finding, which came about through analyzing the semi-structured interviews, and there is further information about the experience of the students who are members of mixed-status families. Chapter 5 attempts to tie the thematic findings of chapter 4 to existing literature and provide suggestions for best practices and future directions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The growing number of Latinos in higher education is a reflection of the changing demographics in the United States; Latina/os, “particularly those of Mexican descent, represent the youngest, largest, and fastest-growing Latino population subgroup, making it up to two-thirds of this ever-growing population” (Census, 2010). Colleges and universities also anticipate a significant increase in Latino college student enrollment (Day, 1996 as cited in Torres, 2003). For this reason this paper seeks to bring further awareness and add to the existing literature by seeking out those Latino students who are members of mixed-status households.

For more than a decade immigration reform has been a very contentious issue in the United States. An issue throughout its entire history, recent debate has taken a particular form dependent on recent sociopolitical climate and trends.. In the current political climate the issue has been heated and warrants much debate on either side of the aisle in Congress. The undocumented population living in the United States has been discussed, debated, and dictated to by policy makers, and power holders of society. Within the last ten years legislation has been brought forward at the national level twice in order to provide a legal path to citizenship for the young children of undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as young children (Mayorkas, 2013, para.2). These young people are known as DREAMers. The DREAM Act has failed at the national level but has been enacted at the state level and while it does not include a path to citizenship it allows undocumented students to pay in-state tuition for college

(Covarrubias & Lara, 2014). States that have passed the Dream Act legislation are: Texas, California, Colorado, Utah, New York, Washington, Oklahoma, Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico, Nebraska, New Jersey, and Minnesota (Olivas, 2009). These states have afforded undocumented students with the ability to pay in-state tuition. However, none of the legislation that has been passed includes a path to citizenship or access to federal aid for undocumented students.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

In the summer of 2010 there was an executive order by President Barack Obama to halt the deportation proceedings of DREAM eligible youth in the United States. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy “provides young people who were brought to the United States as children with temporary protection from deportation if they can demonstrate that they meet several criteria” (Mayorkas, 2013, para. 3). Those criteria that must be met are the following:

- You came to the United States before reaching your 16th birthday
- You have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time
- You were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012
- You entered without inspection before June 15, 2012, or your lawful immigration status expired as of June 15, 2012
- You are currently in school, have graduated or obtained your certificate of completion from high school, have obtained your general educational development certification, or you are an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States

- You have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, or three or more misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat
- You were present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making your request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS

The policy does not allow for a permanent solution for those who apply and the White House has been adamant that, “We need a commonsense immigration reform bill that provides a path to earned citizenship – not just for these DREAMers and their family members – but for all of those who seek to get on the right side of the law, pay their taxes and continue contributing to this country” (Mayorkas, 2013, para. 2). With these small steps the outlook is still uncertain for the future of immigration reform. All the attention that has been placed out into the public sphere has been on undocumented DREAMers and DACA eligible youth.

This research seeks to understand a small group caught in between the undocumented and documented within the Latino population. This thesis is seeking to understand the experiences of those within the Latino population who are United States citizens and are members of mixed-status households. That is, those individuals who are United States citizens themselves but have members within their households who are undocumented non-citizens. The exact number is not known of this particular population. The population characteristics of this group seems to fall through the cracks when speaking about the lived experiences of undocumented immigrants within the United States and the Latina/o first-generation students who are entering into institutions of higher education. To better understand the population it is necessary to understand the

intersectionality of Latina/o identity and the impact of being a United States citizen member of a mixed-immigration status household where there are members in the household who do not hold the privileged identity of a United States citizen.

Mixed Status Literature

The literature on this population is limited. This population refers to those Latina/os students who are first-generation students, United States citizens, and members of a household where other members are undocumented non-citizens. There is a gap in the research when it comes to this population and how they navigate the course of their experiences in higher education. What is known is the impact on the well-being and mental health of this population. Capps and Fortuny (2007) “One in five children in the United States live in an immigrant family: 80 percent of these children are born in this country and legally are entitled to the same support as all U.S. citizen children (p.4)”. Further, It is estimated that there are five million children with at least one undocumented parent (Capps et al., 2007). . Should deportation actions continue, these children will either be left to grow up in the U.S. without their parents, or will have to relocate to countries where many have never lived” (Androff, et al., 2011, p.7).

Ojeda and Brown (2005) described for a health journal the correlation and relationship between the absences of health insurance for Latino children. The authors stated that, “Latinos’ access to job-based insurance may be shaped by immigrants’ citizenship status, English proficiency, educational attainment, and financial resources” (Ojeda & Brown, 2005, pp. 556). Citizens in families of mixed-status families and the constant anxiety and fear (Schueths, 2013) citizen members of mixed-status households

feel most will lack the proper insurance to access resources to ensure good mental health.

Further, Ojeda & Brown claimed:

Children account for approximately one-third of the nation's more than 37 million Latinos; the majority (about 85%) of all Latino children in the U.S.

(approximately 11.8 million) were born in the United States. However, since approximately 40% of all U.S. Latinos are foreign born, Latino children's chances of belonging to families that include immigrants are great; this circumstance may increase the likelihood of a child being uninsured or of a child's family encountering barriers to obtaining group coverage. (p.556).

The lack of health insurance complicates the experiences for citizens of mixed-status household's ability to access proper mental health resources, medical health resources as well as other opportunities within a college setting where health insurance is required. To compound the complexity of this and mixed-status families Androff et al (2011) explained that, "Detention in immigration facilities and deportation to Mexico results in significant family disruption" (p. 87). The emotional toll that is left on the United States citizens of mixed-status households is discussed by Pottinger (2005) stating, "the disruption of undocumented families, when parents are separated from their children, results in increased symptoms of mental health problems among children"(p. 486).

The seriousness and sensitivity of mixed-status households is something that must be addressed and, there must be attention on the United States citizen members of these households who are in institutions of higher education.

Shedding light on the complexity of coming from a mixed-status household there are other factors that contribute to the experience of students from these households. The goal of this research is to bring awareness to the experiences of first-generation college students who are also a member of a mixed-status household. If students who are at risk of not being retained by the institution and are encouraged to further their efforts through such activities and are unable to, the institution may never know how to reconcile those issues that this population, faces.

Research may shed light on ways in which institutions are serving and assisting students from mixed-status households and families. Munoz (2013) stated, “despite the political context, one must question how higher education institutions are reproducing anti-immigration tactics within the campus cultures which further marginalize an already vulnerable population” (Munoz, 2013, p. 235). Munoz (2013) wrote about the experiences of undocumented Mexican college students yet it still applies to the current study. In this regard Munoz (2013) relies on,

Yosso’s (2006) critique of Tinto’s (1987) rites of passage offers another perspective on college persistence for Chicana/o students, including culture shock, community building and critical navigation of multiple worlds. Through critical race counterstories, Yosso reflects upon her students’ stories of alienation, isolation, and discrimination as they were introduced to college life. (p. 237).

Solorzano and Yosso (2002) define counterstorytelling as:

Methods of telling stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society). The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. (p. 32).

These stories of alienation for the undocumented population within institutions of higher education lead to more questions surrounding the equitable experiences of Latino students, in particular, those who are from mixed-status households. The added identity of coming from a mixed-status family may complicate the transition into a college setting. Hsu (2008) has stated that the citizen children of mixed-status families may have experienced trauma and fear of the risks associated with their undocumented non-citizen family members statuses. This may lead to added complications and more awareness in regards to immigration and immigration policies in a college setting. Munoz (2013) was able to capture the experiences of the undocumented population of DREAMers and the anti-immigration tactics, which seek to keep them oppressed. And while the citizen members of mixed-status families are not undocumented themselves it would appear that the non-citizen status of family members causes much anxiety and fear for them (Hsu, 2008). Lippard (2011) explained that “today’s racist and nativist targets and goals have become very similar in that they both look to people of color to oppress and exploit to sustain White dominance in America” (p.600). As Latino students are increasing in number it is imperative to not only address the feelings of alienation and isolation they may encounter as first-generation students (Day 1996; Munoz 2013; Torres 2003; Yosso 2006) but to also bring integrity to their identities as members of mixed-status households and give them the ability to speak to the experiences which may not align with the

dominant rhetoric for the majority of first-generation college students in the United States.

Tying this back to the experiences of students from mixed-status households there is an element of validation that comes into play. Saunders and Serna (2004) with their research on the experiences of first-generation Latino students noted that, “In education, students with limited capital benefit from the development of relationships with caring educated adults. Students benefit from the social connections they establish with teachers, counselors, and school officials” (p. 148). In order to understand the unique experiences of students from mixed-status households it is imperative for these students to be able to have those relationships, which provide a benefit to their college experiences.

While there is much research on the educational experiences of the increasing undocumented population known as DREAMers there is still less known about the experiences of citizen members of mixed-status households. Covarrubias and Lara (2014) have been very efficient in looking into the experiences of DREAMers while also noting that immigration and citizenship play a vital role in the successful attainment of a college degree. They noted, “with an increasingly visible Mexican-immigrant population in places outside of the American Southwest, scholars and others have begun to turn their attention to the profile, trends, and impact of this group, as well as the implications of each at the national level” (Covarrubias & Lara, 2014, p. 77). Even more importantly there is more research that needs to be done to understand the diversity of such a large and increasing Latino population. While Covarrubias and Lara (2014) look into the role citizenship plays in college attainment I seek to understand the role that having a

privileged status as a United States citizen from a mixed-status household has on the citizen when they are directly connected to those members within a household who do not and how that may impact their experiences in a college setting.

As has been mentioned there has been insight brought forth through the research of the children of undocumented parents, and Latino first-generation students, however there still remains a gap when looking at Latino first-generation college students from mixed-status households who are citizens. Schueths (2013) explored the lives of mixed-status couples. These couples consist of white citizen women in partnerships with undocumented Latino men. The research “explores how interracial mixed-status couples deal with racist nativism and examines the toll enacted by these challenges” (Schueths, 2013, p.2). This provides further support in regards to the fear and anxiety the citizen members of mixed-status households have for the undocumented non-citizen members in the household (Androff et al 2011, Hsu 2008, and Pottinger 2005). Schueths (2013) stated that, “U.S. citizens were much more cognizant and anxious about legal uncertainties than their partners”(p. 105) and this would seem to align with the previous research on the traumatic impact that children of undocumented parents experience and the fear they feel for their undocumented parents well-being. There is a need to understand how this is related to the educational outcomes for this group and their experiences in a college setting.

With the recent increase in enrollment of Latino students it is critical to understand how to better serve this population. Torres (2003) stated, “the majority (55%) of Latino students attend institutions where they are the minority” (Torres, 2003, p. 533).

Thus, if these students are coming from mixed-status households how are institutions need to deal with the diverse needs not only of Latino first-generation students but those of mixed-status households as well as with this knowledge there is a necessity to seek to understand the diversity of the backgrounds these students bring into institutions of higher education. Understanding this population and the impact being a citizen member of a mixed-status family requires making room for the intersecting identities, which these students bring to the college setting.

Intersectionality in Mixed-Status households

The research on Latino students and first-generation students has assisted student affairs practitioners with the knowledge to more effectively serve this population. However, when membership in mixed-status households is added it appears there is not much known about this population in a post-secondary setting. Jones (1997) while not speaking specifically about the population of Latina/os who are from mixed-status families points out that identities such as race, ethnicity, and gender affect one's lived experience and in this way having a privileged status as a U.S. citizen in a family where that status is not shared impacts the college-going experience. The intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and immigration status for students who are citizen members of mixed-status households is of particular interest to student affairs practitioners because of the complexity and seriousness of immigration in the current political climate and as Androff et al (2011) noted the children of undocumented parents experience extreme trauma and fear at the removal or deportation of undocumented family members. Coupled with the very heated and political climate, which surrounds immigration, the U.S. citizen members

of mixed-status households should be treated with the upmost care, awareness, and consciousness.

Particular appreciation for the experiences of students who identify as Latina/o who are first generation students and are members of a mixed-status family household is needed especially at predominantly white institutions where experiences may impact how they maintain their racial and ethnic identity. Torres (2009) argued, “dealing with racism is a developmental task central to identity development of Latino students”(p. 587). Further, Schueths (2013) delves deeper into the lives of family members who are citizens of mixed-status families and states, “family members who have legal rights become second class citizens” (p. 98). They are guilty by association (Lippard, 2011) and the costs associated with immigration legal services, “often lead to strain and an unanticipated loss of benefits to U.S. citizens, especially those who are low-income” (p. 106).

With the political atmosphere and the continued browning of America it appears that the tensions are running high (Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). However, there is still much to examine when it comes to the impact coming from a mixed-status household has on Latina/o students in a collegiate, academic setting. Van Hook and Balistreri (2006) support Schueths (2013) findings stating, “recent immigration policies targeting undocumented immigrants have created a decline in well-being for immigrant children, many of whom are U.S., citizens.” Further noted is Androff et al (2011) noted “that children of undocumented parents experience economic insecurity, barriers to education, poor health outcomes, arrest and deportation of family members, discrimination, and trauma and harm to the community” (p.78).

In order to bring awareness and better serve this student population it is of the utmost importance to advocate for these students. Many of the students who enter into institutions of higher education and who are first-generation and students of color are already categorized into an at-risk population. This study hopes to shed light and bring understanding to the lived experiences of Latina/o students who are first generation college students, are U.S. citizens, and are members of a mixed-immigration status household. To facilitate a rich and insightful research discussion LatCrit (Bernal, 2002) and counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2002) have been utilized to capture the depth of the experiences of this student population. These perspectives have been used in past research writings (Delgado 1992, Garcia 1995, Stefancic 1998) to challenge the dominant discourse and bring awareness to the experiences of those who are not in the majority of the population.

Theoretical Framework

Due to the nature of this research study Critical Race theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998), LatCrit (Delgado-Bernal, 2002), and counterstorytelling (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) were utilized. Critical Race theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998) has been an “outgrowth from legal studies and used in past academic research to illustrate that racism is part of everyday life in the United States and appears to be both normal and natural to social order” (p. 11). In order to bring awareness to the racial inequities that exist research utilizing a critical race framework relies on storytelling. Counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2006) and LatCrit (Bernal, 2002) frameworks were used in the design and implementation of this study and provided a framework for understanding participants’ experiences.

LatCrit (Bernal, 2002) utilizing Counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2002) informed this study in that it provided a space for students of Latina/o backgrounds and mixed-status households to tell their stories in regards to such identities within a college setting. Their stories are not the general experience of the majority of college students within the United States, and utilizing a counterstorytelling frameworks assisted in giving them equity and integrity. Further the decision to utilize these theoretical frameworks in addition to counterstorytelling assists in demonstrating that “counterstorytelling can also serve as a pedagogical tool that allows one to better understand and appreciate the unique experiences and responses of students of color through deliberate, conscious, and open type of listening” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 116). By utilizing a critical lens this research also sought to move the discussion forward and as Solorzano and Yosso (2002) stated, “push the envelope of the ways in which we talk about race and racism, so that we focus on the intersectionality of subordination” (p. 37). The manner and approach to the literature and research sought to bring awareness to the complexities of students who have the intersecting identities of first-generation students, students of color, and students of mixed-immigration status households to shed light on the intricate ways they navigate the college setting and their experiences they have when doing so.

Conclusion

There is a gap in the research when specifically seeking to understand the impact on U.S. citizen members of mixed-status households. In particular, how this experience affects the college-going experience of the U.S. members of these households. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and data analysis processes that were implemented to

understand the meaning making experiences of the participants in this study. Participants were given the space and time to speak about their experiences through utilization of LatCrit (Bernal, 1989) and Counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2002). The richness of their experiences is demonstrated in chapter 4 through a description of thematic findings. Then, in chapter 5 I discuss how the findings are linked to past research, implications for practice, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The rising increase in Latino student enrollment in higher education beckons institutions to rethink how they serve this student population (Torres, 2009). The Latino population is diverse. This rise is constituted by a majority of Latino students from Mexican heritage. With this in mind incoming Latina/os bring certain characteristics to institutions. Many of the incoming students are first-generation students, the first in their families to attend an institution of higher education. There are also cultural and language characteristics which institutions should attempt to engage students and their families. With the predicted increase of Latino students in institutions of higher education (Torres, 2003) there has also been more focus on the impact immigration has had on the country (Schueths, 2013).

This qualitative research study seeks to understand the experiences of students who are first-generation college students, identify as Latina/o, and are members of a mixed-status family household. These students are the first in their family to go to college and who are members of a mixed-immigration status family. A mixed-status family being one in which there are members that are of mixed-immigration status. For the purposes of the research the participants are United States citizens who have members in their household who are undocumented non-citizens.

While I could have added to the body of research on the experiences of undocumented students in institution of higher education I was more attracted to this area because this group is growing (Covarrubias & Lara, 2014) and the current political

climate is at a stand still when it comes to making progress on comprehensive immigration reform. However, this has not stopped the 1100 deportations that are occurring everyday. These individuals who are detained have families and among them citizen children. According to Kids Count (2007) as cited in Androff et al (2011) “One in five children in the United States lives in an immigrant family: 80 percent of these children are born in this country and legally entitled to the same support as all U.S. citizen children”(p.20). This area, and this population are very close and central to me as the primary investigator. Growing up in a mixed-status household, myself, has played a pivotal role in how I navigated and experienced college and even the concept of access to higher education. I feel this is a population that is much larger than most people know or even estimates. The sharing of their experiences will add yet another dimension to the issue of immigration, immigration status, and immigration reform.

Study Rationale

There is a good deal of research on the stress, anxiety, and fear associated with being undocumented and attempting to access a postsecondary education. However, there is a dearth of research on the experiences of citizen members of mixed-status families. Also, there is little to no research on the impact of living with a privileged identity in a household where that privilege is not shared with the other members. Tying it back to higher education, there remains almost no literature on how this identity impacts the opportunities and activities that Latina/o first-generation students from mixed-status families participate in while attending college. These questions have not been addressed

related to this student population that is only expected to increase at colleges and universities (Torres, 2003).

Research Questions

The interview questions, which have been drafted, are meant to provide insight into the experiences of this student population. The questions are meant to bring more awareness to the impact of immigration, immigration status, and immigration reform. The research question for the purpose of this research was: What are the experiences of students who are U.S., citizens and members of a mixed-immigration status household? And, also, how does their mixed-status family membership affect their experiences in college? These questions guided the design and implementation of this research project.

Methodology Rationale

Constructivist Design and Phenomenology

To capture the experiences of students from mixed-status households a constructivist approach (Creswell, 2014) was utilized. The constructivist approach was chosen because the purpose of this master's thesis was to assist in the understanding and dissemination of the lived experiences of U.S. citizen members of mixed-immigration status households and in how this student population is impacted by such an identity in a college setting. LatCrit (Bernal, 2002) and Counterstorytelling (2002) were also utilized

as frameworks to fully elaborate on areas where this population of Latina/o students would share experiences that would not fit in the dominant discourse of the majoritarian narratives of those students who traditionally attend PWI's. This made the constructivist design ideal because the central goal of such a design is, "to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2013, p.8).

The only way I could think to capture the complexity of the experiences of this population was through a qualitative research methodology using semi-structured interviews to gather data. This approach provided space for participants to go in-depth and provide insight into their experiences. Two interviews were conducted for the research. The first interview addressed the research questions. The second interview built off of certain themes that emerged through the first interview. All interviews were audio recorded and researcher notes were written during both sets of interviews. The first two participants were interviewed in a private conference room. All other interviews with participants were conducted in my office.

The participants in this study were all familiar with me. As an undergraduate student at the institution where this research took place I was highly involved with activities in the area of mentoring incoming Latina/os. I made initial contact with five out of the six participants years prior to the start of this research study. I believe this assisted in recruiting such students and added to the richness in data. I think if I were less familiar with students they would not have been as comfortable with coming forward to share their experiences as members of mixed-status households.

The informed consent (See Appendix A) process was something that my advisor and myself both had to be present for. Due to the sensitive nature of this study IRB

requested that Dr. Rumann be there as participants reviewed the informed consent document. In this way ensuring that students were not being coerced and understood the gravity of this study and their rights as participants. All participants understood their rights and were informed that if they felt uncomfortable at any time they were within their rights to stop. Dr. Rumann only had to be present for the review of the informed consent and once participants had given oral consent he left and the interviews were started with the participant and myself being the only person in the room.

“Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). In choosing this approach I hope to adhere to “newer conceptualizations in both psychology and other disciplines which resist the notion of identity as a developmental and linear process, instead emphasizing the fluid dynamic, and performative nature of identity” (Torres et al, 2009, p. 579). In this way I aimed to bring attention to how having a privileged status in a household where that privileged status is not shared with all members and illustrate how the identity of these students changes from one setting to the other.

Participants

The criterion for this research was that participants must be first-generation college students. They must also be United States citizens who are members of a mixed-status household. I was granted Institutional Review Board approval on January 27, 2014. At that time I sent out recruit emails and there were six students who participated in the study.

These students met the following criteria: United States citizens, first-generation students, identified as Latina/o or Hispanic, and were members of mixed-status households. All participants are first-generation college students. All students are of traditional age range of college students, which constituted an age range of 19-23. The participants all identify as Latino or Hispanic. All students have disclosed that they are U.S., citizen members of mixed-status households and have undocumented non-citizen family members. A mixed-states household for the purpose of the research is defined as “a composition of in a household of those that include any combination of citizens and non-citizens” (Ojeda & Brown, 2005). All participants have disclosed that they are from the Midwest, meaning they have gone to school from pre-kindergarten and graduated from Midwest public education institutions. There are four female participants and two male participants. Additional participant information is not being presented in this master’s thesis due to the sensitive nature of this inquiry and so that participants cannot be identified.

Institutional Review Board Approval

The IRB protocol process was submitted in September 2013. There was communication back and forth throughout the fall 2013 academic semester. My advisor and I were both requested to attend a full board hearing on December 13, 2013. IRB approval was granted on January 27, 2014. Within the IRB protocol there was a minimum expectation of four participants. However, with the initial recruitment emails (See Appendix B) that were sent out the amount of inquiries of participants increased to six. I have not asked but believe this is due to the small population and trust that is visible and my relationships with the participants. I believe the first students who agreed to

participate went and spoke of it to other students, who they knew would meet the criteria and also implied that there was trust established with me,

As the primary researcher I completed the Consortium for Institutional Review Board Training Initiative in Human Subjects Protections (CITI) certification before the start of this research study. Under the supervision of my advisor IRB protocol was submitted in September of 2013 and final IRB approval was granted on January 27, 2014 (See Appendix D). As part of the sensitive subject matter of immigration and immigration status a waiver of consent was requested. This was requested so that participants could not be traced back to the research and confidentiality could be maintained. Participants were also assigned pseudonyms to participants to keep their identities confidential.

Research Site

The research site is a public, doctoral granting, university located in the Midwest. It serves a majority of in-state students, with a smaller contingent of out-of-state students from neighboring states and a growing international population. According to an institutional Fact Book there was a 4.1 percent increase undergraduate in Latina/o enrollment in 2013. Latina/os are the largest minority group at this predominantly white institution (PWI), second only to the international student population. In addition, Latina/os are the fastest growing population in the state where the institution is located.

Data Collection

The data collection for this research study consisted of two semi-structured qualitative interviews. LatCrit (Bernal, 2002) and counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2002) were

used as guides to facilitate the discussion of issues of immigration, immigration status, and Latina/o identity. The questions are meant to bring more awareness to the impact of immigration, immigration status, and immigration reform. They served to provide students a safe place where they could discuss their experiences. In this way diverging from the traditional discussion that surrounds the experiences of first-generations students and students of marginalized populations. LatCrit (Bernal, 2002) and counterstorytelling (Bernal, 2002) were intentionally utilized in order for this population of students to speak to the very sensitive nature of immigration and the intersectionality of being a U.S. citizen member of a household where there are members who are undocumented non-citizens and the anxiety and stress which accompanies such an identity. The following questions were asked during the data collection process for this study through a semi-structured interviewing approach:

- What is the experience of Latina/o students who are United States citizen members of mixed-status households?
- How has being a member of a mixed-status household affected their college-going experience?
- Based upon their experiences what are ways in which student affairs practitioners may serve Latina/o students from mixed-status households?

The semi-structured interview protocol can be found in Appendix C.

The first interview was based off of the questions provided within the research questions. The second interview was semi-structured and based off of themes that were consistent throughout the first interviews amongst all the participants. The main purpose for choosing to collect the data through two interviews was to ask a set of

varying research questions and through the transcription and coding of the first interview organize similar themes all participants discussed. Creswell (2014) noted most researchers who choose to do qualitative semi-structured is to elicit the participants' views' and opinions (p. 190). As Merriam (2009) asserted, this structure of data collection provides the researcher the freedom to adapt to situation at hand, accommodating the "emerging worldview of the respondent" and adding new ideas to the topic (p. 90). With completion of the first interviews common themes that appeared for all participants were: feelings of fear for undocumented non-citizen family members, lack of being understood at a predominantly white institution, a sense of hiding their family background.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for the research relied upon what Maxwell (2013) has stated is the main categorizing strategy for qualitative research of coding (p.107). Relying on LatCrit (Bernal, 2002) and counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2002) also assisted in the coding and emergence of themes all participants noted. This was important in the transcriptions of the first set of interviews in which interviews were compared amongst each other. Through this approach the main themes that emerged were: immigration status complexities, immigration raids and deportations, and importance of education and academic motivators. These themes are explained more in depth in chapter four where direct quotes are taken from the participants to demonstrate the impact being a U.S citizen member of a mixed-status family has on their educational experience in college.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 explores the methodology and guides such as LatCrit (Bernal, 2002) and counterstorytelling (Yosso, 2002) to better interpret the data. Through the utilization of such tools the reader will be better able to interpret the analysis, discussion, and recommendations in chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to try and understand and provide insight into the experiences of Latina/o first-generation students who are also members of mixed-status households. The research questions that guided this study aimed to inform the audience of the intersectionality of the identities of being Latino students at a predominantly white campus, first-generation students, and also members of mixed-status households, which these students must navigate, and at times reconcile. At the forefront of this research was the need to look at a population, which has not received as much attention by researchers and scholars. These students who are first-generation Latina/o students are the first in their families to enter an institution of higher education and are also the first-generation of U.S. born citizens. The purpose of the research was to gain insight into their experiences pursuing a post-secondary education at a large, research institution in the Midwest as first-generation Latina/o's and members of mixed-status households.

This study allowed the students the space to describe their experiences as Latina/o first-generation students at a predominantly white campus and their membership in a mixed-status household. This chapter will describe the qualitative interview process and demonstrate the emergence of themes all participants spoke about.

In order to further understand this population's experiences there were a total of two interviews. The following research question was developed to explore this topic.

- What is the experience of Latina/o students who are United States citizen members of mixed-status households?

The interviews were transcribed and emerging themes were coded and clarified during the second interview, allowing the participant and researcher to go into further depth and ensure accuracy during the second interview. The second interview was semi-structured and allowed the researcher to ask more in-depth questions surrounding the themes that had arisen during the first interview. The themes that emerged illustrated the complexities of the experiences of Latina/o first-generation students from mixed-status households and shed light on the ways in which administrators, faculty, and staff may be better informed when serving this growing population of students.

Introduction of Participants

All participants for this study were contacted via a recruitment email. With the official IRB approval given in January emails were sent out the following week and the entire first round of interviews took place during the first two weeks of February. There were a total of six participants. All but two of the first round of interviews took place in the primary researcher's private office. The other two interviews were held in a private conference room, Since there was extra precaution taken due to the nature of this research and the political climate student's were informed via email that the research sought to understand the experiences of Latina/o students who were first-generation college students and if they were interested to contact me by phone so that I could provide further information and criteria. Ten students contacted me. Of those ten students four did not meet the participant criteria because while they were members of a mixed-status household their undocumented family members were in the process of or had received

adjustment in their immigration status. While future research may look into the exploration of differing statuses within a household this research only sought to understand the experiences of first-generation college students who have family members who are undocumented non-citizens.

A similar characteristic of this population was that all participants identified as Latina/o. They all fell within the traditional age range for college students. The ages the students presented were from 19-22 years of age. All of the participants were what Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) described as “children of immigrants” meaning they were familiar with the immigration process and connected to the immigrant experience of leaving one’s homeland and coming to the United States. All but two participants were from working- class income households, and the two who did not identify as working-class identified as middle-income earning households. Three of the participants had taken English as a Learning Language courses throughout their elementary or secondary education. All participants demonstrated anxiety as soon as the audio recorder was brought out and would say they were nervous. And, all asked for a moment before I started the actual interview to get ready. This moment consisted of them breathing or just saying that being recorded made them nervous. I am still not sure why they were nervous about being recorded and even when I asked the similar sentiment was that it was just, “more real.” I think actually speaking about this in a formal way, formal as in meaning their stories would exist beyond their control or time, was intimidating because as the rest of the data will show this was something that was not to be spoken about or known by people outside of the mixed-status household. Their membership in a

mixed-status household was a hidden identity and I think the audio recorder was in a sense a form of them coming out from the shadows.

All of the participants were from the same region of a mid-western state and when they were not enrolled in school lived with their families in smaller, agriculturally based cities and towns.

Participants

Pseudonyms were selected for each of the participants. The following descriptions are my interpretations and perceptions of the participants based on my interactions and relationships with them. My intention is to provide the reader with an understanding of my relationship with each of the participants to provide context for the thematic findings described following the participant descriptions.

Jennifer. Jennifer is the oldest of three children. Her parents emigrated from Northern Mexico and settled in the Midwest. Her father had found jobs in the agricultural sector and most recently as a mechanic. While Jennifer was born in the United States she spent the first few years of her life in Northern Mexico with her mother and her mother's family. Jennifer is a very active student in college and has been active since starting college. She's stated,

Growing up in a mixed-status household there are lots of things you have to be extra careful of, you know, so you don't draw attention to yourself. But, being in school and being noticed for being good in school and academically... I liked that. I liked that I could be unafraid of drawing attention to myself in that area of my life.

Jennifer described growing up and being the eldest in the family would sometimes make her more responsible. This was reflected in the depth and much longer duration of her second interview, as compared to the length of the first, as well. Although, she had many responsibilities she made sure to frequently repeat during the interviews that her parents supported her getting good grades and going to college. She was also a student who qualified for a federally funded program through the Office of TRiO in which she enrolled in college preparatory classes and received support and assistance with navigating the college application process.

She is very logical and pragmatic but is able to balance this with a quick sense of humor and ability to laugh at herself. Above all else something that is noticeable about her is her logical reasoning and humility. While talking about making it out of her small Midwestern town she maintained that she does not judge anyone who chooses to stay back in her hometown but she wishes she could share her college experiences with friends from back home. “They would do so great here. So many of my friends...like, they are happy and I’m happy for them I just wish I would be able to share what I learn with them.”

This young woman has taken advantage of almost every opportunity she has been afforded in college. She has studied abroad, interned in Washington D.C., and most recently taken a job at the Capitol as a political intern. Of all the participants she had the most knowledge and experience with the current immigration climate and policies.

Vivian. Vivian is the second oldest child in her family. She has an older sister who just completed her Bachelor's degree and is currently living at home with her mother, and younger brother and sister. Her father is not in the household because he was removed from the United States due to his undocumented status. This topic was one that Vivian shared with me when I had earned her trust and was discussed in more in-depth during the second interview.

Vivian is more introverted when in large crowds, however she is light-hearted and has a sharp sense of humor. She is very much involved in school activities in which she displays her willingness to work for underserved populations. She frequently shared that she tries to stay busy.

She has an admirable work ethic and has been awarded *Member of the Year Awards* as part of her work in organizations. Vivian has a very sweet demeanor and approachable personality. The very first encounters I had with Vivian I remember being struck by how quiet she was when we interacted.

Vivian is someone I admire a great deal. Not just for her work ethic or ability to be patient. I admire Vivian because she exemplifies endurance and persistence. Her bravery, gives me courage; and it is this courage that has for the most part made me more passionate about this area of immigration and the student populations who have to navigate within these broad and, often, unforgiving systems.

Denise. Denise is the eldest in her family. She has three younger brothers who all still live at home with her parents, and all are enrolled in school and plan to follow in her footsteps of pursuing a college education. She attributes growing up with all brothers to

having to act as second in command in supervising her younger brothers. My first interactions with Denise were full of laughs. Denise is down to earth and genuinely interested in anyone she meets. She is one of those individuals who really will give you the benefit of the doubt.

She is not only a beautiful person in the inside but also outwardly as well. Throughout many of our discussions and her two interviews she repeatedly spoke to her feelings in regards to family.

I feel like I came from where there's not much education so being able to come to the university is something big and something that I'm really thankful for. And, just being able to not only to come to pursue my dreams but to pursue my parent's dream also of me being here. I think that has a lot to do with it too.

She is a hardworking student and part of extracurricular activities such as: co-ed soccer, a mentor for her scholarship program, and participates in community service regularly. She hopes to go to graduate school and pursue a doctorate degree in Occupational Therapy.

She is strong and independent but she is a loyal and affectionate friend. Seeing her with her close circle of friends it is easy to see the older sister in her come out. She has a loving but firm touch in her personal relationships. She's a friend that feels what you are going through with you. She's a friend who will partner with you, and she commits to understanding the other person. Commitment is one of her greatest attributes and is something that has inspired me as well. She's a good friend to have, and one to have for life.

Frank. There is no way to begin to describe this young man apart from the word rambunctious. He is the second youngest child out of four children. His mother and father immigrated to the United States from central Mexico and found work in a region of the Midwest that has great ties to the agricultural and meat packing industry. The first few times I talked to him I thought I was speaking to a younger brother or cousin. He has this charisma about him. He is the student who is always whispering and cracking jokes in class. And, while it annoys you beyond your limits the moment you go to chastise him he suddenly looks at you and smiles and almost makes you forget to correct him. Almost.

I remember asking him about his home life and he told me he was the baby before his younger brother came along and he had two older sisters who were quite a few years older than him. That's when I realized it. He was the little brother I did not have. Within the Latino community there exists a male privilege and I have assisted in perpetuating that by letting some of the males I have worked with off the hook for certain behaviors. As I became aware of this I have tried my hardest to equitably work with both Latinas and Latinos. Frank has been educated on his male privilege by me at times in our relationship.

Frank is a loyal friend and remains close to his family. While I do not know the experience of a Latino in a post-secondary institution I can only be thankful that Frank has assisted in providing insight into that experience. He is hardworking and has had to learn better time management in his post-secondary journey the hard way at times. Yet, despite these challenges he has a laid back personality and ability to laugh.

Samuel. Samuel is the epitome of what machismo (Arciniega & Anderson, 2008) means, not in the context of the subordination of women. Quite the contrary; machismo, and the macho did not always refer to the hegemonic subordination of women. It referred to men of integrity who worked arduously for their families, communities, and justice (Ojeda et al, 2011). Samuel is one of those young gentlemen. During my first few interactions with him I noticed how quiet he was in comparison to Frank. However, he would always be whispering things into Frank's ears. I caught on that Samuel had a mischievous side as well. However, as the oldest of three children and the first to go to college he has been very careful to not as he would say, "screw things up."

While he is more reserved and quiet when in large groups of people he has a lot to say when interacting one on one. He is actively engaged in his academics and wants to pursue a professional degree in law or a doctorate. He is one of those people you can talk to for hours and it seems like time has not passed. He is genuinely concerned about his family and friends. He has repeatedly, along with all the other participants, mentioned the importance of family and that being here (college) is not just for him but for them as well.

Samuel is wise beyond his years and I think much of this has to do with being the eldest son. During my interviews with him one of the notes I made was, "still waters run deep." As strong and reserved as he appears he has the ability to empathize and have compassion for those around him. The saying, "He'd give a stranger the shirt off his own back," well, I'm pretty sure Samuel has.

Lucy. The first interaction I had with Lucy was the very first interview I conducted with her. She seemed outgoing and enthusiastic. She was telling me about her

classes. While I had not had much interaction with her before the interview process what I was able to gain from our interactions was how complex coming from a mixed-status family was for her.

She mentioned that while her parents were no longer undocumented she had uncles who lived in her household who were not U.S. citizens. Bringing attention to this reshapes the way in which I thought about family and family structure. Modern-day households, especially among immigrant population do not just consist of a nuclear family anymore. There are many extended family members who make up our households.

Her noting that while no one in her immediate family was undocumented but that there were those individuals who were in her household who were, assisted in making it more real how big the scope of immigration is and that families and households can be more than just parents and siblings. Families, especially immigrant families can include a number of extended family living under one roof. Not just the siblings, or citizen children of undocumented people but everyone who is connected to them.

Research Themes: Immigration Status Complexities, Immigration Raids, Removals, & Deportations, Importance of Education, and Immigration Reform

Based on an analysis of the data collected during the interviews with the participant's four themes emerged, *Immigration Status Complexities* provides insight into the anxiety and fear that presents itself in regards to undocumented family members. *The Importance of Education* theme describes their experiences accessing a college education

and the impact their membership in a mixed-status household has had on them during their time in college. Their membership in a mixed-status household was further amplified when all participants discussed their familiarity with the contentious political climate and the recent increase in immigration raids and deportation. Finally, all participants discussed the hope and impending relief of immigration reform. The four themes will be described in detail with supporting data in this section of the thesis. All themes assist in shedding more light on how a post-secondary education is experienced by these students.

Theme I: Immigration Status Complexities

Stressors

The primary research question explored during this thesis research process centered on how being a United States citizen member of a mixed-status household affected the college experiences of the participants. Every participant spoke to this issue and provided examples as to how broad and complex immigration status for themselves and their family members impacted their lives and college going experiences. Their stories brought to the forefront that even for U.S. citizen members of mixed-status households there was also awareness and fear surrounding the status of those in the household who were undocumented.

The immigration status of the undocumented household members permeated and resonated with the participants and often shaped their choices and involvement in their post-secondary educational settings. Participants described feeling like they had to be in “hiding” and feeling as if they should not disclose their membership in a mixed-status household for fear of the repercussions for undocumented household members. Also,

participants noted that as such a complex issue, people just didn't know a lot or could not abandon their nativist perspective when confronted with the issue. Vivian stated,

It's (being a member of a mixed status household] something hard to explain to people especially if they don't understand it. Cause some people just feel like...they don't understand why people come here illegally. They're like, why don't they just come here legally? Why don't they get their papers before they come here? But it's just like they don't understand how hard it is. And, it's something really hard to explain unless you've lived through it or you're Hispanic or Latino descent or not just that but like any kind of immigrant. Because it's just like they are more understanding of it...I know growing up it's something that is kinda scary because it's like you're in hiding.

Jennifer echoed this sentiment; "being a student from a mixed-status household where your parents are undocumented you always have this fear that you have to hide it from people." Not being able to fully concentrate when living in fear for other family members was a common theme. Frank mentioned,

You always have it in the back of your mind being worried that you never know what day they're gonna...something is going to happen. They might get deported or anything like that. And, since they're well having to be around with the new laws and everything it's always in the back of your mind. It's always there, it's always like, I would say a little distraction.

Samuel also explained the fear and anxiety associated with being a member of a mixed-status household entailed. When asked how it would feel if he was not a member of such a family he said, “I wouldn’t feel that fear that at any moment or any minute...I could not have them again. I could not see them.”

Having the added stress of family members immigration status complicated schoolwork for these students. For example, when Denise was asked how her experience would look if she was not a member of a mixed-status household she relayed similar experiences to those previously mentioned and provided more insight into how the daily stress impacted her education,

I feel like it would be less stressful cause you would only have to worry about what you’re doing. About your education and stuff but...like, since you have to worry about not only you, you always have that in the back of your mind...like, your family members. Are they ok? What if something happens? And, stuff like that. So, I guess it would get...it would take some stress out of your everyday life.

Coming from a mixed-status household also affected participant’s lives in daily practices like calls home. Jennifer explained,

I think...at the beginning and it’s gotten a lot better now but at the beginning it’s one of those things where you’re just kind of always scared, I guess, to call home even, sometimes. I remember one time I couldn’t get a hold of my mom and I

started to freak out and I mean this was just...I called her maybe twice? And, she didn't pick up and I couldn't get a hold of my Dad and it's just one of those things that gets a hold of your imagination. So, my behavior in college I don't know if it has necessarily been affected but I know that has probably affected my emotional state in college.

This constant presence of fear was something all participants mentioned and Samuel further spoke to this theme when speaking in terms of an incident possibly happening and the added stress of being away from home. He stated,

I think about because I think I'm over here, they're back home so, I'm always thinking about it. I'm like two hours away from home so I feel more nervous about it. It makes me feel, how do you say...scared. Scared that at any minute they could just give me a call like, yeah, they're not here anymore or this happened or that happened. You know, you never know, so I'm always thinking about it.

All participants mentioned the added stress that presented itself through being a United States citizen. What seemed to come through more clearly was that they had a privileged status that was not shared with all members in their households. This led to them always having this anxiety that as stated above, "at any minute they would not be able to have them (an undocumented family member)," in their lives. Participants further explained the difficulties and complications they encountered when actually in a college setting and applying for financial aid was a common area in which participants noted anxiety.

Navigating Financial Aid

Another area that illustrated the complexity of coming from a mixed-status household and college attendance was in regards to financial aid and assistance. All participants noted that navigating the financial aid system was complex and they were at times fearful to ask questions because of the possibility of identifying the undocumented non-citizens in their households.

Lucy noted,

Sometimes you're just not sure...like, when I did my FAFSA I didn't know if I should have...like, cause two of the people in my household are undocumented and I didn't know if I should list them or not.

In attempting to navigate the financial aid area Jennifer noted how she was made more aware of the complexity not having so many scholarships would have on her ability to pay for college.

When I was applying for my financial aid for my study abroad I did have to tell my financial aid advisor that my parents weren't able to cosign for me and she asked why, and I told her my parents aren't U.S., citizens. She was very polite about it. She didn't dig too much into it and she was able to help me. She goes, "are they planning on becoming citizens any time soon?" and, I said no. Not that we can help it. So, she was able to give me the proper paperwork. I thought that was nice of her. But just the fact that I had to go through a different path to get

financial aid when there was nothing else different about me I think was...it was a wake up call.

While most participants spoke about being unsure of the financial aid process, five of the six participants mentioned a college preparatory program that helped them navigate through these issues. Vivian stated,

With my, one of my advisors for my scholarship program; they helped me. He was always with financial aid, like calling them all the time and figuring everything out and what they needed, and like, he was...I don't know exactly what he did but it took a while...but he was able to get everything fixed for me and that was really good.

When I asked Vivian if her advisor knew of her mixed-status household and situation she advised,

Yeah, and that's what helped cause like he knew what my situation was so he was able to get in contact with the right people so that he was able to straighten it out to...like...he was telling them...like, well what else do you want from her? He told them I had nothing else to provide them with. It was like...what else? I can't give you anything else.

In having an advisor know her situation and support her through this it seemed to validate her frustrations and legitimize her personal feelings about her situation. She noted,

It was very frustrating because, like, it's not my fault. Like, I don't know what else I can provide to prove that I need help paying for school. Like, I mean, we already have enough trouble having to pay our bills so how am I going to pay for college?

The frustration of not knowing who to go to or which individuals could be trusted was something that all participants discussed and they only shared their mixed-status households' information when it was absolutely necessary. In most of the cases it was in filing for the Federal Application For Student Aid and applying for financial aid where household income was requested or for the purpose of student loans, which requested adult cosigners with a credit history. The anxiety showed when they explained attempting to navigate the area of financial aid and being unsure of how or when to share membership in a mixed-status household. Their tones in the interview turned even more serious when they spoke about immigration raids and deportations.

Theme II: Immigration Raids and Deportation Removals

With the enhanced anxiety and awareness members of mixed-status households had in regards to immigration all participants mentioned immigration raids, current events, and deportations as potential events they were fearful of for family members. These types of events depicted in the media created anxiety for some of the participants and added to their already high levels of stress. These fears were especially evident for those individuals who had experienced the removal of a family member through a deportation, those who were attempting to adjust an undocumented family members

status as well as those who had knowledge of other community members who had experienced the loss of a household member due to their immigration status. Jennifer, spoke specifically about immigration raids and how that impacted her experience being away from home and family because she was at college.

At the time when I was a freshman/sophomore there were a lot of immigration raids going on in the state and especially in the part of the state where my family lives. And, my mom would call me like once a week or every few days and say, like, 'oh, I heard there was an ICE spotting close to here. And, so she would freak me out. So, I think most of my anxiety came from my family. There was kinda, how do I say this...times when she would call and she specifically knew someone who had gotten deported. Or, someone's son, she would call and tell me so-and-so's son is in deportation proceedings or in a hold or something like that. So, I think that played a lot into it. It just became a lot more real to us.

The threat of family separation seemed all too real for this population of students. All participants as mentioned before worried about their undocumented family members.

While not all participants had family members who had been deported, all participants knew people in their communities who had been or had friends who had deported family members. Of the participants who had family members who had been deported the impact this had on their educational advancement seemed to reawaken old fears. Vivian, upon opening up about her family member's deportation noted how she

and the other U.S. citizen members were more fearful for their undocumented family members than they were for themselves. Vivian explained this difference,

Because I know my parents were never afraid of getting caught or anything but I was always scared for them because you never know one day...you're going to be separated. Which, I mean, it's something that ended up happening to me. So...it's been really hard.

When asked what has been really hard Vivian told me that she is not doing well in her classes. She is sleeping through most of them, if she goes at all. She has reiterated at how painful it is to speak about her family members removal and how she does not know where to go or who to share it with. When I attempted to make the connection of her scholarship advisor who knew about her mixed-status household she said that, "it's just different. They can feel bad for you but they don't understand. And, I don't want that. You know, pity." This was further supported during my interview with Vivian where she spoke about the actual removal of her family member from her home. Following an argument over the towing of a vehicle from the front of her house right before a blizzard storm she stated,

There was a police officer there and he told my family member not to move my sister's car and it made my family member mad because my siblings told me that our neighbors were moving their cars but the police officer was just yelling at our family member and still letting them (neighbors) move theirs. So, my family

member tried to ask...and his English isn't very good...the police officer why he was letting the neighbors move their cars but not us...and it turned into an argument and the police officer pushed my family member back...and they ran into the house to try and avoid it. But, the police officer called for back up and, like, five police cars arrived. I'm sorry, it just brings back so many emotions.

Vivian spoke to me after I turned the audio recorder off. She told me that she is struggling in her classes at the moment. She says, "I lost my motivation. The one person who pushed me so hard to get to college...they're not here anymore." She told me she had started to sleep a lot more and apart from her part-time job is not as motivated to do things. She explained that she continues to try and stay busy with helping other people and through community service but that she, "lost herself." She has found some support in the counseling services on campus but at times it is not enough. She advised that maybe if she were able to save up enough money to go visit her family member that might make it better but she stated, "I think it might help going to go see them but I think it might make me sad because in the end I'll have to leave and they have to stay there."

This interview was by far the most difficult to do. Not only because of the profound loss this student experienced but because of the humility at which I felt for this situation. As the researcher I was raised in a mixed-status household and through this interview I became aware of how privileged I was in that I had never, to this degree, experienced a loss of a loved one in this manner. I asked Vivian if she felt comfortable and wanted to continue, and I remain humbled by her fortitude and her perseverance to want to finish the interview. I do not know if I would have been this strong. She stated,

Yeah, I want to finish. Like, they arrived and they broke inside my house. They broke down the door and they took my family member out of the house. They were arrested for like two weeks and then they were removed. Like, they didn't even give them a chance to fight the immigration case. It happened so fast. They were being charged with assault of an officer, resisting arrest, and I can't remember the other thing cause there were three. But, he was supposed to have a court date like a month later but they didn't let them stay for that. Like, I found out that immigration courts...law is different than criminal. They are separate so, they can kick you out while your criminal case is still pending. So, like they kicked them out of the country before they were even able to present themselves. So, it's like, even if they decided to come back...they're gonna have trouble here. They're...we're stuck. We really don't know what to do.

While not all participants had actually experienced the removal of a household member, all participants spoke to fear of such processes and the possibility a family member could face deportation at any moment. Jennifer shared:

As a college student you're extremely stressed, you have tests. But you have the same problems as anybody else it just so happens one of your other problems is the fact that your parents are undocumented and you have to live with this constant fear of them possibly getting deported. You know, it's happened to a couple of my friends and, you know, the first thing I thought about when it happened to them was...wow...they're literally living out my worst nightmare.

The stress associated with fearing the future deportation and removal of a family member was one that all participants spoke of. The feeling of not being sure whom to trust with information of this nature was also something outlined throughout the interview process. And, while not all participants had experienced the removal or deportation of a family member all shared the same feelings of devastation that are evident in Vivian's account. This theme was the most deeply felt and the tone of the interviews when immigration raids or deportations were spoken of was serious and emotional for both men and women in the study. Only Vivian was living in a household where a member was removed but all other five participants had someone in their extended family or community who had been removed from the country. What was comforting about the interviews was that all participants, regardless of the complications faced by themselves or their mixed-status households, continually stated that persisting in college was necessary and their way of paying back their families.

Theme III: Importance of Education and Academic Motivation

All participants noted how important a college degree was in assisting them and their families. A college education allowed participants a way in which to justify their decisions of leaving their households with the prospect of being able to assist their families in future endeavors. Jennifer noted how the surge in immigration raids assisted in her deciding to continue her education. She said,

I want to go into law, politics, and policy. Change. So, that's where I lean more in college. You know, I did start out as a business major and it wasn't until later, actually, you know now that I think about it...it was right after all those raids

were happening and I started to see that this isn't going to change. No one is going to make it change unless you, yourself, step up to it.

This demonstrated that in Jennifer's case immigration raids created anxiety but were also the impetus for her changing her major. Vivian's experience was different and she was forthcoming in her recent decreased motivation to do her coursework saying,

I don't know. I feel like I've lost a lot of my motivation because I know at some point I didn't even want to come back to school [after summer break]. Like, I didn't even want to graduate because the one person I want here when I graduate is my family member who was removed but...they're not able to be here. But, I mean, there's still time to graduate. So, maybe by the time I do graduate they could come back, but I don't...you never know.

Samuel echoed these sentiments when speaking about the moments where he felt anxiety and the impact on his education stating,

I wouldn't be able to concentrate on my studies. I wouldn't be able to, like if I were going to have a test the next day I wouldn't be able to concentrate on the exam. I would be thinking about how this person isn't here anymore. How...then starting to think about other people close to me...will this person get stopped? Or, how about this other person? So, I can't focus on my studies.

However, all participants maintained that they want to finish college. Vivian with the loss of a household family member explained how even with the emotional distress and loss of motivation, much like Jennifer, in a way it is why she wants to continue on in her studies. She stated,

Well...it's made me want to continue college because I know that once I graduate I'll be able to find a good job with my education and I'd be able to help them. I'll be able to give back to them once I'm able to provide for myself I can actually help them out as well.

Assisting family members remained one of the primary reasons to continue on in college. It was not only an individual goal but also a family goal. Denise mentioned how it was not just her dream to get an education but also a dream for her mixed-status household. She stated,

Well, cause I see my parents struggling a lot. Like, they weren't able to get the education. Like, all the hard work they have to go through. Like, my dad has been in a meat packing plant for, like, since he got here. Since, he's been 17 years old he's been working there and he has a lot of back problems and he comes home so tired. And, it's hard to see that he can't get a better job where in a way he doesn't kill himself. Just, because, you know he doesn't have that education and I don't want the same future for my family. And, I know my parents want that for me too. So, that's what, kinda keeps me going in getting a better education.

The education theme was something that seemed to be a motivator for the participants. An education was something that was not only their goal but something made possible through family sacrifice and in this way seemed to make it more real for participants. All participants discussed the importance of education and how having an education would be a benefit not for only themselves but for their mixed-status households as well. An education was also spoken of as a way to become more aware of immigration procedures and policies that lead into the final theme of Immigration Reform.

Theme IV: Immigration Reform

Immigration Reform was something all the participants hoped would be passed. Yet, there was always an uncertainty about the process and political nature of the reform. Jennifer, who had the most in-depth knowledge about the process and how to go about adjusting the status of an undocumented family member, advised,

Also, just the fact that it is so incredibly difficult. I mean, when people say, stand in line like you know if there was a line to stand in I'm sure people would stand in it. But, it's not as simple as that. I, myself, I do not know this might be one of your questions but when I turned 21 I was able to file a petition for my parents to become residents or U.S. citizens, as their child. I'm a lot older now. I'm about to turn 23 and we have yet to hear about...I think we got 3 letters from them and 2 emails? And, it's been 2 years. We have given them close to one thousand dollars already...so, a thousand dollars later, three letters, and two emails asking for more money...I mean, that's as far as we've gotten and I could call immigration. I did once before and I actually fell asleep waiting on the phone for them and I talked to them for maybe thirty seconds. I actually told my Dad that I had a better chance of becoming an immigration attorney faster than I could get help from immigration services. Which, honestly, it sounds like a joke but it's really not. I'm pretty sure I can.

While Jennifer noted the extremely difficult long and costly process that comes into play when trying to adjust an undocumented family members status she maintained that there was still a sense of relief. She noted,

Though at this point, I think...we would be happy for anything to pass. Just so we have that peace of mind. Because I know even since I first filed the application they told me as soon as the application process was filed they're not...and I haven't actually looked into this...this is what other people who have gone through this have told me...but as soon as the application is filed and as soon as they know she's in the country they're not able to hold her. So, I mean, obviously if she did something wrong but just in general they can't come and take her because the application has been filed and they're basically not allowed to touch her anymore. Even that, knowing that was a huge weight lifted off my shoulders. The relief that immigration reform would bring was something that all participants were hopeful for. Vivian stated, "It would bring a lot of hope to people and it would just be a relief. People wouldn't feel like they have to be scared or have to hide anymore. It's just like...they...we could live a normal life." This was also, as Jennifer mentioned, followed with apprehension as to what the legislation would actually look like in practice. This population of students was always quick to voice hope with caution and apprehension.

Vivian, in particular, throughout most of her interviews was very cognizant of the impact reform would have for her family and the blessing that would be but also vocalized fear of getting her hopes up. She stated,

Because I know I want there to be an immigration reform but at the same time I'm so scared that it's not going to happen. I'm scared for my parents that they might not be able to ever...like...watching it (news) makes it all too real.

However, what shined through was the immense happiness and calmness the prospect of immigration reform would be for their families. Frank explained, "It would make me

happy because not only would it help out my family but it would help out a lot of people throughout the country.” Samuel stated, “I would feel happy because it will help out a lot of people that really need it...all the immigrants that come here to work. They come here to give their families a better life.”

The absence of fear for the undocumented non-citizen family members was something all the participants mentioned in one way or another. It was something that would allow them to have peace of mind when trying to concentrate on their academic endeavors. Immigration and being a U.S. citizen member of a mixed-status household permeated throughout almost every decision students made in regards to a college education and persisting in a college setting.

All the participants when speaking about education followed up with the overwhelming sense that an education would benefit not only themselves but their families as well. An added benefit was having the social capital to engage or be more properly informed about immigration reform and knowing what the impact would be for their families. All the participants were advocates for comprehensive immigration reform. While not all the participants were as informed as they would have liked to be they all specifically used the words such as happy, relief, and peace of mind to describe how immigration reform would make them feel.

Conclusion

All the participants noted the added stress of being a member of mixed-status family. From the very beginning of the first interviews all participants mentioned and discussed the prevalence of being worried for the undocumented non-citizen family

members in their households. The participants represent the broad array of Latina/o students entering into institutions of higher education and the complexities of the immigration system especially for those students of mixed-status households and the anxiety and fear surrounding those members who are undocumented non-citizens in the household. These students do not merely represent the traditional college student worrying about exams, and midterm deadlines. As the data illustrates they are, daily, living in fear that someone in their households could be removed from this country.

Chapter 5 will connect the research to the literature reviewed and make recommendations for how to better serve and support college students from mixed-status households.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis focuses on a discussion of the four themes and describes how the findings of this study are consistent with past research or not. I utilized a qualitative research design to try and understand participants' meaning making process as a member of a mixed-status family who is going to college. Using a two interview series to collect data participants shared their stories with me. I then interpreted the data and identified the four themes described in Chapter 4.

Research in this area is needed to help identify the ways in which staff, faculty, and administrators can better serve this student population. As noted in Chapter 2 individuals of Mexican descent are the fastest growing sub-population in the Latino population. , “People of Mexican descent represent the youngest, largest, and fastest growing Latino population subgroup, making up two-thirds of this ever-growing population” (Census, 2010). All the participants identified as Latina/o. As this population is increasing there is a further need to understand the characteristics of the growing Latino population in a post-secondary setting.

While there is research on identity development of Latino students (Torres, 2003; Torres et al., 2009) there has not been specific attention paid to the complex situations of students who are United States citizens and members of households where there are

undocumented non-citizen family members. More often than not when words such as immigration, citizenship, and status are brought to the forefront there is a tendency to view these situations from the standpoint of the growing literature available on the undocumented students known as DREAMers. DREAMers are the children of undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children (Covarrubias & Lara, 2014). This student population of DREAMers and those Latina/o students who are members of mixed-status households is projected to increase, “as population projections for the United States suggest Latinos, most of whom are of Mexican descent, will make anywhere from 25% to 30% of the overall population by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). As student affairs practitioners it is in our best interest and our responsibility in serving students to understand the complexities of this growing student population who are entering institutions with an increased risk of attrition (Contreras & Gandara, 2006). This study sought to shed light on this population and bring awareness of their needs in a post-secondary setting.

Summary of Findings

The guiding research questions of the study sought to understand the experiences of U.S. citizen, first-generation Latina/o students who were also members of a mixed-immigration status household. The guiding research question was to understand the experience of being a United States citizen member of a mixed-immigration status household and the impact such an identity had on their college experience. In attempting to understand the experiences of this population the following question was posed:

- What is the experience of Latina/o students who are United States citizen members of mixed-status households?

Two interviews were conducted with each participant, which I transcribed verbatim. The emergent themes from these interviews with participants illustrate the interconnectedness, complexity, and depth to which immigration, immigration status, and college going are related.

The findings of the research were organized into four thematic categories. These themes provide understanding into the daily lives of these students and how being a member of a mixed-status family has shaped their college-going experience. The more concrete themes that pertained directly to the guiding research question were concentrated on the impact their mixed family status had on their college going experiences. For example, in regards to *Immigration Status Complexities*, all participants spoke of the daily stressors and fears that were always present and how that made life more stressful in general. Also, as discussed when speaking about the *Importance of Education*, education was a way to assist in working towards the adjustment of their undocumented non-citizen family members' statuses. In other words attaining an education was a stepping-stone to find immigration resources or other people who might know how to go about the process to adjust someone's immigration status. Education was linked to better understanding and an enhanced ability to assist those who were undocumented within the household. Thus, attaining a college education added to the social capital of participants and made the goal of finding answers to immigration reform or even adjustment more within reach.

The main points of this chapter include:

- How the thematic findings in regards to the importance of Education and Immigration Reform respond to the research questions and literature on

the experiences of Latina/o students in higher education. Demonstrating that a college education is not only a personal goal but also a familial goal.

- Implications for future practice at institutions of higher education where Latina/o students are increasing in enrollment are to gain a deeper understanding of the current immigration process and the complex nature of family households that are of mixed-immigration status.
- Recommendations for staff, faculty, and administrators for how to more equitably serve this student population.

Summary of Themes and Links to Literature

There were a total of four themes that emerged from the research. These themes emerged as part of the experience of the participants' daily lives. Through the data analysis process I identified these four themes as central to participants' experiences as college students and members of a mixed-status household. The four themes included: *Immigration Status Complications, Immigration Raids, Removals, and Deportations, Importance of Education, and Immigration Reform*. Each of the themes was central to the participants and their experience in a college setting. The following major summary points were identified from the findings:

- The alienation felt by being a first-generation Latina/o student at a predominately white institution in conjunction with their membership in a mixed-status household.

- The fear and anxiety associated with having undocumented non-citizen family members and current anti-immigrant legislation. The fear associated with sharing their membership in a mixed-status family in spite of them being U.S. citizens.
- College persistence was a way to assist their families in hopes of one-day adjusting their undocumented non-citizen family members' status.

Fear and Anxiety. Fear and anxiety was a nearly constant experience for all the participants. These emotions were always something they thought about it in regards to the mixed-status households from which they came. It impacted daily routines and was something noted when having to file for financial aid. Participants advised that they were more concerned, or more fearful, about their undocumented non-citizen family members' status in comparison to the undocumented non-citizen family members themselves. This was in part due to the fact that they, being U.S. citizens, were afforded a status and would most likely be the ones who were responsible for taking care of the household, younger siblings, and relatives. There seemed to be more fear felt by the U.S. citizen members of mixed-immigration status households because there were added responsibilities they had to assume if an undocumented non-citizen member was ever in jeopardy of being removed or deported.

In combination with being fearful for the members of the household who were not documented all participants mentioned that they felt they were in hiding and unsure of whom they could go to for support in regards to their membership in a mixed-status household. While there is the risk of first-generation Latinos students internalizing negative stereotypes this is further complicated when immigration status is added.

Lippard (2011) stated, “to extend the debate, scholars suggest that recent xenophobic rhetoric and policy focused on undocumented immigrants is both racist and nativist as it ‘simultaneously labels being “Brown” and “alien” as the problem” (p.602). In other words these students while being fearful of identifying themselves or family members as belonging to a mixed-status household they were fearful of who could be trusted with such information. They mentioned that for the most part they feared the racist or nativist views of people not understanding and thinking of their families in terms of being “authorized” to be here or “not being authorized.” These students must not only deal with their marginalized status based on race and ethnicity at a predominantly white campus but also navigate the complexity of their membership in a mixed-status household.

This is perhaps the most complex of the issues participants shared and discussed. Vivian’s situation is the most real, raw, and complex because she had someone physically removed from her home and deported out of the country. According to Schueths (2013), “thirty-nine percent of those arrested since 2008 have reported they have a citizen spouse or child in the USA; such arrests have separated at least 88,000 mixed-status families” (p.3). The possibility a family member may be deported is a constant reality for the participants in this study. The role of family and parents is crucial to the success of a student’s college going (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999) which further complicates the potential of a family member being deported and the effect that would have on their college attendance. Vivian’s situation makes real the utter destruction which the enforcement based immigration policies and procedures have not only on undocumented individuals but those who are members of mixed-status households.

What became even more evident through the interviews and coding of data was that immigration policies were an area where students seemed almost defeated. It became clear that the law was not on their side. Constant anxiety about police officers and undocumented non-citizen family members having to drive without driver's licenses, were examples of added stressors to these students. In particular when Jennifer spoke of starting the process to adjust her undocumented family members status she mentioned how extremely difficult it was and stated, "I could become an immigration attorney faster than we could get their statuses adjusted." According to Cruz (2010) "opportunities for citizens to sponsor undocumented spouses have been drastically limited as immigration policy has become more enforcement-based" (p.478). This would seem true for Jennifer as well, especially when considering she filed the petition for her undocumented family member two years ago, has paid close to \$1,000 and still has not had any further progress on the application.

College Persistence. Participants were very specific in their hopes of earning a college education. A college education seemed to be the goal not only for themselves as individuals but for their family too. Participants believed a college education justified their absence from the family and that it would be a way to pay back for the sacrifice their absence may have caused their undocumented non-citizen family members. Education and immigration status and immigration reform were intertwined throughout most of the interviews that in some ways they could not be separated. Gildersleeve (2010) described working with undocumented students, "Through my conversations with students, we came to the conclusion that every topic did relate to (im)migration. (im)Migration permeated their lives in every way imaginable" (p. 112).

Persistence in college was a way in which to further participants' knowledge of the immigration debate and assisted in keeping students informed of ways in which to seek out individuals or resources that could be of assistance. Noting that if they had to they could try and ask an advisor, faculty member, or administrator whom they felt they could trust with their mixed-status identity. Jennifer was the most involved in advocacy for immigration reform. Her decision to pursue a law degree was motivated by a desire to bring about change in immigration policies.

Participants' perseverance was fueled by the need to serve as an activist for immigration reform (Gildersleeve, 2010). For the participants in this study pursuing a college degree and persisting was a form of activism. Covarrubias and Lara (2013) have stated that,

This issue is of immense significance, as this country has been historically shaped by migration and today, citizenship status continues to have an undeniable and distinct effect on the opportunities available to millions of immigrant and native students, especially those of Mexican origins. (p. 76).

These students are aware that they hold a privileged status as United States citizens because of the sacrifices of undocumented non-citizen family members. As the above quote suggests these students are benefitting from such a privileged status yet they carry the fear and anxiety of those closest to them being removed due to being undocumented. Their very presence in predominantly white institutions that were not built for the broad diversity of college students, which they represent, is a form of activism in itself. While

this population, Latina/o United States citizens from mixed-immigration status households, has an increased chance of successfully completing college (Covarrubias & Lara, 2013) these students are faced with some of the most difficult and complicated situations when it comes to immigration, low-income backgrounds, immigrant families, and mixed-status households. As Gildersleeve (2010) states,

Founded on critical and sociocultural theories of learning and development, and empirically anchored in the findings that emerged from my ethnographic inquiry as re-presented in this fracturing of the master narrative, I put forward a call for a critical college-going pedagogy. Outlined...college-going pedagogy serves to assist critical educators concerned with the democratic and social justice ethics of increasing educational opportunity for historically marginalized cultural communities. (p. 2)

I believe the findings of my research align with what Gildersleeve (2010) has stated is a “call for a critical college-going pedagogy” (p. 3). While, my specific research study is looking into the experiences of those students in a higher education setting there still remains the same goal in mind, to better educate faculty, administrators, and staff and bring awareness to these marginalized populations and thus create programs and spaces where they may feel safe and experience a college education equitably.

Implications of Current Study for Future Practice

There are a number of implications for practice based on the findings of this study. The following implications are presented in order to provide strategies to more effectively understand the experiences of college students from mixed status households and support their success in college:

1. Having access to individuals who are open and knowledgeable about immigration and mixed-status families would provide students from mixed status households with a resource to go to with questions about their situations.
2. Having peer networks that understood their situations was consistently noted as important to participants' persistence in college. Scholarship programs as well as other organizations that have a vested interest in the success of Latina/o students may serve as a source of support and validation. Through more intimate conversations focused on immigration status students may feel less isolated on campus concerning their mixed family status.
3. Administrators should be more knowledgeable about immigration laws, policies, and regulations. Misinformation around immigration serves to reinforce stereotypes and misunderstandings of college students from immigrant families. Participants noted how helpful and useful it would be to have administrators who even had a basic knowledge of immigration policies and procedures. Participants noted frustration and isolation when they spoke of administrators who lacked a basic knowledge of the immigration legislation.
4. Institutions of higher education need to be more intentional about recruiting and hiring Latino/a staff and faculty who share common experiences with college students from mixed status families. This implication for practice has two desired outcomes. It provides students with additional sources of support and shows a commitment by the institution to recognize the need for a diverse faculty and staff.

5. Students mentioned feeling more comfortable with students who shared their same ethnic and racial backgrounds and in these settings feeling more able to share their experiences. These students want to know they're not alone and creating a network to find one another may lead to greater awareness of issues around immigration and mixed-status households. Also, the ability to create events that highlight issues of immigration in an educational and meaningful way would assist these students.

The findings in this study also suggest a need for further research in regards to students from mixed-status households.

Recommendations for Future Research

Special attention and research should specifically look into the educational experiences and attainment of students who have experienced the removal of an undocumented household member in order to further add to the research on Latina/o first-generation persistence. There is a growing body of research on the experiences of undocumented students in post-secondary institutions. Yet, there is very little information about this population of U.S. citizens who are members of households where there are undocumented non-citizens. As this study has demonstrated family relationships and household members who are undocumented are cause for stress and anxiety for these students while in college. However, that is not to devalue the fact that these students are persisting in institutions where they do not feel comfortable or even understood. Additional research in this area would further inform best practices for increasing this student population's academic, emotional, and civic success.

The current literature does not provide insight into the complexities for citizen members of mixed-status households and the stressors associated with college access and persistence. Further, another area where there remains little research is in regards to same-sex mixed-status couples. Schueths (2013) is taking the lead with research on mixed-immigration status and interracial couples. This is also an avenue that should be explored as well. Out of the six participants two of them were in relationships with an undocumented non-citizen. While this research study did not address the complications faced by mixed-status couples there should be more attention on how students who are in mixed-status relationships navigate the post-secondary landscape while also facing the consequences such a partnership.

Limitations

Limitations of this research include time constraints that did not allow for a more in depth investigation of participants' experiences in college. Also, due to the nature of the study the Institutional Review Board (IRB) required in depth and detailed information about this study. The IRB protocol was submitted in September and a series of revisions were requested for the entirety of the fall semester. There was a final request from IRB for this study to be presented at a full board review. Presentation of the study and further discussion for full board review was held on December 17, 2013. Final revisions were then requested on December 19, 2013. IRB approval was officially given on January 27, 2014.

Having had a delay in time to begin the research and data collection process was frustrating. However, I do understand the apprehension of the IRB Board. Immigration is a very contentious issue and one that is very easily misunderstood. While I understand

the IRB Board and their apprehension an unwanted consequence of the delay in time was that the data collection process went by so quickly. I feel that if I had the opportunity to repeat this research study again I would start earlier on the IRB protocol in order to allow more time to code data and themes and I feel the findings would be much richer and even more in-depth than what was covered. Although the time frame was a complication it has not hindered the profoundness of my experience with these students or the research data. I remain humbled and in awe at what I have been able to accomplish with the assistance of the participants and advisor. In short, it was more than worth it.

As a qualitative study there was no goal of generalizability. The small number of participants was recruited for this study in order to gain further knowledge about mixed-status household membership and the effect such an identity had on college-going experiences. Due to the nature of the study I do think there are more students who could have fit the criteria but due to the anxiety and stress of making membership in a mixed-status household known I do not think students felt comfortable participating. As mentioned in chapter one, the students who participated had prior communication and knowledge of who I was and therefore trusted me more so than they would have someone they did not know.

Final Thoughts

Much of the interviews centered on the stressors and complications coming from a mixed-status household contained. However, I think what was most encouraging and prevailing was the strength and fortitude of these students. In particular, Jennifer, when

speaking about recent legislation passed in a city with strong anti-immigrant policies she stated,

You know, you have places like Arizona, that make laws that deter immigrants but at the same time you see them struggling with that. You know, they did pass this law but think this is like the fourth time they've had to vote. And, I think it's kinda nice that you realize that we're not going down without a fight. You know, you can pass this law but we're not gonna make it easy for you.

These students are fighters. Their stories serve to assist student affairs practitioners in moving forward and becoming more aware of the complexities of the increasing Latino population that is entering into institutions of higher education. Higher education must attempt to serve all populations as equitably as possible. This is a call to become more prepared and more understanding of the current political climate in regards to immigration reform and those who it directly impacts.

Conducting this study has been very intense for me. Working with the six student participants has been an enriching and, during the most difficult interviews where participants discussed fear and loss, devastating experience due to the fear these students must live with. Having known these students prior to the research there was already relationships established. However, I was unprepared for how in-depth and honest they would be for this study. I am extremely grateful and humbled by their experiences.

Through the transcribing and writing of this thesis I have felt so many emotions. Many of them are frustration, devastation, and sadness. However, for all the horrible emotions that I have felt in regards to this study I have felt hope. These students have given me hope for the future for this population within student affairs.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

IRB# 13806

Identification of Project:

A Master's Thesis research project will be looking at the experiences of students who identify as Latino/Hispanic and are members of a Mixed-status household.

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of students who identify as Latino/Hispanics and the impact that coming from a mixed-status household has had on your development in an institution of higher education.

The research is significant in that it is focusing on a growing demographic of students and seeks to understand your experiences and ways in which to increase awareness of these issues. This research will add to the literature by establishing access to research results involving participant's experiences and motivations in continuing your education while being a member of a mixed-status family. Particular attention will be paid to the motivations and outcomes being a citizen in a mixed status household have had throughout your college experience.

Procedures:

You will be asked to participate in individual interviews. These individual interviews will be conducted in person. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Individual interviews will last approximately 30-60 minutes and you will be asked to schedule a follow-up interview. The researcher will contact you to check the accuracy of the data collection and analysis process. Your participation in that process will take approximately 30 – 90 minutes.

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no known risks associated with this study.

Benefits:

Through sharing of your experiences you will be providing insight and allowing for your perspective to be taken into consideration by administrators, faculty, and staff.

Confidentiality:

The research plan should make adequate provisions to maintain the confidentiality of the data. Data and records will remain with the investigators and secured on a password-protected computer. Record (transcriptions; excludes audio recordings) will be kept until June 3, 2014, one year after the completion of the project records will be kept on the investigators password-protected computer. The primary investigator will maintain and manage access to the records and data. Data will be shared with the secondary investigator as necessary.

Data will be reported as a Master's Thesis Research project and possibly at conference proceedings and/or scholarly journals.

The data will be stored on the primary investigators' personal computers and will be deleted following completion of the project in June 2014. Audio recordings will be erased following transcription.

Compensation:

There will not be any compensation.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. You may call, Alicia Dominguez, one of the primary investigators at any time at (308) 672-0886 or the secondary investigator at (402) 472-8928. Please contact the investigator:

- If you want to voice concerns or complaints about the research

Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 for the following reasons:

- You wish to talk to someone other than the research staff to obtain answers to questions about your rights as a research participant
- To voice concerns or complaints about the research
- To provide input concerning the research process
- In the event the study staff could not be reached

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study.

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)

Principal Investigators:
Alicia Dominguez

Phone: (308) 672-0886

Secondary Investigator:
Dr. Corey Rumann

Phone: (402) 472-8928

Appendix B

Recruitment Email

Recruitment Emails-Interview**Original**

[DATE]

Dear Student,

This email is being sent on behalf of Alicia Dominguez, I'm a second year Master's student in the Educational Administration program. I'm currently seeking students who identify as Latino/Hispanic students who would like to share their experiences as college students.

If you are interested please contact me at (308) 672-0886 for additional information about the study including participant criteria. If you meet the participant criteria and voluntarily agree to be interviewed for the study we will schedule an interview. A one-on-one interview will last no longer than an hour and will be conducted in order to further describe your experiences. The interview will take place in an agreed upon location of the Nebraska Unions on either City or East campus.

Thank you.

Alicia Dominguez
Graduate Student
Educational Administration
vcsa-adominguez@unl.edu

Reminder

[DATE]

Dear Student,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my qualitative research study. Your interview is scheduled for:

[INSERT DATE]
[INSERT TIME]
[INSERT LOCATION]

We will discuss the informed consent process in detail including your voluntary participation in the study, potential risks, and your rights as a research participant prior to your interview. Please set aside an hour for the interview.

As the interview appointment approaches please don't hesitate to contact me at (308) 672-0886 or vcsa-adominguez@unl.edu if you have any questions. Looking forward to meeting with you on [INSERT DAY OF WEEK WHEN INTERVIEW WILL TAKE PLACE HERE]!

Thank you.

Alicia Dominguez
Graduate Student
Educational Administration

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. My name is Alicia Dominguez and I am a graduate student in the Educational Administration Department. Before we begin talking about your experiences as a member of a mixed status household, I am going to go over this informed consent form with you. As I read through each section I will ask if you understand and will ask that you provide verbal consent of your understanding. Dr. Rumann is present to act as a witness to your understanding and verbal consent. Also, for the purpose of this research I am assigning you a pseudonym to protect your identity.

[WALK THROUGH FIRST PAGE: PURPOSE OF RESEARCH, PROCEDURES, RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS, BENEFITS, CONFIDENTIALITY, COMPENSATION].

[WALK THROUGH SECOND PAGE: OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS, AND FREEDOM TO WITHDRAW]. Do not hesitate to stop me at any point throughout the interview to ask questions or to ask me to clarify. [CONTINUE WITH CONSENT, RIGHT TO RECEIVE A COPY]. Here is a copy of the informed consent form for your records. Now that this is taken care of we can get started with the interview.

[INTERVIEW QUESTIONS]

This concludes the interview. Thank you for your time and answers. I appreciate your help with my study. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Interview Questions

1. Are of traditional age range for a university student? Which college is your major housed in?
2. How would you describe your racial/ethnic background?
3. What geographic area are you from (i.e, Midwest)? (Where do you live when you are not enrolled in school?)
4. What is your family makeup? (Who lives with you in your home?)
5. Do you have family members that are undocumented? (Are there members in your family that are in the United States unlawfully?)
6. How do you think coming from a mixed-status family has impacted your college experience?
7. Have there been challenges or obstacles as a student from a mixed-status family in a college setting?
8. Are there individuals (faculty, administrators) on campus that you are able to gain support from in regards to your mixed-status household?
9. How do you feel your experience would be if there were (were not) faculty or administrators who you could talk to about your mixed-status household?
10. How do you feel your experience would be different if your family was not mixed-status?
11. What do you know about current immigration reform legislation?
12. If current immigration reform passed and became law how would you feel about that?
13. Is there anything else that you would like to add that I didn't ask?

Appendix D
IRB Approval Letter

January 27, 2014

Alicia Dominguez
Department of Educational Administration

Corey Rumann
Department of Educational Administration
129 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20140113806FB

Project ID: 13806

Project Title: Development of Latino Students from Mixed-Status Households: Citizens born into families with siblings and/or parents of non-citizen status

Dear Alicia:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46).

Date of Full Board review: 12/13/2013

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 01/27/2014. This approval is Valid Until: 12/12/2014.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Julia C. Torquati

Julia Torquati, Ph.D.
Chair for the IRB

