A CASE STUDY OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS TRANSITION TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the transition to higher education for undocumented immigrant students as part of the social investment in human capital. Each year, approximately 65,000 undocumented students in the United States graduate from public schools and only a low percentage pursue higher education. The study conducted in Massachusetts presents evidence of social transformation as participants were also affiliated with SIM (Student Immigrant Movement), to advocate for higher education opportunities for undocumented students, and change social perceptions of undocumented population. The participants' experiences are analyzed using social theories of transmission and transformation along with human capital theory. Data were analyzed using NVivo9 software and multiple readings of the interview transcripts, with guiding research question, how did the immigration status play a role in the pursuit of access to higher education? The analysis in this study is focused on the investment in human capital through education, considering that the individual and social return ought to be greater. The data gathered from the experiences of 20 formerly undocumented students of Latin American descent in this qualitative case study showed that possibilities of changing immigrant status, like the proposed DREAM Act, influenced the motivation to continue education beyond high school. The major themes among the participants' descriptions of their educational experiences as students were related to (a) immigrant status, (b) motivation to continue their postsecondary education, (c) support they received to continue with their education, (d) social return on their educational investment, and (e) their plans for the future. Recommendations for leaders and policy makers are presented, and suggestions for further research are indicated.

DEDICATION

A mi madre Lucia por sus determinación y sacrificios para dejarnos una herencia con más oportunidades en el desafío y la grandeza de ver un río mas allá de nuestro propio pueblo. A mis hijos Verónica y Alejandro por sus inocentes sacrificios para compartir un momento juntos mientras yo dedicaba tiempo a mis estudios; ahora podremos tener más calidad de tiempo juntos.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On a warm summer Saturday, Manuel was hosting a party at his cousin's house to celebrate two major personal accomplishments. His family's two-bedroom apartment was too small to accommodate even his parents, brother, and sister. Manuel had received his bachelor's degree in international business from a 4-year public college in Massachusetts. That same week, Manuel also received the immigration documents (*los papeles*, the papers) that classify him as a permanent resident. Manuel's family had fled Colombia and arrived in the United States when he was 13. After graduating from high school, Manuel enrolled at a community college in the Boston area. Through hard work and determination, Manuel later transferred to a public 4-year college from which he earned his bachelor's degree, defying the low rate of retention for students from community colleges (González Sullivan, 2007; Szelényi & Chang, 2002).

Manuel's story provides a visualization of the barriers and persistence in pursuit of education that many immigrant students—especially Latino immigrants—in the United States experience. The cousin's house symbolizes the continued support that immigrant students seek and obtain from their families to continue their education (Murphy, 2004). Manuel's option for higher education corroborates what studies have demonstrated as the growing role of community colleges educating underprivileged immigrants (Jauregui, Slate, & Brown, 2008; Szelényi & Chang, 2002).

According to Becker (1993), Manuel's characteristics—college-educated, multilingual, and multicultural—are considered assets based on the human capital theory. Every year, nearly 65,000 undocumented students graduate from public high schools in the United States, but most do not go on to college (Drachman, 2006; National Council

on State Legislation [NCSL], 2014; Passel, 2006). Education enables people to develop skills necessary to thrive and contribute to a changing and increasingly interconnected world (Becker, 1993; Friedman, 2007). In an era of strong globalization that propels migration in every region of the world, the United States must implement educational policies that strengthen its position in global affairs.

Chapter 1 of this descriptive case study includes a discussion of the schooling process of Latino immigrant students. The private and social value of education is explored using social theories of functionalism, conflict theories of transmission, critical theories of transformation, and human capital theory. An overview of the composition of the Latino population in Massachusetts, in terms of socioeconomic status and educational achievement is also included in Chapter 1. The importance of equity and access to higher education for undocumented Latino immigrant students is discussed to explain the nature and purpose of the study. The research method, qualitative case study, is also discussed to clarify the suitability of descriptive case study as the best design for the investigation. According to Yin (2012) there are three types of case studies that fit specific purposes of research: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive cse studies. Explanatory case study approaches the investigation through causal reasoning; exploratory case study intends to define research questions and hypotheses; and descriptive case study places events within the context of the experiences of the participants.

Background

From 2000 to 2010, the demographic composition of Massachusetts has changed to a more diverse population. According to the U.S. Census Current Population Survey

(CPS) (U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division [U.S. Census Bureau-PD], 2006, 2009a, 2009b, 2012), the foreign-born population of Massachusetts has increased by more than 17% since 2000. The Latino population accounts for the fastest increase in the state (Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth [MassINC], 2005, 2014). The growing Latino population is predominantly young and has a high percentage of unskilled members, as compared with other groups of immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey [ACS], 2008). The reality that faces the nation and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in this case is that many of these young immigrants need better education to develop their full potential as members of the community. The educational gap that exists between the retiring Baby Boomers and the workers that will replace them is a cause for social concern. A high percentage of Baby Boomers have some level of college education or advanced training, which means that their retirement will lead to a shortage of qualified people to fill their positions in the workforce (Cooper, 2009; Doyle, 2008; Nealy, 2008).

As the world changes and evolves, so do many laws and regulations in the United States, including those that affect immigration policy. The purpose of the current research study was to encourage discussion, influence policy analysis, and make recommendations that will lead to social benefits by increasing the social investment on a greater number of students to include undocumented immigrant students. Both public institutions and society must find ways to provide educationally-deprived communities with the contributions of better educated constituents (Drachman, 2006). The present study may influence educational policies at public colleges and universities in

Massachusetts to provide greater access for undocumented immigrant students who graduate from public high schools.

According to federal regulations, students in kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) are entitled to a free public education regardless of their immigration status (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982). Part of that free public K–12 education includes teaching children whose native language is not English. According to the 2007 Reading Assessment conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2009a), every state in the nation invests public dollars in English language learners (ELL). States are federally mandated to invest in ELLs regardless of the constituents' general thoughts or attitudes toward immigrant students or the learners' immigrant status. Federal regulations for state funding of ELLs' education are derived in part from the Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), which prevents public schools from inquiring about students' immigrant status (Contreras, 2009; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; *Plyler v. Doe*, 1982). The findings in this case study are concurrent with previous research that has shown that once undocumented immigrant students receive a high school diploma, they tend to (a) assimilate into their communities; (b) solve their immigration situation; and (c) accept the United States as their home (Contreras, 2011; Gonzalez, 2010; Pew Hispanic Center, 2007).

Several studies support the argument that education will provide the means for upward mobility and increase the potential for a stable and even prosperous life (Becker, 1993; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007; National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2005; U.S. Census Bureau-PD, 2006, 2009a, 2009b). Data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) of the U.S. Census Bureau (2009) supported this claim:

"Workers with a high-school degree earned an average of $31,286 in 2007, while those with a bachelor's degree earned an average of $57,181" (p. 1). Often, decisions that affect the education of immigrant students are confirmed based on political expectations and not on educational goals (Flores & Chapa, 2009; Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

Since September 11, 2001, the issue of access to higher education for undocumented students has been an intermittent battle in the political arena at both the federal and state levels (Camarota & Jensenius, 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Santos, 2006). In the days before September 11, 2001, optimism was high as the United States planned to pass legislation that would have granted legal status at the federal level to qualifying high school graduates (Olivas, 2008). Legislation reform was postponed immediately following the tragedy of September 11, 2001 and several versions of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act have been presented in the House of Representatives and in the U.S. Senate (DREAM Act of 2009, 2009; NCSL, 2014).

Legislation to address the situation of talented and motivated undocumented immigrant students is under consideration throughout the U.S. As of April 2014, eighteen states—(a) California, (b) Colorado, (c) Connecticut, (d) Florida, (e) Illinois, (f) Kansas, (g) Maryland, (h) Minnesota, (i) Nebraska, (j) New Jersey, (k) New Mexico, (l) New York, (m) Oklahoma, (o) Oregon, (p) Rhode Island (q) Texas, (r) Utah, and (s) Washington—have enacted legislation and programs that support the classification of undocumented immigrant students as state residents for tuition purposes (Morse & Birnbach, 2011; National Council on State Legislation [NCSL], 2102, 2014). Oklahoma later modified its regulation to leave the decision to admit undocumented students up to

the Oklahoma Board of Regents. Similarly, Rhode Island's Board of Governors for Higher Education passed legislation to allow undocumented students who attended high school there for at least three years, and graduate, to pay in-state tuition (NCSL, 2014).

At the same time, states at the other end of the spectrum are opposed to providing greater access to college for undocumented students. Arizona, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia enacted legislation prohibiting any attempt to promote access to higher education for undocumented students (NCSL, 2014; Olivas, 2004, 2008). In 2011 Wisconsin reversed state legislation passed in 2009 allowing undocumented students to pay in-state tuition (NCSL, 2014). In Massachusetts, legislation to categorize undocumented immigrant students as residents of the state—making them eligible for in-state tuition—has not been approved (Flores & Chapa, 2009; MIRA, 2008; Santos, 2006). The discussion of public education policies at the government level is affected by what Flores and Chapa (2009) characterized as "the bipolar aspect of contemporary immigration policy" (p. 91). Individual states are not required to report undocumented students trying to enroll at their public institutions, and local colleges may decide whether to grant access to college to undocumented students (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency [ICE], 2008a).

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court determined in *Plyler v. Doe* that K–12 education was a right for all children living in the United States. The issue considered then was access to elementary and secondary education for undocumented immigrant students. The Court decided for the students, in consideration of the public good resulting from a better-educated population. The Court failed to address the issue of college education for undocumented students living in the United States and ready to attend college. Today,

thousands of undocumented immigrant students receive free K–12 education in Massachusetts (Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, 2006; MIRA, 2008; Owens, 2007). The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (2008) found high dropout rates among all Latinos that kept them from attending college. Of the thousands of undocumented students who receive free K–12 education in Massachusetts, several hundred undocumented immigrant students graduate from high school and pursue college educations (Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, 2006; MIRA, 2008).

Many undocumented immigrant students who manage to go on to college have to postpone their studies or drop out of college altogether (Flores & Chapa, 2009; Gonzalez Sullivan, 2007). The out-of-state fees, their socioeconomic status, and their immigration status make it extremely difficult to afford a postsecondary education, even at a public institution (Flores & Chapa, 2009; Gonzalez Sullivan, 2007; Santos, 2006). The probability of greater social gains from the social investment made using tax dollars on the elementary and secondary education of the undocumented immigrant students is reduced. A population with less education tends to rely on future social investments in the form of other social services, such as services to needy families and adult literacy programs, increasing expenses for the community (Ochoa, 2006; Passel, 2006; *Plyler v. Doe*, 1982). The investment in education is motivated by the assumption that empowering those who receive the education will eventually contribute in the form of tax dollars, spending power, or another form of social participation (Becker, 1993, Kezar, 2006; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The general problem. Approximately 65,000 undocumented students, the majority of them Latino immigrants, graduate each year from public schools in the United States (Contreras, 2009; Santos, 2006). Less than 20% of those undocumented students advance to higher education. Since 2000, federal and state governments have attempted to address the issue of access to higher education for undocumented students (Flores & Chapa, 2009). Several versions of the federal DREAM Act have been debated in Congress, but failed to pass. As of 2014, 18 states had enacted legislation that allows undocumented students to obtain higher education at the in-state tuition rate (National Conference on State Legislature, NCSL, 2014). Many undocumented students persist in their quest for higher education, in spite of their immigrant status. The need to invest in education is clear at the national and local levels. A general problem exists because, as Gándara and Contreras (2009) indicated,

> Latino students are underachieving at high and consistent rates, and while children of immigrants . . . do indeed improve their educational attainment with each generation, there appears to be a ceiling effect that results in little or no improvement after the third generation. (p. 18)

The specific problem. Educational approaches that consider demographic changes are needed to integrate the growing Latino population into mainstream society effectively. The specific problem is that resources invested in the K-12 education of many undocumented Hispanic students represent a social loss because of negative impact of the immigrant status on student motivation to further their education (Flores & Chapa, 2009; Olivas, 2009; Santos, 2006). Private and social expectations are determining

factors for investing in higher education. Individuals tend to seek a higher education degree because of the expected private benefits, while governments and other entities such as corporations invest in human capital, expecting social and financial returns (Becker, 1993; Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, 2006; Van der Merwe, 2010). Using a hybrid of judgmental sampling (Neuman, 2006) and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2008) methods, 20 semi-structured interviews of formerly undocumented higher education students were conducted in Massachusetts. The current qualitative case study provides an exploration of the experiences of 20 previously undocumented Latino college students to understand their transition to college. Conclusions gleaned from the present study may assist leaders to develop policies that address access to higher education related to the social investment in human capital through the education of undocumented students.

The educational attainment of the Latino population lags behind major ethnic groups. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Education and Social Stratification Branch (2011), the percentage of Hispanics between the ages of 25 and 29 who completed 4 years of high school or more in 2008 is 68.3%, compared with 87.8% for the rest of the population. For the same group, the figures for completion of a 4-year college degree are more alarming: 12.4% for Hispanics and 30.8% for the general population (U.S. Census Bureau-ACS, 2008).

By improving opportunities for undocumented immigrants to pursue college education, the state of Massachusetts increases the potential skills spillover of the social investment made on some of the K–12 students. The potential for reducing future social expenses might increase because of better educated adult members of society (Becker,

1993). Education policies must be designed to provide opportunities for all groups in society to obtain adequate training and preparation to compete in the job market of the 21st century.

Methodology and Population

The present qualitative case study was an exploration of the experiences of 20 previously undocumented college students. Participants have experience as undocumented students who attended high school in the northeastern United States and then went on to attend college. Effective policies can support education based on public needs by strengthening social integration, and increasing the possibility of obtaining the most from the investment. The effects of immigration legislation on financial policies that affect undocumented immigrant students' motivation to continue with their education were discussed. Access to postsecondary education for undocumented students tends to affect the rate of return on the social investment in K-12 education, potentially allowing for better living conditions because of being more educated, according to human capital theory (Becker, 1993, Moretti, 2004; Van der Merwe, 2010).

Population of the study. Little information exists in the literature on higher education regarding the specific topic of access to higher education for undocumented students in Massachusetts. Information available on undocumented population does not address access to college education as a separate issue. Undocumented students' status is discussed in existing literature for policy purposes as part of the larger population of undocumented immigrants (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008; Olivas, 2008; Portes, 2004). Since the year 2000, an increase in research related to undocumented students and higher education has been predominantly focused on

southern states. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the transition of undocumented Latino students from high school to college as part of the social investment in human capital. The study did not include the broader issue of immigration legislation in the United States.

The current qualitative case study may aid in exploring many barriers that undocumented students face in accessing higher education, diminishing the return of social investment in human capital made during their K-12 years of education. The study consisted of interviews with 20 Latino and Latina immigrant students from the Boston area who graduated from public high school. Participants were formerly classified as undocumented immigrant students. The study includes a discussion of the future of undocumented students as contributing members of society as part of the continuous social investment (Contreras, 2011; Hermes, 2008; Pasque, 2006; Yoshikawa, 2011). The present study may illuminate ways for the state to reap greater benefits from the social investment in the education of these individuals (Becker, 1993).

Significance of the Study

The aim of the present study was to examine the transition to college of 20 Latino immigrant students, who were undocumented for at least 3 years during the time they attended K–12 public schools. Allowing individuals to empower themselves to make a greater social contribution may serve to strengthen the communities where they live. Becker (1993) saw attention to "the influence of market size on the incentive to invest in skills" (p. 89) as vital to an economically strong society. Immigrant stability is beneficial

to society in terms of economics and labor-market advantages to the recipient of the resident status (Powers et al., 2004).

Immigrant stability brings public and private benefits in terms of economics and labor-market advantages (Powers, Kraly, & Seltzer, 2004). The incentive is to strengthen the Latino population through access to higher education as part of the social responsibility to engage in the development of communities that will be able to interact in a complex global setting (Kezar, 2006; Pasque, 2006). The current study provides an exploration of the experiences of 20 Latino immigrant students, who were undocumented for at least 3 years during the time they attended K–12 public schools in Massachusetts.

Significance of the study to leaders. The current study may be significant to leaders in exploring new strategies that will shape organizations to conform to global interaction changes. Areas such as global migration and education affect industries, countries, and organizations (Friedman, 2007). Leaders must be able to use their expertise and update their strategies to address current needs of society in areas of education. Gonzalez Sullivan (2007) concluded that educational policies at the national, state, and institutional levels must be designed in ways that "integrate [Latinos] into the mainstream so that they can contribute to our economy and civic life" (p. 419). Higher education is not simply an individual benefit. The relationship to society should be seen as a value to the collective, the public good. The results of the current study may inform educational leaders of the need to modify strategies to coordinate work and motivational strategies between K–12 schools and institutions of higher education.

The characteristics of the participants in the current study and the study results may serve as sources of information beyond the scope of this investigation. Some of the

participants have educational experiences outside Massachusetts and the United States. The study results may illustrate important issues in areas of international education, immigration relations with Latin America, and economic impact of educating transient students. Educational transfer, the lending and borrowing of educational policies from different regions of the world and of the country, may assist leaders design sound educational policies (Perry & Tor, 2009). The present study results may provide leaders with information needed for the design and implementation of educational policies in a changing society.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative study makes possible the gathering of data from the experiences of the participants as manifested in their own words and influenced by their lived events (Yin 2009). A qualitative case study design provides a familiarity with the topic of research—the life experiences—to those who participate in the research: the research subjects and the researcher. The semi-structured interviews in the current qualitative case study followed survey questions that assisted in learning about the participants' background (see Appendices D and E) as recommended by Creswell (2008) and Neuman (2006). The process for the present study began with a focus on a central topic, which led to multiple levels of analysis of the participants' attitude, responses, believes, and the social influence in the educational process of undocumented immigrants. The analysis included strategies to confirm the accuracy of stories through triangulation—a technique recommended for gathering the data and drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2008; Neuman, 2006; Spradley, 1979; Yin, 2009).

A quantitative research method was not considered for the current study because, according to Creswell (2008), the designs found in quantitative analysis deal with statistical figures. A quantitative design, relying on specific measurable data and predictable outcomes as explained by Vivar (2007), would not reveal the type of data needed for the present study. Merriam (2009) recommends a qualitative method to place the experiences of the research subject within a sociocultural framework. In this setting, the researcher first considers the stories of the participants as a unit of analysis. Data were organized and analyzed using NVivo9 software and multiple readings of the interview transcripts to code and identify concepts and categories according to the structure outlined (see Appendix E) to interprete and classify data, as recommended by Yin (2009) and Sinkovics, Penz, and Ghauri (2008).

A case study report was used to present the data, and to illustrate participants' experiences in their own context (Creswell, 2008; Neuman, 2006). The qualitative case study research method permits a close representation of the participants' life experiences under analysis, which may lead to a clearer understanding by the reader/consumer of case study research (Neuman, 2006; Yin, 2009).

An overview of undocumented students' schooling experience, including their access to higher education in Massachusetts, provides the opportunity to place today's immigration issues in proper context. The state of Massachusetts is considered a place that has embraced immigrants since the arrival of the Pilgrims aboard the Mayflower in 1620 (Zinn, 2003). From the mid-19th century until the early 20th century, one in every four residents of Massachusetts was born in another country (Avault & Vrabel, 2005). From the year 1990 to 2000, new immigrants' participation in the civilian workforce in

Massachusetts increased by 223%; by 2003, the contribution of immigrants to the civilian labor force of Massachusetts was 62% (MassINC, 2005). The change and shift in demographics require an exploration into the repercussions of the education policy in Massachusetts.

The federal government determines immigration regulations in the United States. Immigration legislation affects education policies, which in turn have repercussions in the communities where undocumented students live (Avault & Vrabel, 2005; Gonzalez, 2007; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). The consequences of immigration legislation on education are compounded because many aspects of education policy are left for each of the 50 states to decide (Olivas, 2004). At the state level, Massachusetts has yet to pass legislation that allows undocumented immigrant students to pay the in-state tuition rate.

The nature of the present research was to understand the need for improvement in educational policies that address the needs of Latino immigrant students post high school. The assumption is that sources of data are sufficient to make reliable and valid conclusions. The sources of data for the current study included (a) participant interviews; (b) official data from the Massachusetts Department of Education, U.S. Census Bureau, and Massachusetts Board of Higher Education; and (c) field observations of participants' involvement in community, school, and extracurricular activities. The results show the need to address educational policy dealing with immigrant students.

According to the Massachusetts Taxpayer Foundation (2006) and MIRA (2008), the number of undocumented college attendees in Massachusetts is between 400 and 600. A sample of 20 former undocumented college students provided sufficient data to conduct qualitative case study research with "hard-to-reach, stigmatized, or hidden

populations" (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006, p. 61). Another reason for selecting 20 participants is that 20 interviews suffice to determine a data saturation point (Creswell, 2008). According to Creswell (2008) saturation is "a state in which the researcher makes the subjective determination that new data will not provide new information or insights for developing categories" (p. 443).

Research Questions

The implications of immigration status in accessing higher education as well as the barriers encountered by participants in this research study are explored. Motivation is also examined as a component of the decision to continue to higher education as a determinant factor to seek and obtain financial and non-financial resources to achieve their educational objectives. The main questions that guided the study to analyze the life experiences of the 20 Latino students participating in the educational process in Massachusetts were,

RQ1: How did the immigration status play a role in the pursuit of access to higher education?

RQ2: What barriers were faced by undocumented students in accessing postsecondary education?

RQ3: How did the immigrant status affect the motivation of undocumented immigrant students to seek higher education?

RQ4: How do undocumented students view sources of financial support to continue their education?

RQ5: Why are sources of non-financial support significant in the decision to aspire to higher education for undocumented students?

The analysis in the present study illustrates the need for policies that will provide greater opportunities for a postsecondary education. The interviews with research participants may further understanding of how participants analyze their educational experiences in relation to policies in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The purpose of the qualitative case study design was not to look for objectivity, but for the respondents' perceptions of the past through "open-ended questions to capture how the person understands her or his own past" (Neuman, 2006, p. 408). The informant-participant must trust and feel comfortable enough to provide answers to questions related to cultural details to the interviewer/researcher (Yin, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the present study conceptualized access to higher education based on social theories of transmission and transformation and human capital theory in relation to education. The relationship of social theory to qualitative studies "can be defined as a system of interconnected ideas that condenses and organizes knowledge about the social world and explains how it works" (Neuman, 2006, p. 8). The present study served as a guide to understand the educational experiences of previously undocumented Latino immigrant students in relation to education policies in Massachusetts.

Education is considered to be at the center of the search for equity in the United States (Drachman, 2006; Pasque, 2006). Education policy has changed with historical

periods, requiring adjustment in educational opportunities to fit the context in which policies are designed (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004). Since the mid-20th century, education policies have been designed to serve specific purposes or sectors of the population, by providing broader educational opportunities. As an example, the G.I. Bill provided for the education of World War II veterans in the late 1940s (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Olivas, 2006). The Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 led policymakers to work for an equitable system of education (Cooper et al., 2004). The Cold War era brought about the National Defense Education Act as well as the National Science Foundation (Tozer, Violas, & Senese, 2009).

The theoretical model used in the current study is reciprocal relations between education and the economy as described by Becker (1993). According to Becker, investment in education raises the human capital of the individual, which in turn tends to fortify the economic strength of the community of the individual. The expectations regarding the benefits of allowing undocumented students access to higher education in Massachusetts are mixed. Proponents of in-state tuition present the issue as beneficial to the individual and society in general (Avault & Vrabel, 2005). Critics of in-state tuition see the legislation as an unfair advantage for violators of immigration laws (Matloff, 2006; Stewart, 2002).

The potential increase of minority populations with higher education degrees is likely to have a positive impact among the less privileged communities in Massachusetts. Most undocumented immigrants come from the poorest economic sector of society (Passel, 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Greater access to higher education for

undocumented students may represent benefits to the public good as individuals report gains in aspects of life other than wages. Access to education is seen as the solution for a myriad of social problems, potentially reducing state expenses (Hacker & Dreifus, 2010; Ravitch, 2010).

Educational approaches that consider demographic changes are needed for effective integration of the growing Latino population into mainstream society. State and local governments' interpretations of immigration regulations affect a potentially higher college enrollment (Contreras, 2009; Kezar, 2006; Olivas, 2009; Santos, 2006; U.S. ICE, 2008a). A less-educated population leads to a loss in the rate of return of the social investment in K-12 education according to the human capital theory (Becker, 1993) and an analysis by the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation (2006).

The current study provided an exploration of access to higher education for Latino students in Massachusetts through a sociological perspective. Researchers and leaders in education consider issues from a variety of perspectives, relying on several theories of education and social justice. The continuity of values, norms, and beliefs in society are discussed in the current study using theories of transmission and transformation (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). The schooling process was analyzed through the lenses of functionalism and conflict theory to interpret the transmission of social norms. Interpretive theory, which considers that social interaction is the behavior associated at a smaller, local, more individual level, and critical theory, which defines the interaction of the individual and society, were used to attempt to understand the transformation of society.

The present study may contribute to education, particularly in the area of equity. Equity in education deals with social factors such as demographic changes, economic transformation, and the empowerment of members of the community to become fully productive citizens (Baker, 2009; Drachman, 2006; Gonzales, 2007; Kezar, 2006). Since the times of Thomas Jefferson, education has been considered as the vehicle for equality and the foundation of a democratic society (Dewey, 1975; Hacker & Dreifus, 2010; Tozer et al., 2009). The potential role of education in maintaining the strength of society was manifested in the outcome of *Plyler v. Doe* in 1982. The Supreme Court mandated that education be provided to all children in K–12 classrooms in the United States, lest an underclass of citizens be produced. The current study may help clarify factors that need change in access to higher education for undocumented students.

Definnitions

The following are definitions of key terms that appear throughout the current study:

Cultural capital. Cultural capital refers to a person's knowledge and skills that influence her or his ability to function in society and contribute to social reproduction. Cultural capital values are considered prestigious and legitimated through nationally recognized institutions such as government and universities. Something different may be seen as a challenge to established norms (DiMaggio, 2004).

Entered without inspection (EWI). EWI refers to immigrants entering the country unaccounted for in any way by a government agency (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency [ICE], 2008b).

Hispanic/Latino. The origins of the term "Latin" America is attributed to a Colombian publicist in 1856 (Bushnell & Macaulay, 1988) to ascribe a common cultural association of the peoples colonized by Spain, France, and Portugal. In the context of the present research, the two terms—Hispanic and Latino—are used interchangeably to refer to populations originating from the Spanish-speaking countries of the Western hemisphere.

Illegal immigrant. Illegal immigrant is mentioned to clarify the use by some of the literature sources (Camarota & Jensenius, 2008; IIRIRA, 1996; Mattlof, 2006; Urias 2008). The term illegal is not used in the present study in reference to immigrants because "illegal" refers to actions and not to individuals or persons.

Out-of-status. Out-of-status is a classification that refers to members of the undocumented population who entered the United States legally, but overstayed the time limit expressed in their registrations with the Student Exchange and Visitor Program (U.S. ICE, 2008b). Out-of-status is the term used for people whose admission into the United States was documented by some government agency, but are no longer authorized to stay in the country (U.S. ICE, 2008b).

Skills spillover. Skills spillover refers to the benefits in human capital attainment realized through the interaction of better educated and less educated members of a community (Becker, 1993; Moretti, 2003; Van derMerwe, 2010). Becker (1993) concludes that "social returns are said to be larger than private returns because of the external economies produced by college graduates" (p. 209).

Social capital. Social capital refers to the identifiable kinds of social links that promote a sense of connection among individuals in a given culture. Social capital is

used for the purpose of locating and gaining access to jobs and other private and public resources, such as better schools and obtaining scholarships (DiMaggio, 2004; Gamarnikow, 2003). For the purpose of the present analysis social capital is considered within the immigrant student experiences of the participants.

Temporary protected status (TPS). TPS is an immigration status granted by the federal government for humanitarian or political reasons (U.S. ICE, 2008b; U.S. CIS, 2010). The process to determine eligibility of a child to stay permanently in the United States, or to be ordered to leave, may take several years (U.S. CIS, 2010). The TPS category may be granted for several years, sometimes longer than the time it would take a child to finish middle and high school at taxpayers' expense. For purposes of higher education, it is not clear where the persons with TPS fall because of their nonresident status under federal regulations. Foreign citizens who receive TPS are permitted to stay and work in the United States, and pay taxes using an individual tax identification number. Individual states are responsible for regulating students' access to public higher education as either state residents or out-of-state students (U.S. ICE, 2008a). Thus, the investment made on the K-12 education of TPS children is potentially ineffective and the need for future social investment in those children's later life is greater.

Undocumented immigrant. The term undocumented immigrant refers to immigrants in the United States without a visa or green card, or immigrants living in the United States beyond the period allowed by a visa (Passel, 2006; U.S. CIS, 2010). Visas could be for purposes such as student exchange programs, professional occupation, or political association (U.S. CIS, 2010). Undocumented immigrant categories include the children of the adults who initially qualified to enter the United States through exchange

programs, professional occupation, or political association but overstayed their visas (Passel & Taylor, 2010).

The terms "undocumented" and "illegal," while similar in significance, are different in origin and in connotations. The term undocumented refers to persons who migrated to the United States and are not accounted for through the formal process of customs and immigration agencies (U.S. CIS, 2010). The action of entering the country without inspection (EWI) or overstaying a visa (out-of-status) leads to being categorized as undocumented (U.S. CIS, 2008a, 2008b). Thus, what is illegal is the action of staying, and not the person who carries out the action.

Regardless of how students arrive in the classroom, many will resolve their immigrant status, stay in the United States, and often obtain a delayed postsecondary education (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). According to Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1995), "people's association of the terms 'illegal,' 'criminal,' and 'immigrant' feeds the common belief that not only are most new immigrants 'illegals' but they are here with the purpose of committing crimes" (p. 35). In the current study, the term undocumented immigrant was used to project a more neutral image of the individual in this category.

Assumptions

A fundamental assumption of the present study was that participants would provide frank and honest responses regarding their educational experiences. A second assumption was that participants would have a personal interest to tell their stories in a study intended to inform educators, the public, and policymakers. Participants' personal

interest may be rooted in their potential to grow in educational settings, expand their human capital, and to contribute positively to society through skills spillover (Becker, 1993; Moretti, 2004; Van der Merwe, 2010). A third assumption was that research subjects' accounts would be accurately recorded; the data would be thoroughly analyzed and thematically approached.

Another assumption was that the research design would interfere as little as possible with the participants' responses. A further assumption was that the interviewer would not influence the participants' responses in any form or fashion (Neuman, 2006; Yin, 2009). The interview format—unstructured, face-to-face—was chosen to minimize the effect of the interviewer's appearance, tone of voice, and question wording over the responses of the interviewees (Neuman, 2006). Through voluntary participation in the present study, it was assumed that participants could comprehend the nature of the study, the questions, the risks, and benefits involved.

Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations

Scope. The scope of the current study was limited to barriers in education encountered by undocumented Latino immigrant students transitioning from high school to college in Massachusetts. Participation in the study was limited to volunteers who contributed their time and answers to face-to-face interviews. Only former undocumented Latino immigrant students were considered for participation in the current study. The condition of public education is a major concern for all ethnic groups across the United States (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Communities expect to benefit from better educated members of society by providing K–

12 schooling to everyone, regardless of their immigrant status (Contreras, 2011; Ravitch, 2010). Massachusetts could benefit from improved educational opportunities for Latino immigrant students (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, 2009).

The current research provided an exploration of the possibility of access to higher education for undocumented students. Access to higher education for more K–12 public school graduates may represent a way to obtain higher returns of resources invested in the K–12 education of undocumented students in Massachusetts. The discouragement that many Latino immigrant students feel when pursuing a higher education degree are evident in the alarming dropout figures presented by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2009a). For the school year 2007–2008, Latinos dropped out at a rate of 2.5 times greater than the rate for all other ethnic groups in grades 9–12 (MDESE, 2009a). At the postsecondary level, the latest report for a cohort is for the year 2005 (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education & Massachusetts Department of Education, 2008). In 2005, the rate of Latino students who graduated from Massachusetts public high schools and went on to public postsecondary institutions in Massachusetts was 7%. This figure is 4.5 times less than the rate for all other students who graduated from public high schools in the state the same year (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education & Massachusetts Department of Education, 2008).

Limitations. Among the limitations of the present study some were anticipated and some occurred as the process of data collection and analysis progressed. The potential for bias during the collection of data presented an initial limitation. This bias limitation was addressed through the methodology of the current study and coding

categories emanating from the research questions and the range of responses from the participants to the interview questions.

One limitation was the investment in education as part of the human capital of undocumented immigrant students, which is not limited to the educational opportunities discussed in the study. Most participants had formal educational experiences prior to their arrival in the United States, and mostly at the elementary level. The effects of early and elementary education, which are not part of this study, are considered influential factors in the educational outcomes later in life (Heckman, Pinto, & Savelyev, 2012; Lee, Drake, Pennucci, Bjornstad, & Edovald, 2012).

Another limitation was bias involving the collection of data. The methodology of the study was considered to address potential bias. The small sample of participants included only the experiences of former undocumented Latino immigrant students attending K–12 public institutions, and later as postsecondary students with official residency in Massachusetts. The present study was limited to the events and experiences shared by participants up to the time of the interview process.

Qualitative studies must address credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability when considering the range of data sources. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the inclusion of "sufficient descriptive data" facilitates the transferability of the study but "the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere. The original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do" (p. 298). Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to validity in the context of qualitative research as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research. For Firestone (1987,

p.19) "qualitative study provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author's conclusion 'makes sense'" and "describes people acting in events."

Another limitation relating to bias emanated from the focus of the study and the data gathered from the specific questions posed to the participants (Merriam, 2009). Reactions from the participants to the immigrant experience, their perception and opinion of the condition of undocumented immigrant, surfaced during the data collection (Yin, 2009).

In this qualitative study NVivo9 was used to supplement analysis of data. Yin (2009) and Sinkovics, et al (2008) recommend the implementation of computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software. Adherence to the coding system developed in Appendix E was essential to interpret data from the participants' responses. To safeguard against misunderstanding or misinterpretation of participants preservation of the participants' responses and carefully paraphrasing when necessary was implemented to categorize responses.

Another limitation in the study was generalizability. Qualitative research demands greater attention to the integrity in the study findings and concern for the generalizability of the results, which are strengthened through the use of common setting (Brentnall & Bundy, 2009). Case study research addresses the specificity of populations, and in this study the population was limited to former undocumented students of Latino descent residing in Massachusetts. Information gleaned from this qualitative case study might be more useful to states in northeastern United States with similar demographics, and can also assist educators and policy makers across the nation.

The emphasis of qualitative research is to understand and learn from the experiences and the events shared by participants. A small group of 20 participants was adequate to allow for the collection of detailed information and focused analysis of the descriptions with less concern for the generalizability of the findings. The open-ended questions of the interviews and the interview protocol, provided an opportunity for the "pursuit of a consistent line of inquiry" (Yin, 2009, p. 102)

Aspects of credibility and confirmability were addressed through the recruiting process, snowball sampling and judgmental sampling, with the participation of Student Immigrant Movement (SIM) members affording the means to triangulate responses. All participants have had direct or indirect involvement with SIM. Prior to the study, those who were directly involved had publicly shared their stories as undocumented students during meetings or through the media. Those who were indirectly involved in the study either had relatives who were involved with SIM and their status as former undocumented students was confirmed by SIM members.

Delimitations. Delimitations indicate what the research does not cover (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001), to "help readers judge to what extent the findings cannot be generalized to other populations" (Creswell, 2008, p. 207). The current qualitative case study was not a representation of all immigrant groups or situations faced by all immigrant students. The study relied only on data from the experiences of formerly undocumented Latino immigrant students. The selection criteria for the participants excluded other groups of students, limiting the study's generalizability.

Questions of generalizability in a case study design are addressed by Merriam (2009), Yin (2009), and Vivar (2007) who indicate that the objective of qualitative

studies is to understand contemporary events in real life context, and recommend areas for further study. The present research was limited to participants enrolled at public institutions of higher education in Massachusetts, who were undocumented students while attending public schools in K–12. The integrity of the study was preserved through the use the interview protocol, and the Scope section of this study enumerates findings and results that might be generalizable.

Summary

Chapter 1 contained an examination of the context in which the present study was used to explore the situation of Latino immigrant students in Massachusetts. Noted in the study are the potential social and civic contributions of the research participants. The circumstances of undocumented Latino students addressed in the study need to be considered in education policies aimed to improve opportunities for all students, and increase the human capital of Massachusetts.

The various reforms implemented since the 1980s seem insufficient to close the achievement gap between Latinos and other groups (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; MDESE, 2009a; Rivera & Nieto, 1993). The discussion of the issue of underperformance by Latino students in public schools in Massachusetts paves the way for the need to revise to social and educational policies, providing opportunities for the students determined to obtain a postsecondary education. The need to design policies that address opposite ends of the educational spectrum among Latino students is vital to Massachusetts.

The review of the literature in chapter 2 presents an analysis of the influence of immigration legislation over education policy design and implementation. How the state's policy decisions affect students' motivation to go to college is examined in chapter 2. The final section of chapter 2 is an analysis of the participation of the general Latino population in their educational development in Massachusetts. Reasons for the underperformance of Latino students in Massachusetts are also explored, and the financial cost of remediation and other social costs are discussed.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of the present qualitative case study was to explore the experiences of formerly undocumented Latino immigrant students during their transition from high school to college in Massachusetts. Contributions of immigrant students present a national debate at different levels of educational attainment (Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, 2007; Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, 2006; Matloff, 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Education leaders at the state and local levels have to address the issue of access to higher education for students, including undocumented students. The link between the social strength of communities and education has been widely discussed in different areas of the social sciences (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Boyles, Cunningham, Mullins, & Pasque, 2006; Dewey, 1975; Soska & Butterfield, 2005; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008).

The Latino population in the United States is increasing rapidly (U.S. Census-PD, 2006, 2009a). This population growth presents a potential impact in the future of the economic strength of the nation (Friedman, 2007; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gonzalez Sullivan, 2007). Many Latino students come from families that may include mixed nationals, native-born U.S. citizens, and undocumented immigrant members (Passel & Taylor, 2010; Yoshikawa, 2011). To provide opportunities for all to develop their full potential is in the nation's interest.

The opportunities for social participation are discussed by King (2009) who notes that "15% to 20% of the annual average growth in gross domestic product for the United States is explained by increases in educational levels" (p. 1). Others have arrived at similar conclusions in separate studies (Friedman, 2007; Hacker & Dreifus, 2010; Passel,

2003, 2006). Gándara and Contreras (2009) warned of a crisis that will extend beyond ethnic groups if the education of Latino students is not given the sense of urgency the situation demands. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has taken some steps to address the shifting demands of the job market of the 21st century by promoting college enrollment for all students (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education & Massachusetts Department of Education, 2008). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts gives no consideration to undocumented high school graduates determined to go to college, even though these students represent less than 1% of the enrollment of public higher education enrollees (Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, 2006; MIRA, 2008).

Access to higher education for undocumented students and the transition to postsecondary education of former undocumented students, is the focus of this literature review. Education is perceived as the panacea that propels individuals into social and financial attainment and security in the United States (Hacker & Dreifus, 2010; Tozer et al., 2009; Wirt et al., 2004). Becker's (1993) human capital theory guides the explanation of the economic investment in undocumented students who attend K–12 public schools. Social theories of transformation and transmission are used to understand the social investment aspect of educating undocumented students (Gutek, 2004; Neuman, 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Social theories are fundamental in examining legislation and policies that affect the schooling process at various levels.

The current study provided an explanation of the worth of the social investment and the rationality of the perseverance of the undocumented students who enroll in college despite many barriers they face. The main questions that led the analysis of

Latino student participation in the educational process in Massachusetts were the following:

RQ1: How did the immigration status play a role in the pursuit of access to higher education?

RQ2: Why some regular educational activities during the K-12 years turn out to be barriers for undocumented students aspiring access to higher education?

RQ3: How did the immigrant status affect the motivation of undocumented immigrant students to seek higher education?

RQ4: How do undocumented students view sources of financial support to continue their education?

RQ5: Why are sources of non-financial support significant in the decision to aspire to higher education for undocumented students?

Chapter 2 provides an examination of the state campaign "to prepare all public high school graduates for college" (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education & Massachusetts Department of Education, 2008). Chapter 2 includes evidence to support the need for students to self-advocate and make demands for the opportunity to attend a postsecondary education institution.

The literature review includes an overview of federal laws and regulations that influence education policy design and implementation for immigrant students, including undocumented students. Massachusetts state policy decisions affecting Latino students enrolled in public institutions of education are also included. Academic performance of Latino students in Massachusetts is explored using social theories of transmission and transformation. The financial cost of remediation and other social costs are analyzed

using human capital theory. The participation of the general Latino population in education in Massachusetts is discussed in terms of philosophical theories of social justice and in light of the effect of education policies and immigration policies.

Title Searches, Articles, Research Documents, Journals Researched

Information regarding access to higher education for undocumented students in Massachusetts is minimal. A variety of sources were used to gather information regarding how the state is responding to the needs of the undocumented Latino immigrant student population in Massachusetts. The online library of University of Phoenix, other college libraries, and public libraries were used to search databases such as (a) ProQuest, (b) EBSCOhost, (c) Gale Power Search, (d) ProQuest digital dissertations, (e) ERIC, (f) SAGE Full-Text, and (g) SocINDEX. According to Neuman (2006) and Creswell (2008), book collections, electronic sources, and book depositories of the United States government present a variety of sources of information to start a literature review.

In an effort to generate results, the searches were conducted using ordinary terms related to the topic of the current study. Among these terms were Latinos and education, immigrant students, transient students, undocumented immigrant students, minority students, and school and society. Terms that are more specific were added to the search as necessary. Terms included (a) equity in education, (b) social theories and education, (c) transformation and education, (d) functionalism and education, (e) transformational education, (f) transmission pedagogy, (g) No Child Left Behind and English language learners, (h) undocumented students' access to higher education, (i) DREAM Act, (j)

school policy, (k) international students, (l) international education, and (m) immigration policy and education.

The documents collected and evaluated for the present study comprised 160 scholarly articles, books, and government publications. Internet sources included websites for organizations such as (a) the Center for Immigration Studies, (b) The Pew Hispanic Center, and (c) the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA). University research centers such as the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy of the University of Massachusetts, and the Harvard School of Education resource center were also consulted. The literature search covered areas related to the historical perspective of immigrant access to K–12 education and access to postsecondary education. The cultural aspect of the search included areas of (a) self-identity and self-esteem, (b) linguistic barriers, and (c) sociocultural environment encountered by immigrant college-ready students. Literature reviewed in relation to the choice of higher education included topics on community college versus 4-year institution, motivation, determination, and sources of moral and financial support.

As the demographics of the United States change, the approach to education, and the purposes of schooling must be adjusted for congruence with the paradigm shift. Social theory is considered appropriate for the study as "a system of interconnected ideas that condenses and organizes the knowledge about the social world and explains how it works" (Neuman, 2006, p. 8). Three major categories of sociological theories led the analysis of schooling: social transmission theories, interpretive theories, and theories of transformation (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999).

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory refers to activities that increase human resources because of actions that affect financial and psychological returns (Becker, 1993; Moretti, 2004; Van der Merwe, 2010). According to Becker's (1993) human capital theory, "human capital analysis assumes that schooling raises earnings and productivity mainly by providing knowledge, skills, and a way of analyzing problems" (p. 19). Critics of human capital theory argue that investment in human capital promotes credentialism. Schooling credentials emphasize the abilities and skills of workers who have the means to go on to college (Becker, 1993). For Becker, "credentialism does not explain most of the positive association between earnings and schooling" (p. 20). According to Moretti (2004), the connection between earnings and schooling manifests itself in an "increase in the share of educated workers…[and] will raise the productivity of uneducated workers [result of] human capital spillovers" (p. 178). In Massachusetts, a region with a high ratio of higher education institutions (U.S. Census-CPS, 2009), there tends to be what Moretti described as "higher levels of unobserved ability" (p. 208). Unobserved ability results from the interaction of educated and uneducated workers. Many people in uneducated sectors of the population in Massachusetts are immigrants (MassINC, 2005; U.S. Census-CPS, 2009) interacting with people affiliated with the many institutions of higher education in the region.

Becker (1993) called for equality in opportunity for the less privileged members of society to invest in human capital. Becker did refer to the fundamental need for the federal government to step in and assist those students determined to get an education. According to Becker, "Virtually every country has laws requiring a minimum investment

in human capital. Usually only a minimum number of school years is required" by law and "in the 'egalitarian' approach to income distribution, minimum investment legislation would make sense under that approach" (p. 140). Legislation allowing more individuals to invest in their development and gain in human capital is likely to lead to greater private and social gains (Becker, 1993; Moretti, 2004). Investment in education is likely to be complemented by other traits and values such as culture, language, family involvement, and community background (Becker, 1993; Pil & Leana, 2009; Van der Merwe, 2010).

The estimates of the returns on education based on human capital theory are calculated by the years of education and the possibilities of developing a productive life using the skills learned (Acemoglu & Angrist, 2000; Moretti, 2004). Thus, the earlier in life the investment in human capital is made, the greater rate of return for the individual and for society (Becker, 1993; Moretti, 2004; Vander Merwe, 2010). As a nation, the United States is obligated to invest for several years in the education of children in K–12 (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982). In 1982, the *Plyler v. Doe* case involved undocumented immigrant students. In 2010, the estimates of undocumented students graduating from public high schools in the United States was more than 65,000 (Contreras, 2011; Drachman, 2006). Of the undocumented high school graduates, 57% are Latino (Olivas, 2009; Passel & Taylor, 2010).

The central tenet of the human capital theory is that higher education is essential to the improved productivity of individuals and competitive strength of a nation (Becker, 1993; Gonzalez Sullivan, 2007; Moretti, 2004; Van der Merwe, 2010). According to Becker (1993), the full benefits of the investment made do not reflect returns to the individual, but to firms and society in general, particularly among skilled workers.

Limiting access to higher education for undocumented students who received K-12 education in the United States is detrimental to the individual and even more damaging to society (Fry, 2010; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). By drastically limiting the possibilities for those students to continue investing in their own human capital through higher education, the prospects of social benefits from the skills spillover of the investment made in their K-12 education of undocumented students are lowered (Becker, 1993; Moretti, 2004; Pil & Leana, 2009).

The losses in human capital investment in undocumented students' K–12 education tend to increase or become permanent if the individual does not continue to invest in human capital (Becker, 1993). Attempts are made to recruit qualified graduate immigrant students to compensate for the low enrollment in key areas of higher education, such as mathematics and physical sciences (Becker, 1993; Hacker & Dreifus, 2010; Matloff, 2006). The permanent investment loss is clearly explained by Becker (1993). Referring to those who do not continue to receive the benefits of human capital investment, Becker stated, "This is why the labor market cannot do much for school dropouts who can hardly read and never develop good working habits, and why it is so difficult to devise policies to help these groups" (p. 21).

Social Transmission Theories

Functionalism. As part of the social transmission theories, functionalism and conflict theories are predominant theoretical frameworks used to explain the distinct roles of different social structures. Functionalism focuses on the different institutions of society to analyze how a social system works (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999;

Pai, Adler, & Shadiow, 2006). The analytical interpretation of the social structures leads to what is known as structural functionalism. Structural functionalism seeks to explain how social structures, such as the family, the school, or belief system, help maintain a social balance (Neuman, 2006). According to Neuman (2006), "success or failure of one part has ramifications for other parts and for the entire system. The system might refer to a family, or a social group, or a formal organization, or an entire society" (p. 73).

The structuralist view maintains that the different social organisms work to preserve the stability of society by preventing, or slowly moderating, change (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Gutek, 2004). According to functionalists, as a social institution the school transmits and preserves the values of the dominant culture (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Parenti, 1995). The structural functionalism perspective overlooks the role of conflict and contradiction as key components in delineating the contours of society and individual learning (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2007; Neuman, 2006).

According to functionalists, the purpose of schooling is to support the reproduction of the established norms and values of society (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). From a functionalist perspective, the system of education serves the purpose of training and preparing immigrant students to be more familiar with the social norms and the civic aspects of U.S. society (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). The questions that need to be addressed, under the theories of transmission, include the settings of the standards assessed and values transmitted through the process of schooling: Whose culture is being preserved, and for what roles are newcomers prepared through the system of education? (Panofsky, 2007; Tozer et al., 2009).

Conflict theory. Conflict theorists took functionalism as the basis to explore the causes and effects of the tensions of different groups in the hierarchical organization of society. According to analyses of conflict theories, institutions of society must be challenged because their design perpetuates a system of inequality (Gutek, 2004; Leonardo, 2004). For conflict theorists social agencies perpetuate the values of the members at the top of the social pyramid (Gutek, 1997; Shanahan & Tuma, 1994). Conflict theorists see schooling as a way for the status quo to replicate itself from generation to generation without offering a social change out of the hierarchical cycle (Neuman, 2006; Perry & Tor, 2008).

The objective of the conflict theory is to denounce or expose the conserving characteristics of the educational system (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Perry & Tor, 2008). A deficiency of conflict theory is that it is focused on institutions such as schools to explain "economic reproduction, cultural reproduction, and hegemonic state reproduction" (p. 13), leaving no explanation of the participation of the individual to bring change (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). According to conflict theories and functionalism theories, the Latino population represented in the lower socioeconomic status will have little chance of overcoming their social rank (Contreras & Gándara, 2009; Gonzales, 2007).

Interpretive theories. Different from transmission theories, interpretive theories consider that social interaction is the behavior associated at a smaller, local, more individual level. Three types of researchers are categorized as interpretive theorists: phenomenologists, symbolic interactionists, and ethnomethodologists (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). According to Spradley (1979), interpretivists seek to understand

social behavior in a given context or culture: “Culture refers to the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior” (p. 5).

For interpretivists, the social meaning of knowledge is the result of individuals acting upon their own definitions of reality based on the meanings assigned to them by and within a social realm (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). According to interpretivists, through the schooling process immigrant students, and their families, encounter a setting in which their interaction with a new culture is shaped. From the interpretivists’ perspective, undocumented Latino students and their families are at a disadvantage. For interpretivisits “interaction and the assignment of meaning are affected by people’s past experiences and their beliefs, their current experiences in the given setting, and what they come to believe as interaction unfolds” (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999, p. 20) . Lack of knowledge and low socioeconomic status influence the ability to pair immigrants’ construct of the school system in the United States as a system with equal opportunities for all (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008).

Interpretive theories are reliable tools for the microanalysis of individual interaction, but present little guidance for understanding the larger context of social groups (Panofsky, 2007; Perry & Tor, 2008). Reliance on interpretive theories may provide the means to analyze factors that lead to an awareness of the diversity in the classroom. Objection to interpretive theories is mainly based on the focus of study being on smaller groups of students in the classroom rather than the entire student population. Further attempts to understand the culture of small social settings such as schools, have led analysts to make connections that go beyond the teacher–student interaction.

Understanding the interaction of larger groups may assist in changing the role of formal schooling to promote social transformation (Panofsky, 2007).

Transformation Theory

Social transformation theories. Ways of explaining the social world based on the need for change in some aspects of the interaction between groups to empower subordinate social actors of society are known as social transformation theories (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Neuman, 2006). Aspects of the transformation theory include (a) post-positivism, (b) postmodernism, (c) feminist theory, and (d) critical ethnography (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Gutek, 2004). First, positivism is considered by researchers who seek to transform society as too rigid and stifling to understand and explain the causes of conflict among social hierarchies (Neuman, 2006). The post-positivist approach modifies the scientific method to implement new knowledge and methods of exploration to explain social behavior (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Gutek, 2004).

Another transformational theory, postmodernism, uses principles rooted in the 18th century European Enlightenment to understand the machinations of society and the world (Gutek, 2004; Neuman, 2006). Postmodernists' appreciation for the European Enlightenment and its influence on the arts, humanities, and social sciences did not prevent postmodern researchers from critically analyzing the Eurocentric view of the world (Neuman, 2006). "Postmodernists object to presenting research in a detached and neutral way" for fear that such disconnect may "reinforce power relations and bureaucratic forms of control over people" (Neuman, 2006, p. 104).

The last two approaches discussed here as part of the transformation theories—feminist theory and critical ethnography—share close patterns of action (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Gutek, 2004; Neuman, 2006). Feminist theory relies on the principles of critical theory to bring about changes that affect women in a predominantly male-dominated world (Gutek, 2004; Neuman, 2006). Similarly, critical ethnography attempts to give voice to disenfranchised groups of society (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). In critical ethnographic studies, researchers carefully work with members of groups they are trying to empower, analyzing the power structures of society (Gutek, 2004; Neuman, 2006). Groups that have been historically marginalized in the United States are Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, women, and gays and lesbians (Gutek, 2004).

Critical theory. Critical theory is part of social transformation theory, and defines the interaction of the individual and society as a relationship that can be molded, or transformed to construct social reality (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Gutek, 2004). For transformation to take place, individuals need to develop an awareness that allows them to analyze which aspects of society need change. The main approach in the current study is critical theory.

According to critical theorists, school is the place to produce and maintain the established order, or the place to empower individual social actors (teachers and students) to transform society (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Gutek, 2004). The origins of contemporary critical theory can be traced to the post-World War I era (Gutek, 2004; Neuman, 2006). Critical theory has been in continuous evolution to adapt and transform concepts of the social sciences. According to Gutek (2004) “Critical theory’s

assumptions and working generalizations are based on a philosophical and ideological orientation shaped by postmodernist and existentialist philosophies, liberation ideology, feminist theory, and multiculturalism" (p. 309). The purpose of critical theory is to analyze the interactions between dominant and less powerful groups of society (Leonardo, 2004; Neuman, 2006). Critical theory is considered the link between other social theories that serve to examine the individual and society as separate entities when trying to explain the roles of different groups in society (Perry & Tor, 2008). Critical theory is also applied to provide subordinate groups with a roadmap toward a social and cultural change that leads to stronger participation in their own schooling (Gutek, 2004).

Dewey (1997) called for greater interaction between the school and the community to strengthen democracy. In Dewey's view, the school is seen as the means through which the stability of society and the guarantees of democracy are explained to new members of society. Participants in the process of education could then adapt and construct a different reality to contribute civically, economically, and morally (Dewey, 1975, 1997).

According to Pai et al. (2006), a major drawback of critical theory is the lack of a central theory to focus on highlighting what is wrong with the social world. According to critical theorists, the process of education must be focused on empowering students from subordinate social groups for an equitable and just democratic participation (Cooper et al., 2004; Dewey, 1997; Freire, 1998). Critical theorists see traditional schooling as a vehicle for the perpetuation of the status quo (Gutek, 2004; Neuman, 2006; Perry & Tor, 2008). Proponents of critical theory lack clarity to show the way out for the subordinate groups of society (Gutek, 2004). Critical theorists call on students and teachers to

evaluate and question their role in the reproduction of social structures and power relations of different groups. Critical theorists fail to provide the means to avoid the influence of the hierarchical order of the society they hope to transform (Gutek, 2004; Pai et al., 2006).

No single social theory can explain the workings of a complex entity such as schooling in any society. As knowledge increases and diversifies, so does the need to explore the education system for an understanding of the processes through which that knowledge is implemented and transmitted. Through the stories of former undocumented Latino immigrant students, the current qualitative descriptive case study analyzed the means to alleviate deficiencies in the schooling process, as a vehicle of social transformation.

Educating Latino Students

Latinos are a segment of society being left uneducated (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Many Latino families arrive in Massachusetts with little or no formal education, and their opportunities for professional development are underutilized for a variety of reasons (Mauricio Gastón Institute, 2009). The contributions of the current study to the body of related research will be an analysis of the educational opportunities and how the immigration status affects undocumented Latino students' decisions to go to college.

The workforce in the United States is rapidly transforming into predominantly white-collar occupations. Since 2001, 18 states have passed legislation intended to allow undocumented high school graduates to pay in-state tuition to promote access to higher education (NCSL, 2102, 2014). Four states have enacted some form of legislation

barring in-state tuition for undocumented students. Similar legislation has failed to pass in Massachusetts, although higher education would prepare students for more effective participation in the workforce and healthier social contribution to the state (Olivas, 2009; Owens, 2007; Santos, 2006). Since the implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and Massachusetts referendum Question 2 in 2002, there has been no significant improvement for Latino English speakers or ELL students (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Mauricio Gastón Institute, 2008).

The Latino population in Massachusetts is growing, and statistics show that Latinos are not being prepared for the demands of the highly interconnected world and technological developments of the 21st century (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gonzalez Sullivan, 2007). According to Carnevale and Desrochers (2004), more than two-thirds of new jobs in the next decade will require some postsecondary education. Friedman (2007) warned of the global demand for skilled service sector workers, in an economy in which a city in India, using technology, may be considered "a suburb of Boston" (p. 64). Faced with an increasingly global marketplace, Massachusetts must provide adequate preparation of its students to enter jobs locally and contribute to the strengthening of the national economy.

At the postsecondary level, the most recent report for a cohort of public high school students going to college is for the year 2005 (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education & Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008). Only 7% of Latino students "graduated or obtained a certificate of attainment from a Massachusetts public high school in spring 2005 and enrolled in a Massachusetts public postsecondary institution in fall 2005" (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education &

Massachusetts Department of Education, 2008, p. II.) This number represented less than 4.5 times the rate for all students who graduated from public high schools and went on to college in the state the same year.

Table 1
Public High School Dropout Rates for All Students and for Latino Students in Massachusetts 2007-2008

	Total	Female	Male
Total HS Enrollment	295,937	145,529	150,408
Percent of HS Enrollment	---	49.2%	50.8%
Total Dropouts	9,959	4,290	5,669
Dropout Rate	3.4%	2.9%	3.8%
Total Latino Enrollment	38,198	18,861	19,337
Percent of HS Enrollment	12.9%	6.4%	6.5%
Number of Dropouts	3,171	1,419	1,752
Annual Dropout Rate	8.3%	7.5%	9.1%
Percent of all Latino Dropouts	31.8%	14.2%	17.6%

Note. Adapted from "Appendix A: Annual Dropout Rates by District and School: 2000-2001 to 2007-2008 High School Dropouts 2007-2008 Massachusetts Public Schools," report by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE, 2009b).

A central issue of the present research is the transition of former undocumented Latino immigrant students from high school to college. Reports from the MDESE (2009a, 2009b) and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education & the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2008) revealed the urgent need for policy reform; the data from all of these reports show an alarming dropout rate for Latino

students (see Table 1). The discouragement among many Latino immigrant students is evident in the disturbing dropout figures presented by the MDESE (2009a, 2009b, 2009c). The report shows that for the school year 2007–2008, Latinos dropped out at a rate 2.5 times greater than the rate for the entire population of students in Grades 9–12.

Educational Status of Latino Students in Massachusetts

Access to a free public education for Latino children in Massachusetts has been historically less than equitable. During the 1960s, the cultural and social barriers of school practices discouraged participation of the Latino population in Massachusetts (Boston Task Force on Children Out of School, 1971). Also in the late 1960s, a state-mandated program to serve multilingual populations, the first of its kind in the nation, was implemented in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Rivera & Nieto, 1993).

A decade later, in the 1970s, the Latino population was caught in the middle of another government-mandated policy revision (Colón-Morera, Hidalgo, Nevárez, & García-Blanco, 1993). In 1974, a federal court ordered the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools (Boston Public School Papers, 1974). The matter of desegregation was perceived by policymakers in the Boston area as a Black-and-White issue (Rivera, 1993). According to Rivera (1993), the linguistic and multiracial Latino population was left out of the conversation. A consequence of the school desegregation was that a growing minority population—mainly Latinos—were not considered as part of the desegregation process (Colón-Morera et al., 1993).

According to the Mauricio Gastón Institute (2006), the Latino population in Massachusetts has increased and diversified over the past two decades. From 2000 to

2005, Massachusetts's general population grew from 6,362,132 to 6,398,743, or 0.57%, while the Latino population in the state grew from 432,836 to 506,359 in the same period, or 14.52% (U.S. Census Bureau-PD, 2006). These demographic statistics are important in terms of the social and educational health of many regions where the Latino population has become a major segment of the community.

Throughout the state, and almost three decades after statistics on school dropout were collected for the first time, the dropout figures for Latino population in the state of Massachusetts remain the highest (MDESE, 2009b; Wheelock, 1993). The figures of low achievement during the 1980s among Latino students have not improved (Borges, Lavan, & Jones, 2006; Shea & Jones, 2006; Wheelock, 1993). Federal and state laws have not remedied the outcomes for native English-speaking Latino students who have failed to improve on performance-based assessments (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Ravitch, 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). As illustrated in Table 2, Hispanics remain the lowest-performing group in four districts in Massachusetts with a high percentage of Hispanics (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education & Massachusetts DESE, 2008).

Dropout Rates

Nearly three decades of policy changes and education reform seemed to have had little demonstrable positive effect on the education of Latino students in Massachusetts. In 1989, a study by Fernandéz and Vélez concluded that the high Latino dropout rate was the result of school policies and practices. Educational policies implemented in 2002, 2005, and 2007 (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; MDESE, 2009c) seemed to have had no positive effect on ELL Latino students (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). After passage of

the 2002 referendum on Question 2 which dismantled bilingual education, the dropout rate among ELLs increased (MDESE, 2008, 2009c). Nearly three decades of policy changes and education reform seemed to have had little demonstrable positive effect on the education of Latino students in Massachusetts.

Table 2
Total Graduation Rate for Hispanic Population in Massachusetts and Four Primary Metropolitan Areas of Boston, Springfield, Lawrence, and Worcester for 2008 Cohort

District Name	Number in Cohort	% Graduated	% Still in School	% Non-graduate Completers	% GED	% Dropped Out	% Permanently Excluded
Boston	1596	50.4	16.1	0.6	2.4	30.3	0.2
Springfield	895	44.9	10.6	3.4	3.8	37.3	0
Lawrence	773	35.1	22.9	1.2	3.5	37.3	0.1
Worcester	679	60.1	13.5	1.6	2.9	21.5	0.3

Note. Adapted from "2008 Graduation Rate Report (DISTRICT) for Hispanic 4-Year Graduation Rate," report by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE, 2009a).

Socioeconomic Status

In terms of the general state of access to higher education for all socioeconomic groups of students in the United States, Gonzalez Sullivan (2007) predicted a weaker society. Low college enrollment "placing the entire nation at a distinct competitive disadvantage in a global market where skills are highly valued" seems inevitable (Gonzalez Sullivan, p. 402). The Boston Redevelopment Authority (Avault & Vrabel, 2005) and the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation (2006) reported that the long-term benefits of an educated population of undocumented immigrant students were greater than the short-term effect of poorly educated residents on the economy of Massachusetts.

The weakening pattern of an undereducated immigrant population is evident in the U. S. Census Bureau-ACS (2008, 2009) data and other studies (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008; Yoshikawa, 2011). The data illustrated a decline in the number of immigrants with education beyond high school and a decline in the number of immigrant students finishing college. Research has demonstrated that undocumented immigrants from Latin America tend to have lower academic skills when compared with other immigrant groups (Camarota & Jensenius, 2008; King, 2009; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2003). The greatest economic threat posed by Latino immigrants with little education is to those workers already in the United States, in the lower level of the educational spectrum (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Matloff, 2006).

Language and Cultural Adjustment

An important characteristic that adds to the complexities of the educational attainment of Latino students is their participation in the communities in which they live, and in which they come of age. The social contexts encountered by Latino students affect the way they see and live through the schooling process (Kezar, 2006). A democratic society must adopt changes to improve the social situations that have affected the student population. Negative factors may include numerous social barriers and complex student deficiencies. It is important to understand the role of positive and negative social and economic causes hindering factors. As a social factor, housing has a role that affects the early development and preparedness of students concerning academic work (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The role of housing is often negative for Latino students. Some Latino families are barred from available housing in neighborhoods that

offer resources such as libraries, parks, and other places for out-of-school activities to strengthen children's developmental growth. The reasons for these families being disqualified from certain neighborhoods are cultural and socioeconomic differences and the lack of intergenerational wealth and social capital seen among other ethnic groups (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

The academic adjustment and achievement of any student is linked to the social and cultural environment of the school setting (Dewey, 1997; Ravitch, 2010; Vygotsky, 1962/2000). Some of the academic challenges encountered by Latino students are associated with school practices and policies that tend to be addressed to a general population and school community (Garcia et al., 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Policies that rely heavily on standardized testing, grade retention, meritocracy, and teacher expectations are not intended to serve the needs of the immigrant student trying to thrive in a new culture (Ravitch, 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008).

Latino parents are not familiar with the schooling process in Massachusetts, and many are even less familiar with the process of assisting their children as they enroll in a college program. Many Latino parents often do not understand their rights or how to exercise them, because many parents lack the social capital to navigate the system (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Passel, 2006; Yoshikawa, 2011). When students are placed in special education classes or a language learner level, many Latino parents do not know how this placement will affect their children's education. Parents cannot assist their children in an academic context, which includes the understanding and reasoning behind the placement of children in certain academic settings (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008; Yoshikawa, 2011).

Language proficiency. During the process of cultural adjustment, language plays an important role, in terms of how the individual perceives the culture in which she or he is growing up (Garcia et al., 2008; Kozulin et al., 2007). Culture is often associated with an affiliation with a geopolitical entity, such as a country (Anderson, 1991). For the Latino immigrant student, cultural association could be with more than one geopolitical entity, or more than one country. Students growing up in multilingual homes often face difficulties when negotiating more than one culture and balancing the different insinuations of nationalism encountered daily (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Murphy, 2004; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008).

Language development and language acquisition for Latino students in Massachusetts has become more stifling as a result of policy changes in the education of immigrant students (Gilroy, 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). How to integrate and deliver education to culturally and linguistically diverse Latino students is not clear in terms of what approach to use to reach out to bilingual, multilingual, or multilingual emergent students (Garcia et al., 2008). In 2002, Massachusetts voters went to the polls to decide whether to change the delivery of educational services to ELLs. Question 2 ended bilingual education in Massachusetts as it had been practiced.

The referendum known as Question 2 regarding bilingual education in Massachusetts became another example of the impact of political and economic decisions on education with little regard for real educational strength (Gándara, 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Question 2 rejected most of the cultural and social needs of ELLs in the state (Question 2: Law Proposed by Initiative Petition, n.d.). The initiative promoted

the approach for the education of ELLs to be the same as that of monolingual English-speaking students (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Garcia et al., 2008).

Poverty, Resilience, and Ethnic Identity

The characteristics and stereotypes predominantly associated with Latino students' families are those of an impoverished, poorly educated population with little or no social capital on their side. The parents are not able to assist their children in finding their way in a foreign school system. Instead, children often assist their parents in navigating the intricacies of everyday life in the new, and sometimes unwelcoming, society (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Garcia et al., 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008; Yoshikawa, 2011). Conditions of poverty and the lack of support from their community prevent many Latino students from seeking resources to obtain higher education (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Mauricio Gastón Institute, 2008; Yoshikawa, 2011). Advancement in education may provide Latino families with some resources necessary to grow their cultural capital, financial capital, and socioeconomic status while increasing the societal benefits as a result of better income, more taxes, and a healthier society (Wirt et al., 2004).

Part of the social ideology in the United States is that everyone who works hard and takes advantage of the opportunities will achieve the "American Dream." According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2007), education level can double or triple the salary of a worker in the United States. The target age group discussed in the BLS analysis was for workers 25 and older, the same age group some of the participants in the current study are or will soon be. According to Becker's (1993) human capital theory, if

Latino students complete their higher education, their social contribution must be greater, thus reducing future social cost.

In the BLS study, the average salary for workers who did not have a high school diploma in 2006 was $419 per week with a 6.8% unemployment rate for the same group. At the bachelor's level, income was reported to be $962 per week and the unemployment rate dropped to 2.3% for Latinos with bachelor's degree. The doctorate level income reported was an average of $1,441 per week, and the unemployment rate was a low 1.4% (BLS, 2007). Moretti (2004) reached a similar conclusion in his analysis of the "unobserved ability" gained from the immediate spillover of a higher knowledge society (p. 186).

The Latino population of the United States has grown tenfold since the 1950s. According to the U.S. Census Bureau-PD (2009b), approximately 52 million people classified themselves as Latinos (Motel & Patten, 2013). As Rumbaut (2004) explained, the children of undocumented families do not fit the categories of first or second generation; they are categorized as the "1.5 generation" (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988, p. 1). Children from the 1.5 generation have experience as outsiders who understand their parents' culture and simultaneously have the firsthand knowledge of the receiving culture (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). The combination of such experiences, along with linguistic and cultural skills, gives children from the 1.5 generation essential resources in an interdependent world.

Evidence of the growing participation of Latino population is that 66% of the children enrolled in schools, whose parents are immigrants, are Latino children (Capps, Fix, Murray, Passel, & Herwantoro, 2005). In many instances, these students make up a

high percentage of the public school population (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Pew Hispanic Center, 2007). Attending these schools means that the Latino immigrant children negotiate an unknown territory, even for second-generation Latinos (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

The context of acculturation, poverty, and economic insecurity lead many Latino students to choose staying with their families and their affinity to their ethnic groups over attending college (Murphy, 2004, 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). For many Latino children who grow up in poverty, the option for a postsecondary education is often not a viable choice (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). For Latino students from poor segments of society, the selection of college location is highly influenced by the proximity to their family and ethnic enclaves. According to Murphy (2004), in large urban areas such as Boston and Amherst, Massachusetts, students and families look for an "institutional fit," which represents a greater opportunity for "consonant acculturation" (p. 24), or the integration of parents and students into the new culture.

Latino and immigrant students, in general, look for opportunities that allow them to stay in contact with "a sizable community of co-ethnics" (Murphy, 2004, p. 26). The gradual progression of acculturation strengthens the individual's knowledge and functionality within her or his native culture and the new culture. Living close to family and ethnic enclaves has a positive influence in the "selective acculturation" process (Murphy, 2004, p. 24). Integrating immigrant students must be a priority for the educational institutions that serve first- and second-generation immigrants. In 2011, the largest minority group of students registering for college was of Hispanic descent, and nearly 25% of K-12 students in public schools are Hispanic (Fry, 2011 & Lopez, 2012).

As Murphy (2004) stated, "The cost of leaving family and community behind to establish oneself in the academic community is simply too high" (p. 24). With the growing Latino population in the United States, a low educational level among Latinos would lead to a weaker United States as a society.

Perception: Stigma and Self-Esteem

The social status and confines in which Latino students must interact and live in Massachusetts can often affect their decision to go college. Another factor is unsafe neighborhoods that may cripple some students' determination to enroll in postsecondary education (Flores & Chapa, 2009; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). For other students, the determination to overcome adverse social circumstances propels them to enroll in 4-year colleges (Mauricio Gastón Institute, 2008; Murphy, 2008).

When students are undocumented, the stressors are greater because families fear deportation and separation, and a criminal label is often associated with their immigrant status (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Yoshikawa, 2011). Families of mixed nationalities tend to face complicated situations associated with fear of deportation (Passel, 2006; Yoshikawa, 2011). When some members of a family are born in the United States and others are foreign-born and undocumented, the state will provide equally for the K–12 education of both—the undocumented resident and the United States citizen of the same family (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Once students in families with mixed nationals become college-ready, they are faced with different barriers and have different opportunities. Obtaining financial support for postsecondary education is more

difficult for the undocumented child than for the citizen or permanent resident child (Olivas, 2009; Passel, 2007; Santos, 2006).

Policies Affecting Latino Immigrant Students

Since 2000, the spectrum of legislation affecting the debate over education for undocumented immigrants has been broad (Flores & Chapa, 2009). Immigration legislation related to education has been punctuated by comprehensive propositions (Olivas, 2009; Santos, 2006). Legislative proposals range from encouraging undocumented students to continue their education, to punishing those who try to aid undocumented students (Olivas, 2009; Rex, 2006; Strayhorn, 2006).

At the federal level, the issue of education for undocumented students has been ambiguously addressed through court rulings. Regulations such as those resulting from *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) guaranteed a free elementary and secondary education for all children enrolled in school in the United States. In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Plyler v. Doe* determined that school-aged children were entitled to the opportunity of a free public education. The Court considered that these students may, as adults, have the opportunity to become citizens of the United States. The Court determined that the potential of these students would help provide a better educated population.

Other federal policies restricted access beyond secondary school for undocumented students. In the United States Senate, bills were introduced to counter growing support for access to higher education of undocumented students (Contreras, 2009; Santos, 2006). Legislation such as the Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (2005) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and

Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996 (H.R. 3610, 1996) were intended to serve as barriers for undocumented students' access to higher education (Olivas, 2004, 2008, 2009). H.R. 4437 was introduced as a deterrent to helping undocumented immigrant children to continue their education. The Sensenbrenner Bill, as H.R. 4437 is also called, attempted to "criminalize undocumented immigrants and anyone who 'assists them'" (H. R. 4437, 2005). The Bill primarily affected the working-class communities and sectors of public institutions of higher education (Ochoa, 2006).

In contrast to the 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe,* the IIRIRA (1996) limited the rights of undocumented persons in the United States. The IIRIRA was created as an attempt to establish greater limits when it came to the educational support that undocumented students could receive beyond secondary school (IIRIRA, 1996). Title V, Section 504, of the IIRIRA provides the following:

> In general, notwithstanding any other provision of law, an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible on the basis of residence within a State (or a political subdivision) for any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such a benefit (in no less an amount, duration, and scope) without regard to whether the citizen or national is such a resident.

Soon after the ratification of H.R. 4437, efforts to reverse such legislation were set in motion. The most noticeable of these campaigns has been through the Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, or DREAM Act (2009).

The DREAM Act. The DREAM Act was introduced in Congress in 2001 (Contreras, 2009; DREAM Act of 2009, 2009; NCSL, 2014). The DREAM Act was an

attempt to repeal federal regulations, which prevented states from using federal resources to support undocumented students (Flores & Chapa, 2009; Olivas, 2004, 2009). In an attempt to expand legislation emanating from *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) and reverse policies such as H.R. 4437 (2005), the federal DREAM Act was introduced in 2001. Since then, several variations of the DREAM Act have been reintroduced, such as the Student Adjustment Act (2001), the American DREAM Act (2009), and DREAM Act (2009). Reintroduction of the DREAM Act for consideration in Congress took place on March 26, 2009 (National Immigration Law Center, 2009), and in May 2011 (Morse & Birnbach, 2011).

The DREAM Act offered several incentives for undocumented students to attend college (Immigration Policy Center, 2007a, 2007b; Morse & Birnbach, 2011). Undocumented students seeking conditional permanent status to attend college under the requisites of the DREAM Act would have to be in the United States for no less than 5 years prior to the enactment of the DREAM Act (2009) or the American DREAM Act (2009). Other prerequisites included graduating from high school or obtaining an equivalency diploma and having entered the United States before the age of 16 (DREAM ACT, 2009; American DREAM Act, 2009). To qualify for the permanent resident incentive, candidates must have completed 2 years of college education or served in the United States Armed Forces for at least 2 years (DREAM Act, 2009; American DREAM Act, 2009). Such requirements translated into a very limited number of undocumented students, who spent many years of their lives residing in the United States, qualifying for in-state tuition (DREAM Act, 2009; American DREAM Act, 2009; Morse & Birnbach, 2011).

In-State tuition in other states. In contrast to the DREAM Act, in-state tuition legislation is determined by individual states' residency requirements for tuition purposes (Contreras, 2009; Olivas 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). A statement issued by the Department of Homeland Security in 2008 indicated that states are responsible to declare state residency for people living within its boundaries (U.S. ICE, 2008a). If individual states pass legislation, students would pay the in-state tuition rate only if the students meet the requirements of the state in which they intend to attend college (Olivas, 2004, 2009).

During the past three decades, states have complied with the Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982). The outcome of the case mandated the provision of access to free and public K–12 education for all children in the United States, regardless of their immigrant status. Access to postsecondary education for undocumented immigrant students has not been addressed by national legislation or any Supreme Court ruling. According to Section 1623 of the IIRIRA (1996), and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) (1996), in-state tuition for public higher education was left to the decision of individual states. According to Section 411(d) of PRWORA (1996),

> A State may provide that an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States is eligible for any State or local public benefit for which such alien would otherwise be ineligible under subsection (a) only through the enactment of a State law after the date of the enactment of this Act which affirmatively provides for such eligibility.

The federal government decided to step aside in the issue of in-state tuition and, under Section 1623 of the IIRIRA (1996) legislation, left it up to the states to decide. According to Olivas (2004), the IIRIRA imposes stricter requirements to qualify for in-state residency but "state residency is a benefit, to be determined by states" (p. 452). IIRIRA (1996) legislation requires that if the benefit of state residency for tuition purposes or any other purpose is granted to undocumented immigrants, the same benefit shall apply to citizens of the United States.

Of the 18 states that have enacted some form of in-state tuition rate for undocumented students, none has experienced a negative outcome, either financially or socially (Contreras, 2011; NCSL, 2012, 2014; Olivas, 2009; Santos, 2006; Strayhorn, 2006). In Texas, tuition programs have been established to allow undocumented students and students categorized as nonresidents of the state access to financial options (Jauregui et al., 2008). According to the Texas comptroller, such legislation has not resulted in a drastic increase in expenditure for the state, but in a number of high school graduates enrolling in college programs (Strayhorn, 2006). In Massachusetts, a slight increase in profits to the state's public colleges could be obtained if undocumented students were allowed to enroll at the in-state tuition rate at public institutions of higher education (Massachusetts Taxpayer Foundation, 2006). The Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation (2006) also predicted an increase in revenue for the public university system in the state as a result of undocumented students enrolling in higher education institutions.

The global changes of the 21st century call for a population prepared to function competitively in a technological and multicultural world. The Latino population in Massachusetts already possesses some of the multilingual, multicultural, and other social

characteristics needed for an economy to thrive and become stronger in the global market (Friedman, 2007; Mauricio Gastón Institute, 2008; Owens, 2007). The problem is that an alarmingly large proportion of this population is not finishing high school (Fry, 2010; Granberry, 2011). The dropout rate leads to an uncertain economic future for the individuals and deprives the state of the benefits of a strong workforce (Becker, 1993; Friedman, 2007; Gonzalez Sullivan, 2007; Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, 2006).

The implementation of policies that address the educational needs of the Latino population has proven inadequate. The dropout rate of Latino students has increased since the 1980s and has remained relatively constant during the past 10 years (MDESE, 2009b; Wheelock, 1993). Neither the federal NCLB Act of 2001, nor the passage of Massachusetts Question 2 in 2002 has resulted in improvement in student performance among Latino students (MDESE, 2009b).

As mandated by the NCLB, schools need to concentrate more on statistical performance (Ravitch, 2010). The emphasis of NCLB is on achieving statistical objectives with little, if any, attention paid to the factors that lead to student success (Ravitch, 2010). School districts do not take into consideration the development of language acquisition programs and the development of cultural and linguistic skills that immigrant Latino students bring with them when they attend school (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Garcia et al., 2008).

After the passing of Question 2, bilingual education programs in Massachusetts were modified to the old sink-or-swim format that had proven ineffective in the past (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Effective practices that reduce the dropout rate of Latino students in Massachusetts, still need to be addressed. The NCLB Act of 2001 requires

that all students demonstrate knowledge of academic content in standardized tests written in English. The standardized testing approach does not take into account the level of language skills of ELL students; what students know about a specific topic or academic subject is often overlooked in standardized testing (Ravitch, 2010). Standardized testing penalizes non-native English speaker immigrant students for not knowing enough English.

The subject of the current research is access to higher education for Latino students in Massachusetts, with a focus on barriers and restrictions faced by undocumented students in relation to social investment in human capital. The analysis may contribute to the body of literature to illustrate policy design and implementation. A limited amount of literature is dedicated to the analysis of undocumented students' access to higher education. Studies concentrate primarily on border states such as Texas, California, and Arizona (Contreras, 2009; Flores & Chapa, 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). In other studies, the expectations of undocumented students appear as a part of the literature about general issues of undocumented immigrants (Contreras, 2011; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002; Yoshikawa, 2011). To meet the demands of global interaction in the 21st century, society must strengthen educational services for immigrant students, regardless of how they arrived in the state.

The state of Texas granted undocumented students access to public colleges and universities at the in-state tuition rate in 2001, a year before the DREAM Act was proposed in 2002 (Contreras, 2009; Olivas, 2009; Santos, 2006). The number of undocumented immigrant students who enrolled in higher education institutions in Texas was lower than anticipated (Jauregui et al., 2008; Strayhorn, 2006). For Massachusetts,

the estimated figure of potential undocumented college attendees is between 400 and 660, equivalent to less than 1% of the total enrollment of the public colleges of the state (Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation, 2006; MIRA, 2008).

Educational policy in public higher education institutions. As of 2014, groups such as the Student Immigrant Movement (SIM) and the MIRA Coalition were engaged in a campaign in Massachusetts to address the issue of access to college for undocumented students. According to MIRA (2008), the goal of the Education Parity/Opportunity Campaign is to grant about 400 undocumented students statewide per year the opportunity to enroll in college and pay the resident tuition rate. According to MIRA (2008), this solution is intended for students who have attended Massachusetts high schools for at least 3 years, a requirement that limits the number of applicants.

Conclusion

The current study focused on social investment made on undocumented students and barriers faced by undocumented students in their quest for access to higher education. Social investment refers to the expenses incurred by society in the procurement of some egalitarian measure of human capital expected to extend beyond private gains (Becker, 1993). *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) resulted in legislation mandating social investment in undocumented immigrant students, for fear of producing what Justice Brennan termed a caste of undereducated members of society because of lack of access to K–12 education:

> This situation raises the specter of a permanent caste of undocumented resident aliens, encouraged by some to remain here as a source of cheap labor, but nevertheless denied the benefits that our society makes available to citizens and

> lawful residents. The existence of such an underclass presents most difficult problems for a Nation that prides itself on adherence to principles of equality under law (*Plyler v. Doe,* 1982).

Three decades later, the federal and state governments have different approaches to the issue of higher education for undocumented immigrant students. While the amount of research available about undocumented students' access to higher education has grown over the last 10 years, most of the literature ignores the northeastern region of the United States.

Every year, hundreds of undocumented students graduate from public high schools in Massachusetts. Approximately 400 to 600 undocumented students per year would enroll in public colleges and universities in Massachusetts if some form of in-state tuition was available (Massachusetts Taxpayer Foundation, 2006). Society makes an investment in the K–12 public education of these children, and should also expect to gain some contribution of those children once they become adults.

Summary

Chapter 2 presented a review of the literature in areas that affect changes in population and schooling of the Hispanic undocumented immigrant students. Education leaders must be more aware of the changing demographics of the United States, particularly the increase of Latino immigrant students. Hispanic/Latino students represent a growing sector of the population and many of them are academically underprepared (Camarota & Jensenious, 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Passel &

Taylor, 2010). Resources to address the needs of undocumented immigrant students and students in general are limited (Matloff, 2006).

Hacker and Dreifus (2010) suggested that "higher education should be open to every young person, and this is an option we can well afford" (p. 3). Gándara and Contreras (2009) and Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008) warned of a series of factors that hinder the development and educational ambitions of the Latino immigrant students. Hacker and Dreifus (2010) considered that "the best way to get support for higher education is to warn that the United States is falling behind other nations in skills needed in a competitive world" (p. 5).

Chapter 3 includes the rationale for the selection of the qualitative case study research method to answer the research questions. Chapter 3 also contains discussion of (a) details regarding the justification for the use of a qualitative descriptive case study, (b) the design appropriateness, (c) population selection criteria, (d) data analysis, (e) instrumentation, (f) confirmability, and (g) dependability.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to examine the barriers faced by undocumented students in their transition to higher education, and the influence of the social perception of undocumented students from the participants' perspective and sources of support. Little information exists in the literature on higher education regarding the specific topic of access to higher education for undocumented students in Massachusetts. At the legislative level, access to college for undocumented immigrant students is treated as part of the larger topic on undocumented immigration (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Suárez -Orozco et al., 2008; Portes, 2004). Over the last 10 years, an increase in research related to undocumented students and higher education has been predominantly on southern states. The present study did not include the broader issues of immigration legislation in the United States.

The present qualitative case study explored barriers that undocumented students face in accessing higher education diminishing the return of social investment in human capital. The current study consisted of interviews with 20 former undocumented Latino and Latina immigrant students from the Boston area who graduated from high school. Using social theories of transmission and transformation, and human capital theory, the current study provided an examination of access to higher education for undocumented students (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Hermes, 2008; Ochoa, 2006; Pasque, 2006). Chapter 3 includes a thorough description of the research design, the research questions, the process for selecting the participants, and a discussion of how the participants' confidentiality was protected.

Research Method and Design

Method appropriateness. This study focused on former undocumented immigrant students of Latin American descent. A qualitative case study was the appropriate research method to explore the experiences and academic transition of the participants. The approach allows the collection of details of participants' life experiences and social issues in a given context, such as access to higher education for disadvantaged groups. According to Creswell (2008), "reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual" (p. 474) help illustrate social issues that need to be addressed by policymakers. A case study design corroborates the participants' and researcher's familiarity with the topic under analysis (Yin, 2009).

Traditional methods of inquiry were used in the semi-structured interviews conducted for the present qualitative case study (Neuman, 2006). The process of conducting the interviews for the study started with a focus question on a central topic related to the educational experiences of immigrant students. The interviews advanced to other questions, which led to multiple levels of analysis. The analysis included strategies to confirm accuracy of the stories through triangulation, a technique recommended by Creswell (2008) to analyze data and draw conclusions. The data were analyzed to learn more about financial resources and the social benefits of providing financial opportunities for all students.

A quantitative research method was not considered for the current study because, according to Creswell (2008), the designs found in quantitative analysis deal with statistical figures. A quantitative study would not reveal data needed for the current

study. Merriam (2009) concluded that the qualitative researcher could place the experiences of the research subject within a sociocultural framework. From a sociological perspective, the researcher develops the participants' stories as a unit of analysis "to *understand* how people make sense of their lives and their experiences (Merriam, 2009, p.23). Then, data can be organized through life experiences within a contextual framework that goes beyond the original experience (Neuman, 2006; Spradley, 1979). The data can be used to place the experiences in their own context through a detailed report that can serve as an instrument for interpretation to develop social educational policies (Denzin, 2011; Fontana and Frey, 2005; Merriam, 2009;). Neuman (2006) stated that critical social science "emphasizes combating surface-level distortions, multiple levels of reality, and value-based activism for human empowerment" (p. 94).

Vygotsky (1962/2000) described the complexities involved in the interactions of individuals as part of the larger social context. For Vygotsky, society is a functioning organism that shapes, and is shaped by the stories of people. A quantitative approach would not work to analyze the context in which individuals function and grow because the experience of the individual leads to a storied life. The story is exactly what a qualitative case study design is trying to draw. A qualitative approach provides ways to present a more realistic human picture of the participants and the events in a case study. Vygotsky (1962/2000) advised against trying to subdivide the context into what may be perceived as more manageable components:

> It may be compared to the chemical analysis of water into hydrogen and oxygen, neither of which possesses the properties of the whole and each of which

> possesses properties not present in the whole. The student applying this method in looking for the explanation of some property of water—why it extinguishes fire, for example—will find to his surprise that hydrogen burns and oxygen sustains fire. These discoveries will not help him much in solving the problem. . . Nothing is left to the investigator but to search out the mechanical interaction of the two elements in the hope of reconstructing, in a purely speculative way, the vanished properties of the whole. (p. 3)

Based on Vygotsky's explanation, when the fragmentation of the interactions of the individual and society is carried out to assign functions or values to gain in statistical figures, researchers run the risk of distorting the story of the participant.

Case study inquiry, as any other form of research, is influenced by the choices made by the researcher and the experiences of the research subject (Creswell, 2008). Gudmundsdottir (2001) supported the plural concept of the multitude of voices in case study research. The plurality of influences is evident when "one finds no singular voice, because any claimed voice is a heteroglossia of culturally situated voices that ventriloquate through the singular voice that is claimed by an individual" (p. 235).

Case study research focuses on how individuals tend to assign meaning to their experiences through the stories they tell "to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The stories of the research participants provide applicable information to address the research questions and may assist leaders in designing educational policies. According to Yin (2009), the case study is a design in which the experiences of the participants are integral part of the context in

which they occur and the stories make up for information that could otherwise be inaccessible.

A limitation in the use of the case study research design in the present study is the difficulty of verifying what has been recounted in search of the true story. Part of the inaccessible information in the present study is the verification of the former immigrant status of the research participants. Field notes and observations from meetings with participants were also used for the purpose of triangulation. The research participants were identified as formerly undocumented students. Triangulation was used in the current study to interpret the data collected from field notes, observations, and interviews with participants (Neuman, 2006).

Sample Population

Participants in the present study are formerly undocumented immigrant students of Latin American origin in Massachusetts enrolled at a public college. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the participants' experiences as undocumented immigrant students enrolled in a public high school in Massachusetts. To be selected for the present study, participants must have been undocumented while they were high school students, and must have graduated from a Massachusetts public high school within the past 7 years. At the time of participation in the study, subjects' immigration status must have been updated by the federal government to legal residents eligible to benefit from in-state tuition rates.

It was anticipated that participants in the current study might have had interrupted or delayed entrance to postsecondary education because of their undocumented status.

Thus, the seven-year period since high school graduation served to qualify student participants who would be about to finish college, and could compare the immigrant status experiences as students. The interview process allowed the participants to comment on issues that affected their motivation, perseverance, and perception of what a higher education is.

Population and sampling. The selected population was former undocumented Latino immigrant students enrolled in college. Data for the current study included a review of the available statistical and demographic data (U.S. Census Bureau-CPS, 2009; MDESE, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; U.S. Census Bureau-PD, 2009a, 2009b). The 20 participants were selected using a hybrid process of judgmental sampling and snowball sampling. In qualitative research using purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2005) or "judgmental sampling" (Neuman, 2006, p. 222), the researcher selects "unique cases that are informative" of a given "difficult-to-reach, specialized population" (Neuman, 2006, p. 222). In the current research, the difficult-to-reach population was immigrant students with undocumented immigration status experience.

The formerly undocumented immigrant students were considered information-rich relative to the purpose of the current study, and were selected for what Creswell (2008) stated is, "to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (p. 204). The judgmental sampling method "uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind" (Neuman, 2006, p. 222). For the purpose of the present study, the judgment of experts from the Student Immigrant Movement (SIM) was used. The participants' insights provided a deeper understanding of the impact of access to higher education for undocumented immigrant students.

Homogeneous sampling is one of several purposeful sampling strategies commonly used in research (Creswell, 2005). In this type of sampling, individuals are selected based on common characteristics that define them. For the present study, participants' common characteristics were that they are formerly undocumented students enrolled in institutions of higher education in Massachusetts.

According to Neuman (2006) and Creswell (2008), snowball sampling refers to recruiting participants using a network approach based on the analogy to a snowball. The researcher starts the study with a few individuals who, in turn, recommend other potential participants. For the current study, participants were recruited through SIM or recommended by members of the organization. The snowball sampling approach was adequate for the current research because, as Neuman (2006) explained, "based on information about interrelationships from a case" the researcher "identifies other cases and repeats the process again and again" (p. 223). The request for recommendations started out informally. Information stemming from informal questioning helped identify potential participants for the current study.

The present research included interviews of 20 formerly undocumented immigrant students. In qualitative case study, an in-depth examination is provided based on interviews with a small number of individuals for better understanding of the problem being analyzed (Neuman, 2006; Yin, 2009). At the time the interviews were conducted, participants had to have stabilized their immigration status through the different immigration processes available to them. The first participants were contacted through SIM, a nonprofit immigrant advocacy organization in Massachusetts.

The names of the participants were changed to protect their identities. Precautions were taken to safeguard participant privacy in handling information and for the reporting of data. Specific names identifying people or educational institutions will remain confidential and pseudonyms used instead. For purposes of handling data, such as tabulating responses or demographic information, attributions of sources from the interviews were with the letter "P" and a number. For example, Participant 1 was designated "P1," Participant 2 as "P2," and so forth.

Informed consent. Initial contact with potential research participants was made first via telephone communication and then through regular or electronic mail. The informed consent form was shared with potential participants once they confirmed that they were willing and able to participate in the study. The research subjects were informed about their rights to privacy, anonymity, and safe participation in the study (see Appendix A). Each participant signed a consent form before proceeding with the interview.

Subjects participated on a voluntary basis. They were informed of their right to withdraw their consent at any time and for any reason by disclosing their intent in a verbal or written communication. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All of the information gathered about each of the 20 participants will be kept in the strictest confidence in electronic, encrypted, password-protected format. Transcripts and storage material (discs or storage devices) will be destroyed 3 years after completing the study.

Confidentiality

The identity of the participants in the current study will remain confidential. Neuman (2006) reminded researchers that, "the United States federal government has regulations to protect research participants and their rights" (p. 129). Compliance rests with the individual researcher's notion of ethical responsibility (Neuman, 2006). Participants will be provided with a copy of the results of the present study should they make a request. Specific names identifying people or educational institutions will remain confidential. All materials directly related to participants in the research will be stored in electronic encrypted format for a period of 3 years at the researcher's residence. After the three-year period, the electronic copy will be deleted and the storage device (disks or USB flash memory) destroyed.

Geographic Location

The present study location was limited to the state of Massachusetts. Massachusetts has experienced a significant increase in Latino student population. Cities and towns such as Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Lowell, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester fit the purpose of the study. Since the 1990s, these places represent the major areas where growing numbers of immigrants settle. Information was reviewed from the U.S. Census-ACS Bureau Current Population Survey (2009), the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (2009, 2010) and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2009a, 2009b, 2009c), and the U.S. Census Bureau-PD (2006, 2009a, 2009b).

Credibility and Dependability

The credibility of the current study was strengthened through the use of multiple data sources. The use of the same procedure, following a standard interview protocol, using the same interview questions (Appendix C), and multiple data collection methods helped to confirm the data, added to the trustworthiness of the research findings, and substantiated the conclusions reached (Creswell, 2008; Neuman, 2006). Qualitative researchers want to be consistent in their approach, interpreting findings in a truthful and balanced account of the social context of the participants' experiences that serve as the basis of the data (Firestone, 1987; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2012).

To safeguard the dependability of the study, the researcher must develop a level of proficiency to conduct interviews by researching interview techniques. Yin (2009) recommends "the use of a case study protocol to deal with the documentation problem in detail and the development of a case study database" (p. 45) to strengthen consistency of a case study. The development of the interview questions (Appendix C) provided additional precautionary measures for internal consistency.

In a qualitative study, trustworthiness is supported by the participant interview data (Neuman, 2006). The accuracy of the interview recordings and transcription made possible to expand the analysis from general to specific elements of the experience. A specific level of measurement yields more accurate results if the concepts investigated are subdivided in refined categories that show links to the individual and social behaviors (Creswell, 2008; Neuman, 2006; Panofsky, 2007). The use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis system (CAQDAS) is recommended by researchers (Sinkovics, et al, 2008; Yin, 2009) as tools to facilitate analysis and support dependability. Software

used for analyzing data in qualitative research provides a more solid degree of credibility, coding, and efficiency in the process of data analysis as a "categorizing tool, and does not do the analysis for the researcher" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 187). NVivo 9 was used in this study as a tool to assist in the categorizing of experiences shared by participants (see Appendix E).

According to Neuman (2006), multiple indicators allow the researcher to measure extensive content that includes a variety of "aspects of the construct to be measured, each with its own indicator" (p. 191). Creswell (2008) suggested member checking, triangulation, and searching for disconfirming evidence as a means to collect accurate data. In the current study, the interviews consisted of open-ended questions. In qualitative research, relying on open-ended questions reduces interviewer bias, increases credibility, and facilitates the conceptualization of data found in the research (Creswell, 2008; Neuman, 2006; Patton, 2002).

Data Collection

Gathering data from different sources can provide triangulation. Neuman (2006) and Creswell (2008) found triangulation the best way to conduct a qualitative study. Gathering information about a topic from different angles served to corroborate and strengthen the accuracy of the present study. The data for the present study were collected from (a) participant interviews; (b) the official data from the Massachusetts Department of Education, U.S. Census Bureau, and Massachusetts Board of Higher Education; and (c) field observations of participants' involvement in community, school, and extracurricular activities. The current study design and method allowed a better

understanding of the barriers encountered by undocumented immigrant students in Massachusetts in their pursuit of a college education.

The main sources of data collection in the current study consisted of a demographic questionnaire and one in-depth, semi-structured interview with each participant, lasting between 35 to 65 minutes. Data collection involved finding participants, obtaining signatures on the necessary confidentiality and voluntary participation forms, scheduling interviews, and attending several SIM meetings.

The volunteer recruitment process and interviews spanned from March to June 2011. Formal contact with the SIM to obtain permission to use premises, name, and/or subjects was initiated in May, 2010 (see Appendix B). Potential participants were contacted in three different ways. The majority of potential participants were contacted in person through references from SIM. Other potential participants were contacted via e-mail and telephone. All potential participants were presented with a formal written request prior to their agreement to participate (see Appendix A). After the potential participants reviewed and agreed to participate in the study, the time convenient to them was arranged for the interview. Participants were guaranteed privacy and confidentiality throughout their participation in the study.

Demographic questionnaire. Participants were asked to fill out a demographic questionnaire for foundational information of their experience as immigrant students. Demographic information shared by participants aided in the corroboration of some information stated during the interviews. A hard copy of the questionnaire was presented in person to each participant, and then collected in person after participants completed it.

The interviews. The interviews of the research subjects were dependent on the participants' honesty and how the participants provided feedback and analyzed their educational experiences. The purpose of the case study design is not to look for objectivity, but for the respondents' perceptions of the past through "open-ended questions to capture how the person understands her or his own past" (Neuman, 2006, p. 408). According to Spradley (1979), the interview process involves two stages: "developing rapport and eliciting information" (p. 78), to reach a level of comfortable participation. Yin (2009) concludes that participants who reach a high level of trust in the research process and the researcher often become "critical to the success of a case study" (p. 107).

Conducting interviews requires certain level of proficiency in the process. Pilot interviews were conducted to improve interviewing techniques and strategies. Neuman (2006) and Creswell (2008) suggested the interview protocol ought to be piloted to address aspects of the interview process that may need refinement. A sample of two participants was included in the pilot phase of the present study. Research subjects who participated in the pilot testing were not included in the final sample for the study. The interviews were conducted in face-to-face meetings. The purpose of the open-ended questions was to elicit responses that revealed detailed, personal information (Creswell, 2008; Neuman, 2006).

Participants were informed of the interview procedure and purpose. Information about the risks, benefits, and confidentiality was provided to each of the research participants at every interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analyses of themes and clarity for follow-up interview questions or field observations.

Protection of confidentiality and anonymity was explained to each participant at the beginning of the interview. The participants were also afforded the opportunity to ask questions. The time and location for the interviews was at the convenience of the participants and agreed on prior to the formal interviews. Participants were free to withdraw from the current study at any time; no explanation was requested, even if they signed the consent to participate.

All 20 interviews for the study were conducted in the English language, at participants' convenient location and time. The entire process, from soliciting students to participate through the completion of the interviews, occurred from March 2011 to June 2011. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed; additional notes were taken during the interviews.

Participants were informed that they may ask to have a question repeated for clarification. Participants were informed that if, for any reason, they needed the researcher to pause or stop recording, the recording would be suspended. During four of the 20 interviews, four participants requested to pause the recording for clarification purposes only. The other 16 interviews were uninterrupted.

In total, 20 interviews were completed and the transcripts analyzed and read multiple times to refine the evaluation of participants' life experiences. The 20 interviews represent the number at which saturation of information was reached (Neuman, 2006, p. 240). It was determined that adding more participants to the study would not contribute new information or additional categories to the research.

The semistructured interview questions (see Appendix C) were designed to obtain information related to participants' transition into the United States educational system. Interview questions 1 and 2 were designed to elicit information on participants' learning environment as undocumented immigrants and after they regularized their immigrant status. Questions 3 and 4 were intended to obtain information regarding the experience travelling and settling in Massachusetts.

Interview questions 5 through 10 were intended to gather information regarding the interaction with the community where they live and the schools they attend. These questions were specific to how participants viewed themselves and others as undocumented immigrants, how they considered other people in their schools and communities perceived them. These set of questions elicited information on participants' change of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in relation to immigration and education.

Question 11 explored participants' knowledge of information regarding college tuition for undocumented students. The question was related to state and federal opportunities for undocumented immigrant students. Participants' responses to this question provided information about the impact of support in their determination to continue their postsecondary education.

Questions 12 through 15 were designed to gather information related to the ways in which participants identified themselves within their families and their communities in relation to their education and immigrant status. Responses to these question provided information about the cultural identity, involvement in community activities as influenced by the immigrant status, and changes in participants' interaction resulting from a stable immigrant status.

The last two questions, 16 and 17, were designed as questions that consider participants' changes in their perceptions of the value of postsecondary education. The responses to these questions provided information related to financial value of obtaining education as undocumented students, and the struggle to finance their education as students with regular immigrant status qualifying for in-state tuition.

The volunteer participants for the study all had at some point in their K-12 school years been undocumented immigrant students. The participant letter of invitation had specific information about the face-to-face interview, the nature of the study, and the purpose of the participants' involvement. Yin (2009) advises not to underappreciate the value of the interview process and the information provided in the participants experiences. The format of the interview, semi-structured, open-ended questions allowed participants to share their information in their own words, providing opportunity for gathering details of the descriptions, meaningful in the context of the events and the purpose of the study (Spradley, 1979; Yin 2009).

The protocol had 17 open-ended questions designed to obtain information from the participants in their own words about their educational experiences (Merriam, 2009). The questions were designed to elicit responses about participants' focus and attitude toward education, type of support they sought and received, beliefs, and behavior regarding their pursuit of higher education. To assist in the starting of the interview process participants were asked questions about their experiences as undocumented students and during the last semester they were attending or had attended last. Other questions asked about motivation and determination to go to college, interaction with

other students whom they knew were undocumented, self-esteem and interaction with the community. Refusal to answer a question was also noted and analyzed (Yin, 2009).

Challenges During Data Collection

Seventeen semi-structured interview questions were proposed for the study (see Appendix C). One question—question #4 "Could you show me on a map how you arrived to Massachusetts?"—was the arrival question and was not considered in the final analysis. All but two of the respondents, P12 and P15, described their arrival to the United States as a simple flight from the country of origin to the United States. Eighteen participants arrived in the United States with a visa through an airport. Those 18 participants were not sure about the use or applicability of showing their travel route on a map because they flew straight to Massachusetts or to a connecting airport on their way to Massachusetts. One participant limited his response to just walking to the U.S. Only one participant tried to use the world atlas made available by the researcher to the participants (Compact Atlas of the World, 2009). After looking at the atlas for a few minutes, participant P15 stated that he was too young when he arrived in the U.S. to have any memory of the route from a town in Central America and gave a partial answer to the arrival question, interview question #4. Since the arrival question was partly answered by only one of the 20 participants, the response was not considered part of the final analysis.

The main source of information for the study was the data gathered from interviewing 20 participants. The purposeful and snowball sampling were challenging, as several of the potential participants did not qualify for the study because they did not fit

the immigration criteria. In the purposeful sampling approach, SIM members referred some of the potential participants because they were actively involved in advocating for immigrants' rights issues. Due to the potential participants' openness about immigrants' rights, some SIM activists had assumed those potential participants had stabilized their immigration situation with the federal government.

Other potential participants did not fit the immigration criteria because they were born in the United States. Other participants who assumed they were recommending people who fit the formerly undocumented immigrant criteria had recommended these potential participants. In six cases, the assumption was made because those persons recommended for the study did not have English as their native language, fluency in English was low, and/or their parents were undocumented. The people making the recommendations were friends of the families of the U.S. native-born persons they thought might qualify for the study. Participants making the recommendations knew that family members of those they recommended had stabilized their immigration status, and assumed that everybody in the family of those recommended had the experience of being an undocumented immigrant. In two of these cases, the families were of mixed nationals, with some siblings born in the United States and other siblings born in another country.

In one case, a participant had lost her temporary protective status (TPS) and was left in a state of immigration uncertainty for some time. TPS is an immigration category granted for humanitarian reasons, and sometimes lasts long enough for a person to finish secondary school and a college degree (U.S. CIS, 2010; U.S. ICE, 2008b). This participant had considered joining the Army before her TPS was terminated, but stabilized her immigration status through other means. This participant was hesitant to

contribute her story because she thought she did not qualify for the study due to her immigrant status. After reviewing the criteria for the study and understanding that she qualified for the study, she decided to share her story.

The originally proposed requirement that participants be enrolled at a public institution also became a challenge. There were participants who fit the requirement that they must be formerly undocumented Latino immigrant students, but the data collection process revealed that there were formerly undocumented students attending private colleges and universities. Tuition and other fees at private institutions are commonly higher than at public institutions. Some former undocumented students went to private colleges and universities at the time they were undocumented because they received scholarships, or other forms of financial incentives that public institutions do not offer to undocumented students. Extending participation in the research to students attending private postsecondary institutions was considered to enrich the study and illuminate further discussion of access to higher education for undocumented students. A decision was made, therefore, that participants in the study include former undocumented students attending private institutions of higher education.

Instrumentation

The basic process for data collection in the present study was interviewing research participants. As a tool of assessment, the interview must adhere to standards of dependability and truthfulness (Creswell, 2008; Yin, 2009). For Yin (2009) the researcher must work with "a fluid rather than rigid" set of questions in a case study interview for which the researcher must "operate on two levels at the same time:

satisfying the line of inquiry while simultaneously putting forth 'friendly' and 'nonthreatening' questions in the open-ended interviews" (p. 106).

In-depth, face-to-face interviews and documentation of meetings was used to collect data. Neuman (2006) recommended that to improve consistency, researchers must carefully design instruments of measurement that indicate concepts or components of the data. The interview questions (Appendix C) were created following Spradley's (1979) guidelines to conduct field work and understand human behavior as it relates to "two major tasks, *discovery* and *description*" (p. 17, emphasis in original) of the participants' conditions and the results from other sources.

For the purpose of reviewing the data from the face-to-face audio-recorded interviews, participants were identified using the letter *P* followed by a number from 1 to 20. References made by participants to persons and institutions other than SIM by name were deleted as part of the confidentiality procedure. All interviews were later transcribed to Word® format for further analysis using NVivo 9 software. Sinkovics et al. (2008) recommended the use of (CAQDAS).

Demographics

A combination of public government publications was used to determine the characteristics of Latino students in Massachusetts. The descriptor demographic categories included information related to the participants' background and their communities. Demographic characteristics categories included (a) ethnicity, (b) language spoken at home, (c) language spoken in their community, (d) language associated with school or academics, (e) household income, (f) gender, and (g) parents' level of

education. The information gathered will help identify social barriers, opportunities, and factors that affect Latino students' perseverance to attend higher education institutions.

Research Questions

The research questions were used to prompt participants to tell their stories. The research questions in the present study were divided into three main questions and interview-guiding questions (see Appendix C). The primary research questions that led the analysis of the Latino students' participation in the educational process in Massachusetts are as follows:

RQ1: How did the immigration status play a role in the pursuit of access to higher education?

RQ2: Why some regular educational activities during the K-12 years turn out to be barriers for undocumented students aspiring access to higher education?

RQ3: How did the immigrant status affect the motivation of undocumented immigrant students to seek higher education?

RQ4: How do undocumented students view sources of financial support to continue their education?

RQ5: Why are sources of non-financial support significant in the decision to aspire to higher education for undocumented students?

According to Creswell (2008), qualitative research is "an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon" (p. 645). The central phenomenon in the current qualitative study is the transition to higher education of former undocumented immigrant students in pursue of advancing their human capital.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data began upon completion of the interviews. Qualitative data analysis was conducted using NVivo9 software and complemented with manual revisions to identify, explore, and understand patterns and themes. The interview transcripts were coded, with special attention given to key words and phrases (Creswell, 2008; Spradley, 1979). General topics and background information from readings and documents complement the topics and codes emanating from the interviews. Coding and topics were reviewed to develop subcategories and to assure adequate data labeling to complement the "software [which] is just one tool in a larger coding process" (Neuman, 2006, p. 463). Dominant categories and key concepts were identified (Creswell, 2005; Neuman, 2006).

Summary

The present research study encompassed a qualitative case study design. Three sources of data were used: interviews, official government publications, and documents verifying research participants' involvement in advocacy groups. After data collection, information was coded and themes and subtopics were classified (Neuman, 2006). Multiple data collection was used to verify information and strengthen the present study's dependability (Creswell, 2008). Truthfulness and dependability were ensured through triangulation and member checking (Creswell, 2008; Neuman, 2006). Ethical standards of research were properly implemented, and each participant was assured confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were informed of the research process, and given the opportunity to participate or withdraw from the study. Participants were given an informed consent form (see Appendix A). The results of the study will be locked at the

researcher's residence for 3 years in a file cabinet after the completion of the study. After the three-year period, all data will be destroyed by shredding the stored material and deleting and destroying the electronic storage device.

In qualitative research studies, the researcher seeks to recreate as accurately as possible the life experiences of research participants (Neuman, 2006). A pilot test of the interview format and questions was conducted before the present research interviews that became the source of information for collecting data for the analysis (Creswell, 2005). Results gathered from the research instruments are presented in chapter 4, along with analyses of data.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the transition to college of K–12 undocumented Latino students as part of the social investment in their education in Massachusetts. As a rapidly growing segment of the population in the United States, Latinos must be able to contribute in greater scale to the larger society. Interviews were conducted with 20 formerly undocumented Latino immigrant college students to obtain information on their educational experiences and resilience pursuing higher education. The participants answered questions related to their experiences as former undocumented immigrant students, and as students with a regularized immigration status. The data gathering included in-depth interviews with college students from institutions of higher education around Massachusetts.

This chapter contains the interview analysis and results of formerly undocumented Latino immigrant students in Massachusetts. Participants described their perceptions of how they considered the larger community viewed them as undocumented persons. Participants' involvement in their own advocacy for access to higher education and its implication for the larger population were explored. A qualitative design was chosen to elicit responses and to explore the potential of greater individual and social benefits from the social investment in each participant's education while he/she attended K–12 public schools. The current study included a demographic questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with 20 participants.

The data were organized to develop emerging themes in terms of cultural and linguistic perceptions, motivation, support, and economic factors. The results were analyzed and compared with the research questions to place the experiences of the

participants within a sociocultural framework. The focus of the study was to explore the transition of former undocumented Latino students to post-secondary education as part of social investment in human capital and the social and individual benefits because of their education.

Study Population

The chapter presents information gathered from the interviews and relevant data from the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). An interview protocol (see Appendix C) was followed before proceeding with the interview questions. The protocol consisted primarily of contacting potential participants, explaining the purpose of the dissertation research, describing the interviewees' participation, informing participants how their responses to the study would be protected, and providing researcher's contact information.

This study was an analysis of the educational experiences of formerly undocumented Latino immigrant students in the state of Massachusetts. College students from institutions of higher education around Massachusetts were interviewed to obtain firsthand accounts and perceptions of their educational experiences in K–12 and the transition to postsecondary education. Finding formerly undocumented Latino immigrant students who met the criteria and were willing to participate in the study was challenging. Of the 28 Latino students asked to participate in the study, six did not meet the criteria for the study, two served as pilot interviews, and 20 were used in the analysis.

The six disqualified participants were found using the snowball sampling method. Four had been recommended by other participants under the assumption that, at some

point in their lives, they had been undocumented immigrants in the United States, but they were born in the United States to undocumented parents. Two other potential participants found using snowball sampling had not regularized their immigration status, but were recommended because they were enrolled in college. Eleven of the 20 participants were or had been affiliated with the Student Immigrant Movement (SIM), and the other nine participants were recommended for the study through the snowball sampling method.

Outlier Responses

Two participants, P15 and P17, believed at some point that they were not affected by having experienced the undocumented status. Both participants received TPS soon after entering the United States from El Salvador. The perception of the TPS in both of these cases was that the temporary status was a valid and regular part of the immigration process, complementing permanent immigrant status.

After entering the United States through the south border as a young child, P15 was unaware that he was undocumented. While waiting for the TPS request and while in public school, P15 was under the impression that TPS was a path to citizenship. When responding to some of the interview questions, he tried to explain that he did not have the experience as a former undocumented immigrant student. In one instance, he referred to English language as his native language. Years after high school, when he married his girlfriend of 3 years, he discovered that he had to apply for permanent residency. His responses are part of the analysis.

P17 was a few weeks away from graduating with a BS in psychology when her TPS expired. Participant P7 had to reapply for TPS and was in the process of adjusting her immigrant status once again, this time to get her status changed to permanent resident. Some of P17's responses were germane to the social investment on human capital of undocumented immigrant students and were included in the analysis.

Data Analysis Process

The data analysis procedure followed the description presented in chapter 3. The experiences described in the interviews were taken as the basic units of analysis. Those experiences were explored within a sociological framework and organized based on the individual life experiences of participants and the interaction with others. The data from the interview transcripts were analyzed using NVivo 9 (see Appendix E) and complemented with manual revisions. The initial codes of classification used as a starting point for the analysis included: motivation, family, economy, educational support, immigrant status, social interaction, and social return. Repeated reading of the interviews resulted in additional codes, leading to the emerging themes.

Instances represented in these codes include topics emanating from the interview responses. Some themes and sub-themes were mentioned by the participants or implied in their responses. In some cases, participants might not expressly have used the terms listed in Appendix E but the topics were determined through induction after analysis of the responses.

Interview questions were used to gather data about the life experiences of formerly undocumented Latino immigrant students in Massachusetts. The transcribed

interviews were read numerous times to gain familiarity with the content in the voice of the participants. The interview questions were semi-structured to preserve the voice of the participants. How the story is told by the participant and presented by the researcher influence the selection of units of analysis presented in Appendix E.

Results

The approach to gather data was based on descriptive questions to collect information about life experiences of individuals through the interviews, and about specific, practical insights. Efforts were made to maintain the voice of the participants without correcting grammatical expressions or mistakes in the transcripts. The face-to-face interviews generated the results presented in the following sections and outlined in Appendix E.

Appendix E consists of key factors generated from each of the interview questions. These factors provided information about what influenced the transition from high school to college of former undocumented students. Following each participant's response, the interview question number and the research question related to the response are noted (i.e., response, interview question #, RQ #). The interview questions were designed to gain information related to the research questions, which are answered in chapter 5.

The findings in the study provided information into the social investment in human capital of undocumented students in Massachusetts and their transition to higher education. The major themes among the participants' descriptions of their educational experiences as students were related to (a) immigrant status, (b) motivation to continue

their postsecondary education, (c) support they received to continue with their education, (d) social and individual benefits from their educational investment, and (e) their plans for the future as influenced by their postsecondary education. Among the participants' responses, the experiences and perceptions of the need for access to higher education and options for social recovery were most clearly elicited in the stories of eight (40%) participants. In the following section, excerpts of the text transcribed from the participants' interviews are presented to illustrate the themes.

The interview data related to the first research question indicate that the barriers faced by undocumented students do interfere with society's investment in human capital of the undocumented population as a group belonging to many communities. Responding to interview question #5, what sustained their motivation, and question #6, the effect of undocumented experience on motivation, participants described stressors they faced that led to different levels of motivation, determination, and resilience in the pursuit of higher education. Participants' response to interview question #3 described their journey to the United States as a decision made by adults when the participants were children, to provide for a better future. Responding to question #3, about staying in Massachusetts, education was described by all participants as part of the opportunities sought by their parents, or other adults making the decision, to stay in the United States as undocumented immigrants. Discussing what sustained their motivation in response to interview question #6, participants also described education as essential to a more productive adjustment to their new society, as a way to overcome barriers related to research question #1. Participants felt that efforts to continue their post-secondary education were affected by state policy.

Common Themes

Table 3, *Nodes and References among the Respondents Data. Additional nodes and references in Appendix E.*

Nodes	Responses Related to the Node	Percent of Total of Respondents	No. of References
Benefits to society	14	70%	26
Change of immigrant status and access to higher education	20	100%	56
Civics	18	90%	47
Derogatory language	8	40%	11
Description of immigrant status	12	60%	23
Dropping out	8	40%	12
Ethnic identity besides Latino or Hispanic	20	100%	48
Experience as undocumented student	15	75%	26
Experience getting to this state in terms of lawful admission	20	100%	32
Family group	13	65%	22
Family separation	14	70%	20
Family support	17	85%	38
Fear of deportation	14	70%	33
Financing education	20	100%	59

Note: total number of respondents =20.

For the participants in the current study, the challenge of continuing their education is compounded by deficiencies in their educational experiences caused by their undocumented immigrant status. The participants' experiences in relation to the pursuit of higher education were affected by the factors discussed here: (a) perception of immigrant status; (b) stigma and self-esteem; (c) language; (d) deportation fears; (e) family separation; (f) financial support; (g) challenges in the community; and (h)

education as a reason for migration. The stories were analyzed from the perspective of social transmission and social transformation theories, considering human capital investment.

Perception of Immigrant Status

How participants think of themselves, and how they perceive other people in their communities see them as immigrants shape participants' own perception of their immigrant status and participation in their communities. The perception of their immigrant status may affect the way the person deals with the barriers faced by undocumented students in their transition to higher education, the subject of research question 1. Eighty percent of the participants were unaware of their undocumented immigrant status when they started attending school in Massachusetts.

The perception by the community, interview question 10, seemed to have another impact on participants. Participant P7 described the perception of the immigrant status as "it's not like you have a sign in your forehead that says 'I crossed the border,' or you have a social security on a tattoo or something like that." The participants' responses regarding their perceptions of immigrant status and motivation to continue their education ranged from a factor propelling them to do well in school, to the potential reason for considering dropping out of school.

Six of the 20 participants saw their immigrant status as a motivator to get high grades in school. For four other participants (P7, P12, P14, P17), the motivation to do well in school was diminished to the point of considering dropping out of school as the best option for an undocumented person. Participant P13 stated, "I was conscious that I

didn't have the papers to go to school, to higher education. I still persisted in doing good in school." For participant P12 who started college as an undocumented student, the perception of the undocumented status had a negative effect: "For several months I was really depressed and I even thought of never going back to college."

In other instances, participants remained aloof to the immigrant situation and let the parents worry about the immigration status. Participant P9 stated

> I think that the years that I didn't have any documents, as a teenager you don't think about it that much. I know that my mom, she's affected; she does think, or thought at the time and she had a lot of problems trying to find a job. I think that for me it didn't affect me that much back then because of my, um, that wasn't my priority at the time (lines 165-168).

Stigma and Self-esteem

Stigmatization as a social behavior affects the self-esteem of individuals, negatively affecting those whose social participation is devalued. Stigmatization and self-esteem were analyzed in relation to research questions 2 and 3, in terms of the social theories and the development of human capital. Participants in the study expressed concerns about full participation in school and community activities that might have helped them to find opportunities to grow and contribute to the recovery of the social investment in their human capital. All of the respondents indicated that after becoming aware of their undocumented immigrant status, they were at some point in their lives reluctant to talk about their immigrant status for fear of being stigmatized.

When asked about the use of a term to refer to undocumented students, interview question 7, all of the respondents said they did not know of a specific term for undocumented students. When asked if they personally used a term to refer to people in an undocumented situation similar to theirs, all of the participants answered that at some point they had used the term illegal, especially when they had been in the United States for only a few months. In response to interview question 8, fourteen (70%) of the participants said they now use the term undocumented, when referring to people in immigration and academic situations similar to theirs. Six (30%) of the participants explained that they use the term "DREAMers," referring to the federal DREAM Act, a bill that has been introduced in the U.S. Senate several times since 2001, and would lead to a stable immigration status for undocumented students who graduate from high school in the United States, and attend 2 years of college or serve in the military. Another term shared by participants is "SIMers," alluding to the Student Immigrant Movement (SIM). Participants perceived the use of DREAMers and SIMers as positive statements to overcome the self-esteem barrier projected by the negative concept of the term illegal.

The effect of the stigmatization due to the undocumented immigrant status was evident in the responses of 85% of the participants. These 17 participants were quick to point out that they had entered the United States on a plane, as opposed to crossing the U.S.-Mexican border, suggesting they had entered the United States through a legal process. Participant P4 explained the term *mojado*, which literally means "wetback," but did not notice her own perception of the undocumented status when she explained that "what mojado means is that you came through the water and I came through a plane, like people don't know that and they would just call you mojado, they think that's how you

got here, then you are illegal." Participant P14 used a similar clarification as a way to distance himself from the term mojado, and as a way to not succumb to stereotypes. Thinking about comments and stereotypes by classmates talking about undocumented immigrants he states that "in the back of my head, I was always saying 'I came here on a plane,' so I was not a wetback."

The stigma carried by discouraging remarks to immigrants affects their motivation to continue to postsecondary education, potentially altering social investment in the young student, and likely increasing the social cost of that same community member later in life as an adult. As explored in the intersection of social theories and human capital investment, the cost and benefits of greater human capital investment early in life bring greater individual and social benefits later in life.

Language

As a factor in the immigrant experience, language entails several barriers in the participants' educational experience. These obstacles include cultural adaptation, limited social capital to access social support, and ease of communication. Nineteen (95%) of the participants shared events from their time as elementary or high school English Language Learner students (ELLs). Only one participant, P16, did not narrate a situation in which she was aware of the experience as an ELL student, and participant P16 believed this was because she arrived in the United States at the age of four and started school in kindergarten in Massachusetts.

At the time of the interviews, participants felt that they were considered English-dominant. Fourteen participants, or 70%, stated that they were more comfortable using

English than using Spanish when expressing their feelings, opinions, and interacting in everyday activities. The use of English as the interview language demonstrated that participants were able to relate to their adopted cultural setting as students in K–12 schools with policies that demanded test preparation in English only. Conducting the interview in English allowed for observation of the participants' ability to overcome the language barrier, handle complex social and cultural concepts beyond school, and use more than one language and multiple cultural skills.

Deportation Fears

All of the participants expressed that they had experienced fear of deportation due to their undocumented status. Participants in the study expressed that the fear of a sudden end to their stay in the United States was present in activities that might otherwise be routine and normal for a regular student in the United States. Participant 13 stated that "[My mother] wants me to go to school; she doesn't want me to do the jobs she does, cleaning and everything. So it's like being deported after 11 years of hard work it's not [fair to her]." Participant P2 stated that around the time when the Sensenbrenner bill was introduced in the US Congress, "during this particular time SIM significantly became really, really active in the community. There were a lot of coalitions that united to pass a comprehensive immigration reform" (lines 102-104).

Participant P16 delayed her college enrollment for a year while waiting to stabilize her immigrant status.

> I applied for other colleges I was going to apply in my senior year of high school. I deferred my acceptance to *[deleted for confidentiality*] because I didn't have the

> status, and I didn't have the money; I was just waiting. I deferred and waited until I had the [immigrant] status (lines 231-234).

Eighty percent of the participants expressed that they declined participation in activities that might involve providing any information participants thought could identify them, or their families, as undocumented. Participant P12, expressed his concern about the possibility of deportation as "not seeing my family for a long time or even ever [again]." Participants expressed that removing that fear of deportation could lead to their greater participation in the communities where they live.

Family Separation

Interview question 3, about moving to the United States, and interview question 13, about interaction with the community, allowed participants to share information regarding family separation. All participants in the current study had been affected by family separation at one point in their life, particularly as young children. In some cases the separation was in the form of one parent coming to the United States ahead of the other family members, or sometimes participants stayed behind with relatives in the country of origin while both parents came to the United States. Seven participants (35%) lived in single-mother families, and one participant was a child of the state as a foster child.

Reasons for family separation range from political instability and poverty in the country of origin, to parents leaving the United States and returning to the country of origin. In two cases, P2 and P20, the immigrant children stayed in the United States and

the parents went back to the country of origin. In one of those cases, a decision for a participant to stay in the United States was made once she arrived in Massachusetts for vacation. The two adults that could take care of her as a child in Colombia fell ill, and her extended family decided it was better for her to stay in the United States for a while. In the case of P20, the state took custody of the participant as a child and her mother went back to Colombia.

Finanacial Support

Financial options for undocumented students are limited as they are ineligible for financial aid in the form of federal loans or work-study programs. Some participants stated that they were receiving scholarships and financial aid of some sort from private institutions, and all of the participants had to work to supplement some portion of their daily needs. Participants P2, P16, P18, and P20 received scholarships that covered portions of their higher education tuition. Three of these four participants received scholarships that paid for their tuition to private institution while still undocumented. Participants had to work to cover their room and board and other school-related expenses, such as textbooks or medical insurance. Participants P10 and P14 modified their immigrant status in time to receive Fulbright scholarships to attend private universities in Massachusetts.

Interview questions 11 and 16 are related to participants' knowledge of in-state tuition in relation to their educational experiences. All of the participants in the present study described their financial situation as a major challenge when making the decision to go to a 4-year institution or to a community college. For 55% of the participants, going

to community college was considered the best route to start their post-secondary journey because it was a less-expensive option.

Sources of support to continue their path to post-secondary education involved peer support to disseminate information on college access. Participants P2, P10, P13, P16, and P20 received scholarships and had sources of information outside school or family to help them navigate the higher education application process. Of these five participants, four were involved in SIM and had, at some point, presented their own immigration story to the public as advocates for in-state tuition. The other participant who received a scholarship and had support to go on to college, was a foster child of the state. This participant gave her support to other students by helping other students in her former group home with the paperwork to apply for college.

Challenges in the Community

The interview questions were intended to obtain information about participants' interaction with the community in general, regardless of immigrant status. In most cases, participants described the challenges associated with a lack of connections to navigate services available to the community. Participants expressed that as undocumented immigrants, they felt more comfortable in some communities than others, thus felt they were able to inquire more about social programs and services for which there was no need to disclose their immigrant status.

Participants in the study described challenges in the community related to their undocumented status. Participants felt that their immigrant status deprived them of greater community involvement to contribute to that social transformation they thought

was needed to strengthen their communities. When responding to interview question 13, about how the immigrant status affects the interaction with the community, participant P12 stated that the undocumented status places extra demands on them:

> When you don't have an immigration status you're forced to work more. If you want to go to school, if you want to do different activities, you're required to work more. So that takes time away from you; and that time, if I had that time I could invest it in working with the community attending different activities like cleaning up, and town hall meetings, etc. So I do see that [our interaction] is affected by our immigration status because we don't have that much time to relate to other people in the community.

Twenty five percent of participants indicated that having no access to a driver's license, undocumented people rely on public transportation, friends, or coworkers to get to and from work. Participants expressed that traveling to and from work are often more time consuming for undocumented workers. As undocumented persons, they have to make arrangements to work and must work as often as jobs are available to them. The findings seem to indicate that the participants' undocumented status increased the challenges to relate to the community, affecting the possibilities of social participation that may lead to greater social, emotional, and financial support explored in research question 4.

Participant P8 mentioned his financial and social contribution to the community as a reason to further his education and as a positive way to interact and contribute to his community:

> Basically I'm an entrepreneur guy right now. Definitely contributing a lot, I just paid taxes. I actually owed money to the state, and I paid. It's definitely a bigger contribution. I think the importance of contributing to the community... I feel very good to see myself as hiring people to work because that's creating jobs for the community, locally here in Jamaica Plain; so definitely a plus, for the community and for my family (lines 346-350).

The story of participant P20 presented a different aspect of the challenges in the community than the other cases in the study. This participant became a foster child of the state when she was undocumented. Her social workers wanted her to attend college, but were faced with the obstacle of the immigration status. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts had taken custody of her as a child, after her mother was no longer in the United States. "Things didn't work out as well when I was a teenager, so my custody passed to DSS [Department of Social Services], and she returned to Colombia, and then DSS got the paper work for me [to regularize my immigrantstatus] (P20, lines 103-106).

Participant P20 was the child of the state at the time she graduated from high school and, as an undocumented resident of the state, she found herself in an immigration limbo, unable to enroll in college. Her perception of the experience as undocumented student cannot be compared to other participants as they were not under the custody of the State. Massachusetts took action to solve the immigration situation of participant P20, stabilizing her immigration status through legal process between the state and the federal government.

Education as a Reason for Migration

For the participants in the study, education was not the unique reason for their families to have migrated to the United States. Motivation to advance their education as a form of investing in their human capital fluctuated among participants. Responses to the interview questions show that participants were determined to continue to higher education, regardless of the obstacles they faced. Participant P7 expressed her determination to get a college education as a personal goal:

> Even if I had to…um, I don't know, leave the country, because inside of me I knew what I wanted was education; it's not because is an option or is a path that you have to take after you graduated, because I really wanted to keep on going for myself (lines 49-52).

Participant P17 also indicated that she was willing to relocate outside of the United States if it was necessary to further her career:

> I'm almost done, almost getting my degree, by the end of June. Right now I feel that at least I went to college and I have a degree from the United States, which makes a big difference. Even if I go to El Salvador again, even if I go to another country, which is in Latin America, it would make a big difference.

Participant P17 was under the immigration category of temporary protective status (TPS), which may come to an end at about the same time she receives her degree in psychology. The TPS category was granted her because of the unstable social situation in Central America, specifically in El Salvador, and participant P17 would have to reapply for TPS again. Participant P17 expressed concern about the changing politics in the region, thus the reference about the social capital that a degree from an institution of higher education

in the United States represents. The prospects of her degree in psychology made participant P17 consider the possibility of taking her education to a country other than the place of birth, El Salvador, and other than the one she now considers home, the United States.

Sources of Support to Continue to Post-Secondary Education

For participants in the study, the prospect of postsecondary education was a major factor in finishing high school. For 60% of the respondents, going to college was a primary goal their parents had in mind when deciding to come to the United States. For some respondents, the motivation to pursue their postsecondary education was influenced by the sources of support from family, educational staff, and peers.

As former undocumented immigrant students, the respondents' sources of support in their quest to continue to post-secondary education varied. Participants referred to more than one source of support to continue their post-secondary education when responding to interview questions, and for that reason answers are not separated by categories in this section to avoid duplicating responses.

Table 4

Participant Category in Terms of Sources of Support to Continue to Post-Secondary Education

Category	Number of Responses in Which the Category Occurred	Percent of Total Responses
Familial support	17	85%
Institutional support	11	55%
Peer support	12	60%

Some participants shared that they had more than one source of support.

This section presents the sources of support from family, institutions, and peer groups. Regarding familial support, 17 (85%) of the respondents credited their families as the driving force that sustained their motivation to continue their higher education. Eleven (55%) of the participants shared as a positive experience that they found at least one supportive member of an educational institution who helped them continue their higher education. Participants described how a teacher, a guidance counselor, or an admissions officer was active in supporting them to continue their postsecondary education.

In some cases participants mentioned education officials supported them by going against established protocol that might have prevented participants from continuing their postsecondary journey. Participant P2 noted that her guidance counselor appealed to colleges that had accepted her as an international student, which meant higher tuition, to review P2's application as Massachusetts resident. P2 was eventually admitted to a college that did not see her undocumented status as a major issue to continue her education:

> The university that I'm going did not question my status whatsoever. They did not care. She [my guidance counselor,] called them, and she thanked them personally for the fact that they were really supportive, and my immigration status had nothing to do with me being accepted to the school. As a matter of fact, since I had a very high GPA I qualified for many, many scholarships that ended up going to cover all my tuition. I was very lucky and happy to know that, even though I was undocumented, I still received a Fulbright from the college to cover all my tuition (P2, lines 480-487).

Twelve, or 60%, of the respondents referred to groups of peers and community organizations, as the source of support and encouragement to continue their post-secondary education. In responses associated with research question about the intersection of social theories of transmission and transformation with the human capital to recover social investment, participants found educational support through other students and community groups. Local groups for tutoring and homework help, cultural dance groups, and advocacy groups such as SIM and MIRA (Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy) were mentioned by participants as key support factors.

Educational Investment

Participants viewed the purpose of education as an investment in human capital. Some of the themes were related to the respondents' perception, plans, or active involvement in reaping the benefits of their education. Based on their advanced educational level, most participants spoke confidently of their present occupations and plans of greater social return. Fourteen of the participants had already initiated work in their potential field of professional training, had a small business, or were on their way to becoming employed in areas associated with their studies.

Participants in the study considered the possibility of in-state tuition as an option for more undocumented students to pursue higher education. Participants expressed that when the in-state tuition bill did not pass in Massachusetts, undocumented students turned to working longer hours at their jobs than they would have if the tuition was lower. Participant P6 stated that "after high school I had given up on the dream of going

to college. After that, I started working and saving some money to see if I could earn some credits as I paid for that little by little" (lines 28-30)."

Responses to interview question 11, knowledge of the DREAM Act or in-state tuition, presented a variety of information, and sometimes confusion of the participants. Participant P1 described in-state tuition as being cheaper than out-of-state tuition charged at public institutions: "as undocumented student you have to pay, I think is like triple. While if you're just a resident, it's way cheaper. That was really hard" (lines 141-142). Participant P4 described the term "in-state tuition" as a program for the tuition paid by immigrant students who did well in school: "I think in-state tuition is if you're part of public education, and you attend high school, and if you're a good student, eventually you become, um, they allow you to go to college" (lines 126-128).

The lack of a state program that allows undocumented students to compete for scholarships was mentioned by 30% of the participants. Participant P7 was frustrated over the fact that she was not given the opportunity to receive state scholarships, but was optimistic about the opportunity to finish high school and go to college. Participant P7 stated "I can't go back and say 'Oh, I'm legal now, I want my money.' Sometimes you have opportunities just once in a life time and that's the time to go to high school" (lines 96-98). Referring to why the state should have in-state tuition, P7 added

> I think to pay in-state tuition one should be a resident of the state. Even if you're undocumented, you're a resident of the state; you're paying your taxes, you're doing everything that you're supposed to do, why not, um, you're not going to get your education for free, you're not asking for grants, you're not

> asking for loans, you're not asking for scholarships, you're just one more seat but someone is going to pay for it (lines 161-165).

Participant P14 gave a more detailed description of the same issue of the in-state tuition in Massachusetts described by P7:

> The state of Massachusetts currently does not have in-state tuition for undocumented students. I believe Colorado just passed it, Maryland just passed it. They joined states like Illinois, Utah, Texas, etc. etc. and Connecticut that do have [in-state tuition]. Massachusetts currently does not. What in-state tuition would do is charge the same amount of money to go to a public-funded school, like UMass, University of Massachusetts, or Bunker Hill Community College. It would cost the same for documented students as for undocumented students. So instead of an undocumented student having to pay $2000 per class at a community college, they would pay $500, which is what the documented student would pay (lines 218-225).

Of the six participants who mentioned the lack of a program that allows undocumented students to receive government scholarships only one was able to receive the scholarship awarded to him. The other five had also earned merit-based scholarships, but were unable to claim the scholarships because they were undocumented at the time of the award. Participant P14 became a permanent resident right before the time he was awarded a scholarship:

> [The university] doesn't give out grants or scholarships to students who are in undocumented status. So what I would've most likely had to do was go back, stay back home. I would've probably gone to a community college, for

> classes; take a couple of semesters off, so I could work, save the money so I could pay for the next classes. If it wasn't for my documented status currently, I would not be able to afford the education I have now. The way my education is paid for by is with the scholarship that I earned. If it wasn't for the scholarship, I wouldn't be able to be here. The only reason I got that was not only because of my grades, but the reason I qualified for it was because of my documented status (lines 294-301).

Undocumented students have resorted to community organizations in search of support for their quest for access to higher education. Sixty percent of the participants found support and felt confident with the help from community organizations in their transition to higher education. The other 40% of participants did not feel they needed, or were not comfortable seeking, assistance from community organizations for fear of revealing their relatives' immigrant status to unknown parties. Participant P18 concluded that he did not need assistance from community organizations to go to college, because his fear of revealing his status prevented him from disclosing his immigration status. Participant P18 described his interaction with the community as undocumented student because he hid his immigration status until his senior year: "I never disclosed my immigration status while in high school, but it was just until the end" (lines 137-139).

Participants expressed a variety of needs of undocumented students in their transition from high school to college. Describing their experiences as former undocumented students and as students with regularized immigrant status, participants' responses ranged from support to indifference, to fear of seeking support because of the immigrant status. Participants considered institutional support in a variety of ways; from

a single teacher encouraging and giving advice to students to apply for college, to admissions officers at higher education institutions assisting students navigate the college enrollment process. Participant P18 continued to describe his experience and the role of a school representative, a teacher going out of her way to provide guidance for students. Participant P18 had reached 12th grade and he had seen his classmates applying to college. He remembered a teacher who had expressed concerned that he was not applying, and that teacher became a link to community organizations:

> I knew that I didn't have documents, so then I went to one of my teachers that I really trusted. This was my history teacher, and I explained her my situation, like what were my chances of me pursuing school after high school, and then it was her that made me realize that there were a few challenges that I was going to face. Given that I didn't have documents I wouldn't be able to apply for financial aid. Then also, scholarships would probably… you'd probably have to give them like a social number to be able to apply for them. Even though I did have pretty much like a good resume in high school, but it was her who put me in touch with the MIRA Coalition, which is the Massachusetts Immigrant [and Refugee] Advocacy Coalition (lines 33-41).

Seven, or 35%, of the participants felt that they were supported by school personnel as undocumented students to continue to postsecondary education. Fifty percent felt that they were not supported as undocumented students in pursuit of higher education. Fifteen percent did not seek support because they were afraid of disclosing their status, or felt that school personnel was not receptive to their situation as immigrants, thus they did the college application process themselves.

Participants P15 and P17 shared a similar response to questions 9 and 15 about the perception of changes from undocumented immigrant students to documented immigrants. Their responses were different from the rest of the participants:

> May be I didn't have that experience. I was not that … I didn't have docu… I was undo… how do you say… I had my documents, I had my permit to work, so that allowed me to go to school; I'm sorry that allowed me to go to work after high school, to go to school to get my computer, my computer training (P15, lines 157-162).

When pressed about describing differences in experiences as undocumented and documented resident of the state, P15 adds "I really haven't seen the big difference for me" (line 274).

For participant P17 the perception of the state's response to undocumented immigrant students changed when her TPS category came up for inspection, and possible termination. "Even though at some point I didn't have the money to go to college but I felt that I was protected. Now I feel that things are going wrong and I don't see the light right now" (P15, lines 14-16). Participant P15 did feel that compared to other immigrant students who were undocumented she had an advantage and was supported by the state, and that she could be a role model and support for Latino students.

At the time of undergoing the college enrollment process, these two participants felt that the condition of undocumented students did not apply to them because they had TPS. After enrolling in college, participants P15 and P17 were faced with the situation of the expiration of the temporary protective status, which left them in an immigration limbo for some time.

Participants reported that school personnel took the initiative to guide undocumented students in a process related to social theory of transformation. One participant, P18, started attending Massachusetts public schools at the age of eight, and did not disclose his immigrant status to anyone until he was in his senior year of high school. During his senior year, participant P18 mentioned his immigrant status to a teacher who was surprised that he was not applying for scholarships or college grants despite a high GPA. Participant P18 then disclosed to his social studies teacher that he was undocumented and the teacher guided him to sources that were useful in applying to college.

One participant, P2, had been encouraged since she entered high school to apply for college. Guidance counselors and teachers at her school had supported her to be involved in academic activities beyond the classroom, winning science competitions at the state level. Responding to interview question 6 about positive or negative experiences as an undocumented immigrant student, participant P2 stated that she had almost given up on the "dream of attending college" when an academic counselor at a private college informed her that this institution would admit her regardless of her immigrant status.

In-State Tuition Versus International Student Rate

One participant, P16, attended Boston public schools since the age of four. By her junior year of high school, she was undocumented still, but like many of her classmates, was applying to college. The experience of participant P16 was similar to that of other participants:

> I filled out the college applications but when I got back my responses, whether they were accepted or not, the ones that were accepted, my financial aid package wasn't very good. A lot of them saw me as an international student because I didn't have a social security number. So therefore I would've had to pay full tuition. I deferred my acceptance to [deleted for confidentiality] because I didn't have the status, and I didn't have the money, and I was just waiting. I deferred and waited until I had the immigrant [documents]. A year [later, during my senior year] I got my status, so I got my [legal immigrant] status before I enrolled (P16, lines 103-110).

Another participant, P2, applied to and started college at the same institution as P16, but had a different experience as an undocumented applicant. Participant P2 described her conversation with the admissions officer during the acceptance interview as part of the college enrollment process as follows:

> I remember going to my admission interview… and I told [the admission counselor] that I was really afraid that my immigration status was gonna have something to do with me getting accepted into [deleted for confidentiality purposes] and by all means he said don't worry, if you want to talk about this right now, we will talk about it. Just be aware that it doesn't have anything to do with [your admission]. So that was very meaningful to me because I felt that finally I have found this university who only cared about my talent as student, my potential as an individual. [My immigrant status] wasn't even like a major topic of conversation, they didn't care. I felt comfortable, I felt welcome (P2, lines 522-531).

These two participants had different responses from the same private institution. Participants P2 and P16 sought to enroll at this institution as an option outside of the state's public system due to their undocumented immigrant status. For participants P2 and P16, a private institution was a less-expensive option than a public college.

Unstable Future

Interview questions 14, on the change of immigrant status and college enrollment, and 17, plans once they earn their degree, were intended to obtain information about the prospects of a stable immigrant status in the United States. Sixteen, or 80%, of the participants expressed concern about their unstable future at the time they finished high school or during their transition to college. Four participants, 20%, were not concerned about a likely unstable future as undocumented persons when considering their transition to college. Two participants, P6 and P 9, thought that solving the immigration issues was not something for them to be concerned about; they considered that their immigration status were matters for the adults in their families, namely the mothers. Participants P6 and P9 were confident that their immigration status would be clear and they would be able to go to college. Participant P6 said "it doesn't matter if I'm legal or illegal now; I just know what I want to do. Being illegal didn't affect me much; I just knew that in my mind it was right to go to college." For participant P9 not thinking about the undocumented status was a positive action: "I think that the years that I didn't have any documents, as a teenager you don't think about it that much. I know that my mom she's affected; she does think, or thought at the time."

Addressing interview question 17, about plans once they obtain their degrees, participants P7, P8, and P12 felt that some form of in-state tuition could lead to greater social and civic involvement on their part. Participants described the inaction by the state regarding in-state tuition policy for undocumented students as an obstacle to their readiness to fully contribute to the society that invested in their education. Participant P8 had received a scholarship to attend a community college, but the scholarship money was to cover the difference between the in-state and out-of-state tuition. This participant stated,

> You need papers to open a practice, open a business, work as a therapist and be able to pay. If I was still undocumented, you know, I was going to be able to pay out-of-state one or two classes per semester; that was the plan. So when I got my documents I was already done with the massage practice, or the massage program, and I already had one year of graphic design (P8, lines 291-296).

For participant P7, the possibility of not being able to attend college was perceived as a local obstacle in Massachusetts. Participant P7 described her determination to get a college education as an important goal in her life: "I knew I was gonna get an education no matter how. Even if I had to leave the country, because inside of me I knew what I wanted was education." Speaking of her inability to afford college as an undocumented student, participant P7 stated,

> [Not having in-state tuition] it kind of brought me down because I was like "what else, what's next for us," even if we tried to. I was part of a lobbying group going to Washington, and [advocating for] DREAM Act's laws, and trying to find a way around it, but I couldn't do it (P7, lines 67-70).

Discussing the difference in experiences as a former undocumented student and as a student with permanent resident status, participant P7 considered that regularizing her immigrant status allowed her to pursue her educational goals in Massachusetts. "Right now I'm going through my sophomore year at a community college, second year and I'm ready to graduate with my associate. I am taking four classes and I am very fortunate that I'm able to keep studying" (P7).

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the results of the demographic questionnaire and the semi-structured interview responses. The data presented on the transition from high school to college as part of the social investment made on undocumented immigrant students are the source of discussion in chapter 5. Excerpts from participants' responses, included in chapter 4, support the significance of the results. The most common themes were (a) perception of immigrant status, (b) motivation to stay in school and continue to higher education, (c) sources of support to continue with their educational journey, (d) the potential of social returns to education, and (e) awareness of the significance of the change of immigration status.

The stories of the immigrant students in the study are centered on the search for opportunities beyond what schools can offer. Many of the participants expressed their desire to continue to postsecondary education as a way of gaining upper mobility and entrance into the upper middle-class employment sector. Most respondents considered the return of the educational investment in terms of individual and social benefits. Several respondents noted the increased support and awareness they found in community

organizations. Challenges encountered by the researcher during the study were also included in chapter 4. The results of the study in the context of the literature and leadership significance are presented in chapter 5. Analysis of the limitations, conclusions, and recommendations are also included in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains a review and summary of this case study exploring the experiences of undocumented student's transition to higher education as part of the social investment on human capital. Implications of the study, contributions to the literature, to policy makers, and most importantly, to educational leaders gleaned from the literature review and the data analysis are discussed. Chapter 5 also includes a discussion of the conclusions resulting from the analysis of the face-to-face interviews detailed in chapter 4. Analysis of the scope of the research and the limitations presented in chapter 1 are further discussed, and recommendations for adjustment to the process of access to higher education for undocumented students are included in this chapter. This chapter includes an overview of the study in relation to the literature review of chapter 2, and the context of the research method chosen presented in chapter 3. Recommendations for future research are also provided based on the data collected and the conclusions gleaned from the present study.

Conclusions

The study's findings contain information about the transition of formerly undocumented Latino students who persevered in accessing higher education. The research identified areas of educational policy and some repercussions of immigration regulations on the transition to higher education by undocumented students. While the literature shows the number of Latino students enrolling in postsecondary education is increasing (Passel & Cohn, 2011; Passel & Taylor, 2010), the number of those who

successfully complete their degree is still very low compared to the number of Latino students enrolled in K-12 public schools (Contreras, 2011).

The study reflects previous findings in terms of growing participation of Latino students in the education system in the United States. The diversity in education has been in part the response of the postmodernist approach to changing demographics in and out of the classroom, by attempting to diversify the postsecondary institutions. In the case of Latino students, regardless of the immigration status, many are not well-informed. The study coincides with other findings (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Yoshikawa, 2011) in the limited information that most unauthorized immigrant students possess to navigate the college application process. The findings in relation to research question 2, barriers faced by undocumented students in accessing postsecondary education, highlight the need to prepare the path beyond K-12 education for the Hispanic population. The growing numbers of Latinos in the United States constitutes a significant percent of the nation's labor force that make it a pressing issue to provide educational opportunities to develop the skills required to participate in an intense global interaction.

The data gathered for this study present responses that cannot be considered as unanimous in terms of the experiences of the participants. All of the participants were undocumented students at some point during their K-12 education, but not all were aware of their immigrant status as K-12 students, and in cases in which they were, the reaction to their plight was different. For some participants the undocumented immigrant status was a barrier that they saw as something temporal and therefore they had to strive to achieve an education beyond high school and be prepared to be positive members of their

communities. Some participants perceived the state's response to undocumented students as ambiguous and frustrating in terms of the state's decision not to allow in-state tuition. At the same time other participants expressed optimism with the need for a bill as the DREAM Act to pass at the federal level, even if such law will no longer benefit them.

Several characteristics appeared common to the participants' situation related to the investment on human capital in the state of Massachusetts. The analysis is centered on topics such as (a) the changing context of employability and education in a service economy; (b) the immigrant student experience; (c) the perceived value of education among participants; and (d) the potential results of participants' contributions to society.

The following conclusions from the study were perceived to build the character and support the skills of participants to transition to college:

1. The perception of immigrant status is influential in the decision to continue to higher education.

2. Stigma and self-esteem are perceived as competing personality forces that shape the determination of undocumented immigrant students to go to college.

3. Language is a factor that as an individual and social investment affects the strength of the cultural bridge and resultant benefits in the transition to postsecondary education.

4. Fear of deportation was a determinant factor in achieving higher education, independent of when in relation to schooling the immigrant status was regularized.

5. Family separation was an important causal characteristic driving the effort to attain an education at a higher level.

6. Financial support presented a dilemma for participants and institutions in terms of availability of resources for undocumented students.

Perception of Immigrant Status

The perception of immigrant status was manifested in different ways in the responses of participants during the face-to-face interviews. The study shows that all participants were not focused solely on their Hispanic or Latino identity. Participants shared 48 instances of references to other than Hispanic or Latino as a reference to themselves or as how other people around them perceived them at the place of employment, community activities, or school. Concurrent with the findings by Murphy (2008) on the factors affecting the motivation of immigrant students to persevere through college, the findings in this study indicate that the support immigrant students feel in their community is fundamental to the continuation of post-secondary education.

The findings in this study show that in some cases the unauthorized immigrant status was conceived of by participants as an encouraging situation to embrace opportunities for the advancement of their own education. The approach to the advancement of their own education in spite of the challenging situation of being undocumented immigrant presented faults within the frameworks of the critical theory (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Gutek, 2004). Participants in the study examined their role as individual members of a subordinate group in a society that requires postsecondary education for a stronger participation and a healthier future.

Stigma and self-esteem. Participants in the study unanimously mentioned the burden of stigmatization as a result of the undocumented immigrant status. Almost all participants mentioned that even if their knowledge of the English language and cultural skills of the receiving culture allowed them to navigate some of the everyday basic needs, there were abundant reminders of their documentation status. The study reflected the findings by Yoshikawa (2011) on the stigmatization of unauthorized immigrant status, limiting access to everyday life activities in the community, schools, and resources that could offer some sort of financial flexibility.

Other results from the present study reveal that the impact of the self-concept influences the determination and decisions to continue to higher education as a response to the barriers faced by the former undocumented students. Participants sought a way out of their role as subordinate participants of society through community organizations and peer support groups, coinciding with the explanation of the social transformation theories presented by Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte (1999) Gutek (2004), and Neuman (2006). In the present study most participants were empowered by community organizations such as SIM and MIRA.

Language. The findings in the study illustrate the transition to English language as an initial barrier that was overcome by participants as a means of adjusting to their new communities and to achieve their goals of attaining higher education. The level of English proficiency of some participants reflected the findings by Suárez-Orozco et.al (2008) in which the level of fluency among immigrant non-native speakers was affected by the English language learners' school characteristics they attended and the community where they live. All participants spoke English and Spanish, and felt comfortable in both

languages. Four participants who had attended school in neighborhoods with predominantly non-immigrant communities considered themselves English-dominant speakers, expressed their responses in more complex language, and the four received full scholarships to attend college.

As discussed in the literature review, states must invest finances in the education of English language learners, including the children who might be unauthorized immigrants. The experiences of the participants in this study illustrate the need to continue investing in the delivery of English language acquisition policies. The adoption of the English language represents that participants were able to advance in their cultural socialization, adapt to the nature and culture of work, becoming skilled in their fields of study, and a multicultural link in their communities.

The language advancement of the participants in this study is significant in terms of the cultural bridge that this group was able to cross, and is representative of the larger picture of Hispanic immigrant students found in the literature. This study coincides with the findings by Gándara & Contreras (2009), Garcia et al. (2008), Suárez-Orozco, et.al (2008), and Contreras (2011) that many new immigrants attend schools with weak resources that may not prepare students as well.

Deportation fears. The findings in this study show that the fear of deportation was an impediment in the attainment of higher education that once removed, resulted in greater motivation and determination for participants. Some of the participants in the study were able to resolve their immigration situation at different points while still students. Those who had resolved their situation while still in high school were relieved to know that they could at least apply for student loans or other financial packages. Other

participants who solved their immigration situation after finishing high school, expressed how their determination became more intense, as if in an effort to catch up to the educational opportunities they had had to pass because of prior undocumented immigrant status.

Participants expressed their relief to be able to participate more openly in everyday activities and basic formative school activities that other classmates were able to engage in. Most participants in the study were engaged in giving back to the community in different ways, even before they finished their college degree. Some participants were employing other people; others were contributing their skills to organizations such as nonprofit groups, churches, or through their employment. This study coincides with the conclusion of Contreras (2011) and Gonzales (2007; 2010) that not allowing undocumented students access to higher education prevents the nation from taking advantage of the contributions this population is willing to give to the nation.

Family separation. The study's findings inform of factors on the impact of migration on family structure presented in previous studies (Murphy, 2004, 2008; Yoshikawa, 2011; Suárez-Orozco, et.al, 2008). Family separation was an experience that all of the participants had faced before arriving in the United States. The majority of participants expressed that their mothers were the driving force in their determination to complete their college education. For most participants, completing their degree was equally significant for them as for the parents. The link between participants' motivation and their parents, particularly mothers, was related to the connection of early years of education in the country of origin, and a sense of obligation to the parents for their sacrifice as immigrant workers.

For most participants family relations came into play when deciding what to do about the prospects of higher education. Having gone through family separation prior to their arrival in the United States, participants had a hard time seeing their education as undocumented students as a potential cause that might affect family reunification. As they grew up, participants thought of their role as being at the center of their family's migration, since parents wanted to provide a better future for their children, therefore they refrained from educational activities. The study informs of the need to have organizations that invite participation independently of the immigrant status, beyond the individual student or parent to alleviate the fear of separation when seeking services and social networking to build social capital.

Financial support. Financial support to attend college is challenging for many students regardless of their immigrant or citizenship status, and according to the literature the unauthorized immigrant status makes attending college virtually impossible for many students (Olivas, 2009; Passel, 2007; Santos, 2006). This study illustrates the frustration experienced by many students who, on the grounds of academic merit, qualify for financial resources in the form of grants and scholarships but cannot apply to receive them because of the immigration status. The existing literature shows that there are scholarships and programs to help finance college tuition for undocumented students, but often school personnel do not provide information about opportunities for undocumented students, sometimes because they are not aware of these programs.

The findings here show a need to develop programs to better inform and reach out to undocumented students considering public colleges as their option. The findings in this study revealed that some undocumented students consider private institutions of

higher education a better option because they offer more incentives for some undocumented students to afford higher education. Among the implications of this study is that Massachusetts should emulate other states that have had some form of financial legislation to allow greater access of undocumented students to college.

Education as a reason for migration. The study represents what is symbolic of global interaction with families moving from less affluent regions to more financially stable locations in search of a better future for the children. When populations in a region do not have access to an education that is meaningful enough to guarantee a basic livelihood, chances are that people will seek to migrate to regions that are more affluent. For participants in the study, obtaining a postsecondary education was not the sole purpose of their immigration to the United States, but was a value that was inculcated by their immediate family or by the adults around them.

The findings in the study showed that higher education is significant enough to lead people to make life changing decisions, and alter immigration policy to affect the education of probably more than 1.4 million students. Awareness of the value of education became more remarkable as parents made the life changing decision to uproot their families and move to the United States at the risk of great emotional cost. Similarly, for some of the participants the possibility of picking up their lives and moving somewhere else with their U.S. education was contemplated as a way to utilize their skills.

Implications

Emerging from the stories of the participants in the study was a portrait of resilience and determination to improve human capital investment and social return in the form of skills spillover. Despite the many challenges and barriers they faced, participants persevered and continued their educational goals with a sense of optimism, at times diminished by instances of self-doubt and a perceived notion of social rejection. The daily struggles in finding their path to higher education were related to the information and support participants had regarding their undocumented status and access to postsecondary education. In most cases, that struggle was compounded by a social interaction anxiety caused by fear of immigration policies and possible deportation. Resilience was evidenced when students, despite their immigrant status decided to proceed with balancing education, family ties, and the prospects of a better future for them and the communities in their adopted homeland.

Barriers to Higher Education

The first research question was intended to explore multiple factors that hinder or limit the pursuit of higher education opportunities among undocumented immigrant students. The findings in this research coincided with other studies that some of the factors, such as poverty and under-resourced schools, affect undocumented immigrant students and also affect other students who are not immigrants (Tozer et al., 2009). The literature review and the data collected for this study revealed many barriers faced by undocumented immigrant students that have shown to negatively influence the educational experience of college-ready Latino students.

The immigrant status perception influenced the decision of formerly undocumented students to continue with their educational investment. Studies by Matloff (2006) and Stewart (2002) concluded that the impact of immigrant students at the K–12 level and college level was a negative factor affecting the U.S. educational process. For participants in this study, the negative perception of being undocumented served as a motivating force to pursue their higher education aspirations.

Family and social factors limited educational opportunities for undocumented students attending K–12 institutions in Massachusetts. Participants in this study attended public K–12 schools in Massachusetts, but theirs and their families' limited social and cultural capital prevented them from taking advantage of services and opportunities available to students at their schools. The undocumented status led students to not participate in school trips, abstain from enrolling in activities that might require family or personal information including a social security number, or to travel outside the state.

The barriers faced by undocumented students are compounded by the lack of information and inadequate information from those in charge of providing students with support, when servicing undocumented immigrant students. Participants in the study shared their experiences with high school guidance counselors, college admissions personnel, and administrators who did not know how to handle the situation of undocumented students. The experiences narrated by participants are consistent with existing knowledge from previous studies that described similar situations and experiences of undocumented students (Contreras, 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008; Yoshikawa, 2011).

The data from the study lead to the conclusion that for all the participants, their undocumented immigrant status affects the investment in their education diminishing the potential of improving their communities through more efficient skills spillover. All participants felt that undocumented immigrant students could be more productive academically, socially, and in the work place if they had solved their immigrant status sooner, or if they had a guaranteed pathway to resolving their immigration status sooner. With a change in immigration status, for most participants, the social recovery of the investment made on their K-12 education could have started earlier than having to wait for a lengthy immigration process. This finding coincides with what Matloff (2006), advocating for a lower immigrant population, criticized as the unnecessary search abroad for college-educated professionals to fulfill industry's needs for qualified personnel.

Fear of revealing the undocumented immigrant status created another barrier to further human capital investment, and negatively affected the possibility of society benefitting from previous investment in their education. Participants' fear of disclosing their immigration status and compromising their families' livelihood led them to remain quiet about their status, not trusting the school-based adults for guidance finding college pathways. In most cases, staying quiet meant that participants either sought very little guidance or none at all from school personnel for the college application process. The findings coincide with previous studies by Contreras (2011), Gándara and Contreras (2009), and Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008), who indicated that undocumented immigrant students tend not to trust school personnel about their immigration status.

The finding in the study revealed that staying quiet about the immigration status negatively affects the possibilities of getting support to persevere in the college

enrollment process. One student who did not speak about his immigrant status while in high school had given up on the prospects of applying for college. His immigrant status changed through his mother's change of immigration status; this participant went on to receive a Fulbright scholarship and became a SIM representative, thus increasing the possibilities of greater social gains from the investment in his education.

As with most college students in the United States, tuition presented another barrier to pursuing college education for undocumented immigrant students. Out-of-state tuition was seen as an expensive option for all participants and in-state tuition was seen as a distant goal for some of the participants. Most participants in the study had interrupted or postponed their post-secondary education because of the difficulty of paying the international student rate. For some undocumented students, private institutions presented options that made the financial barriers easier to overcome through grants and scholarships that assisted with tuition and other expenses. Private institutions do not have to abide by the same restrictions as public colleges and universities in their admissions policy.

Challenges in the Community

The present study shows that the stigmatization felt by participants, combined with the immigrant status, negatively affect the availability of resources that have the potential of enhancing the development of the immigrant students and the communities where they live. The results of the study imply that future work related to civic participation must be geared to increase the participation of members of the communities regardless of their immigrant status. Concurring with other studies, this study indicates

that immigration legislation needs to be revised and adjustments made to include participation of greater population through programs such as the DREAM Act (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Olivas, 2008; Yoshikawa, 2011).

Participants in this study represent a segment of the immigrant population that thrives, that gives back to the community, and for whom the push-pull effects of immigration status as in the case of college educated adults, who grew up in the United States, are likely to stay in the place that is for them home, the United States, and solve their immigrant situation at a slower pace and at greater social cost in long run. All participants in the study had already experienced being undocumented immigrant in the United States, and most were at the time of the study citizens of the country that at some point rejected their presence. These participants are an example of an emerging leadership that guides participants to advocate for themselves and in a combination of social transmission and social transformation theories and principles, in a region where demographics are rapidly changing.

The literature review revealed demographic changes throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century that affected the delivery of education and support services for immigrant students in general (Camarota & Jensenius, 2008; Granbery, 2011; MassINC, 2006; Mauricio Gastón Institute, 2008; Motel & Patten, 2013; Shea & Jones, 2006). The data gathered from the participants' responses indicate that Massachusetts was not prepared for the rapid changes in non-native state population. Several participants spoke of the year 2005 as the time when the debate over in-state tuition came closest to becoming law, and some of the participants felt that if the legislation did not pass then, it would be really difficult for such legislation to become law in Massachusetts.

Data gathered in this study show that addressing the educational needs of undocumented immigrant students as a separate issue has not been a priority for state policy makers. The information gathered from the participants' stories and the literature review indicates that the state's response to the growing number of immigrant students has centered on programs that socialize new arrivals to the existing culture. The school system emphasis is on transmitting existing values and norms that will allow immigrant students to function better in their new society, concurring with Bennet deMarrais and LeCompte (1999) in their description of social transmission theory as it relates to schooling.

The findings also suggested that the state's campaign to have all K–12 students prepared to go to college did not consider the situation of undocumented immigrant students. Participants in the study perceived attempts by the state of Massachusetts to promote college enrollment for all its students as part of political campaigns and not as a supportive tool for undocumented immigrant students. It was gleaned from this study that the feeling of exclusion expressed by the former undocumented students affected their motivation to invest in education, which in turn negatively affects the rate of return of the social investment in human capital. With the exception of those who had solved their immigrant status before ninth or tenth grade and those who were misinformed about their TPS, all the other participants (70%) considered at some point that attending school was useless unless their immigrant status changed.

The findings from this study suggest that the lack of direct action from the state to support undocumented students' efforts to continue their post-secondary education had a negative effect on motivation of individual students and social benefits as a result of a

less educated populace. Ninety percent of the respondents had been involved in some form of advocacy for a greater state support for undocumented students in the form of in-state tuition or DREAM Act legislation. Several participants in the study referred to scholarship opportunities from the state as rigged contests because the awards were based on academic merits, but the academic achievements of the undocumented students were not considered. Some participants thought they should be entitled to receive the scholarship even if they had no social security number, which some argue was not their fault but that of the adults around them.

Most participants in the study expressed little interest in or knowledge of the current in-state tuition campaign that promotes access to higher education for undocumented students at the state resident tuition. One participant, who while in high school had collaborated making videos and speaking publicly advocating for in-state tuition, felt he had little knowledge about the current situation of the in-state tuition campaign and felt pessimistic about such a policy. Some participants referred to access to higher education as a struggle for equality among different socioeconomic levels, regardless of the role of the undocumented population on the topic.

Policy Implications

At the time of migration, most participants did not know they were brought to stay in the United States, and as young children most participants had no notion of the undocumented implications for their family. Changes to legislation should come through modification of restrictive policies such as IIRIRA (1996) and PRWORA (1996), to the implementation of a national DREAM Act that goes beyond DACA (Deferred Action for

Childhood Arrivals; 2012), a non-legislative memorandum. For now, DACA is a starting point to a necessary discussion on immigration reform and the future of undocumented immigrant students. Policy makers must consider the value of the education of a segment of the population on which public money was invested with the expectation of future social returns, not increasing future social expenses.

Additional policy implications gleaned from the study indicate that modifications to the criteria for awarding merit scholarships and academic benefits that include a broader segment of qualified students is an option to increase college enrollment of underrepresented populations. Changes in criteria should include characteristics found among the undocumented students such as first generation students, enrollment in English learner programs, and economic hardships. The competition for financial scholarships should be broaden to include all students, as found in the literature (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education & Massachusetts Department of Education, 2008). The notion of preparing all high school graduates for college should have an educational meaning as opposed to what might be considered a mere political statement.

Implications for Research

College attendance is a turning point for many immigrant families. The findings in this study illustrate that for many people postsecondary education represents the path out of their subservient condition. For leaders in communities with rapidly changing demographic complexions, the study informs of the urgency to address the reality of the importance of preparing future generations with the skills needed to sustain a dominant role in a global society. Participants in this study represent a segment of the student body

that is determined, disciplined, and individuals who choose to improve the fabric of society by giving back to their communities across ethnic and social lines.

The study's findings contain information about the success of formerly undocumented Latino students who persevered in accessing higher education. While the literature shows the number of Latino students enrolling in postsecondary education is increasing, the number of those who successfully complete their degree is still very low compared to the number of Latino students enrolled in K-12 public schools. The study reflects previous findings in terms of growing participation of Latino students in the education system in the United States. The research highlights the needs to plan and prepare the path beyond K-12 education for this population, if the expectation is for the nation to be able to keep up with the skills demanded by intense global interaction.

Scope of the study. In the discussion of the scope of the study in chapter 1 the participation of the respondents was described as limited to residents of the state of Massachusetts who volunteered their time and stories. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants who were former undocumented immigrant students and were enrolled in college at the time of data collection for the study. The scope of the current study was limited to barriers in education encountered by undocumented Latino immigrant students transitioning from high school to college in Massachusetts.

Limitations. Participation in the study was limited to volunteers who contributed their time and answers to face-to-face interviews. Only former undocumented immigrant students were considered for participation in the current study. The condition of public education is a major concern for all ethnic groups across the United States (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008).

The dependability of the data in this study stems from the data collection process and the "truth value" as re-storied by the researcher and "credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). Participants for this study volunteered their time and information during face-to-face interviews that resulted in the main sources of data. Neuman (2006) suggested that credibility and consistency are supported by the participant interview data. The interview instruments used in the present study, and the accuracy of the recordings and transcription, make it possible to expand from general to specific elements of the experience. The open-ended questions presented during the interviews, as recommended by Yin (2009) Creswell (2008), Neuman (2006), and Patton (2002), were intended to increase credibility, as well as to facilitate the conceptualization of the data found in the research and reduce interviewer bias.

The transferability of the present study is limited because the study relied on a small sample of the undocumented student population of Latino descent in the United States. The present study findings may not be applicable to other cultural groups or populations in other states for whom the goal of attending college may not be a priority, as well as groups for which social capital may be defined differently. The present study may not be valid for analysis of groups such as English-speaking undocumented students, or undocumented populations in other states with high percentages of undocumented immigrants from Latin American and access to higher education.

Sources of Non-Financial Support

The theoretical framework, explained in previous chapters, centers on the individual and social return of education as investment as part of the human capital theory. In the present study, education is seen from the perspective of social theories of transmission and transformation to explain the effect of social forces in the educational process of undocumented Latino immigrant students. As discussed in the introductory chapter and according to the literature review, human capital investment influences economic and social behavior. Human capital analysis and social theories in this study allowed for a better understanding of income inequality and economic growth.

The intersection of human capital and social theories was evident from the data and from the participants' involvement in a diversity of social behaviors aimed at promoting access to higher education among immigrant students. Participants were determined to continue investing in their human capital through education beyond the K–12 education they had received. Faced some times with discouraging situations of what seemed unchangeable and unattainable regularized immigrant status, participants found support in groups outside of the government as a response to the official rejection in pursuit of their post-secondary education.

The findings suggest that participants engaged in ways of civic participation best described through the lens of social transformation. Most participants in the study felt encouraged by community groups that made them feel that their perseverance and effort were valued, when school-based adults ignored their academic dedication and their work ethic. Participants actively engaged in the social construction of their own course to

emancipate themselves from a subservient social role most of them have seen in their own parents and communities.

The data indicated that participants were ready to actively use the investment in their human capital through education towards greater accomplishments that might result in individual and social benefits. The values and cultural experiences transmitted through participants' families, and the experiences of participants coming of age in a new culture, allowed them to aspire to create roles connecting their individual achievements with a larger, transformative social process. All participants expressed a desired to give back to society through occupations that require their skills, in addition to the benefits of usually larger economies produced by college graduates associated with skills spillover that benefits communities with more educated constituents.

Recommendations

Pursuit of competitive opportunities requires access to education beyond high school. The present study highlights issues of education and migration that are globally intertwined in modern times requiring pressing action on the part of the education leaders and policy makers. Access to educational opportunities ought to be provided based on real needs of disadvantaged populations in the nation, such as the Latino communities. Historical and sociological analyses have shown that the equal treatment of unequals does not alleviate inequality (Bennett deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2007; Suárez-Orozco, et al, 2008). Charging both undocumented and international students the same tuition does not provide equal access to education for

those undocumented members of Massachusetts communities, making tuition a major impediment on the advancement of a significan sector of the state's population.

This qualitative case study reflects a series of social changes taking place in Massachusetts. Social changes are often influenced by changes in the economy, followed by adjustments to educational policies. Changes in the demographic composition and the economic interaction of communities should be taken into account by policy makers and education leaders. With the increase of the immigrant population come increases in the demands and need for investment in schools and education with the purpose of transforming communities to meet new challenges and meet new goals.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further studies should expand on what influences the motivation, plans, and educational choices of the people whose stories and experiences have been presented here. The findings from this study can also shed light on elements for further research in areas of professional development opportunities for school personnel, and international education related to educational transfer policies. Of important consideration for future studies is the context of the positive factors, and how to strengthen those factors that motivate undocumented students who strive to attend college despite the many challenges they face. The post-secondary educational plans and the familial, community, and K–12 institutions influences on undocumented students' decisions require careful analysis beyond the scope of this study.

The limits of the present study and the results indicate the need for additional research in areas to include different factors affecting Latino immigrant students, and

similar factors affecting different immigrant ethnic groups. Future research should include social investment and outcomes among students who opted for vocational schools or community college training versus the 4-year college path, as a more affordable way to further their higher education. Other studies might analyze the experiences of undocumented students who are undocumented still after finishing their 4-year degree adding to the topic of options for social and individual recovery of human capital investment.

Participants in the present study have distinct family and schooling backgrounds. Some of the participants were part of mixed national families, while others were the first in the family to attend school beyond middle school and high school. The present study was focused on formerly undocumented immigrant students of Latin American origin who were still attending college. Future studies that consider data from other ethnic groups and other states would add to the subject of immigrant students and higher education. Studies that further analyze policies in states that have the outcomes of in-state tuition for undocumented students might inform policymakers of the approach to an in-state tuition policy for undocumented students in Massachusetts.

Future studies might also focus on undocumented students who attend charter and private K–12 schools. The impact on social transmission and transformation, as influenced by the greater individual and family investment generally demanded by private institutions, would contribute to findings on differences on persistence and determination to continue to postsecondary education. Additional factors that were not considered in the present study, but might yield data to reach out to at-risk student

populations include analysis of family involvement, financial resources to attend private K–12 schools, and students' commitment to continue their education.

A final recommendation for research is in the area of immigration policy and its impact on social investment for and from unintended populations. Immigration policy grants permits to enter the United States to diverse populations in different occupations, ranging from diplomats to skilled professionals, to farm workers. Adults who come to the United States as employees often bring their children to the United States and those children receive K–12 education here.

Research is needed exploring what happens to children who come to the United States legally with visas, or who were allowed to stay legally through TPS and then become undocumented. The immigration category of temporary protective status (TPS) granted by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) often include children who spend years receiving free K–12 education in the United States. Such research would inform immigration and policy makers in the area of education to revise and more effectively coordinate policies.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the educational experiences of former undocumented Latino immigrant students and their transition to post-secondary education. The descriptive case study centered on students who had attended K-12 in Massachusetts while they were undocumented and had regularized their immigrant status at the time of the research. Triangulation of face-to-face semi-structured interview responses, media reports, and SIM events, yielded data representing

the lived experiences of the participants and evidence of combined efforts aimed at social transformation and social transmission.

The data gathered for this study provided answer to the research questions that guided the study to analyze the life experiences of the 20 Latino students participating in the educational process in Massachusetts. The participants' experiences in relation to the pursuit of higher education were affected by the factors discussed in this study and analyzed from the perspective of social transmission and social transformation theories, considering human capital investment: (a) perception of immigrant status; (b) stigma and self-esteem; (c) language; (d) deportation fears; (e) family separation; (f) financial support; (g) challenges in the community; and (h) education as a reason for migration.

The implications of this study for leaders support the need to develop policies that address access to higher education related to the social investment in human capital through the education of undocumented students. The current study informs educational leaders of the need for professional development opportunities for educators and school personnel to develop strategies to coordinate work and motivational strategies between K–12 schools and institutions of higher education. Taking into account the changing demographics mentioned in this study, education leaders in Massachusetts must address the issue of access to higher education to strengthen access into the investment made in K-12 education of students, including undocumented students.

The contributions of the present study to the body of knowledge add to the slowly growing social awareness of the participation of the undocumented members of society. Massachusetts has experienced rapid demographic changes that demand information and

this study contributes to the discussion on the importance of social strength and educational opportunities for underrepresented communities. The present study contributes to the growing debate that accompanies changing demographics and the findings provide for discussion in areas of social sciences, public policy, and education administration. In the area of public administration this study illustrates aspects of the need to address the true value of educating immigrant children who come of age in a culture that ought to embrace them as members of the only society they really know, The United States.

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Appendix A
Informed Consent
UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX

INFORMED CONSENT: PARTICIPANTS 18 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER

Dear Participant,

My name is Jorge Ortega Moreno and I am a student at the University of Phoenix working on a Doctor of Education degree. I am conducting a research study entitled Undocumented Students' Access to Higher Education as an Option to Recover Social Investment. The purpose of the research study is to explore the transition of undocumented Latino students from high school to college and the options to recover social investments of their K-12 education. A qualitative narrative approach will be used as the method of the research. The study will consist of interviews, observations, and review of documents. I am asking you to participate in the study.

Your participation will involve sharing your educational experience at the K12 level and at college level. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so without penalty or loss of benefit to yourself. The results of the research study may be published but your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be disclosed to any outside party.

In this research, there are minimal risks caused by questions related to past immigrant status and educational experiences.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, a possible benefit of your participation is that the results of the study may generate benefits to society, your community, and to the educational experiences of Latinos.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at information deleted for privacy purposes.

As a participant in this study, you should understand the following:

1. You may decline to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without consequences.
2. Your identity will be kept confidential.
3. Jorge Ortega Moreno, the researcher, has thoroughly explained the parameters of the research study and all of your questions and concerns have been addressed.
4. If the interviews are recorded, you must grant permission for the researcher, Jorge Ortega Moreno, to digitally record the interview. You understand that the information from the recorded interviews may be transcribed. The researcher will structure a coding process to assure that anonymity of your name is protected.
5. Data will be stored in a secure and locked area. The data will be held for a period of three years, and then destroyed.
6. The research results will be used for publication.

"By signing this form you acknowledge that you understand the nature of the study, the potential risks to you as a participant, and the means by which your identity will be kept confidential. Your signature on this form also indicates that you are 18 years old or older and that you give your permission to voluntarily serve as a participant in the study described."

Signature of the interviewee _____ Date _____

Signature of the researcher _____ Date _____

Appendix B
Permission to Use Premises, Name, and/or Subjects

Permission to Use Premises Name and Subjects-SIM-June 2010.doc

UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX

PERMISSION TO USE PREMISES, NAME, AND/OR SUBJECTS

(Facility, Organization, University, Institution, or Association)

Student Immigrant Movement –SIM--

Check any that apply:

☑ I hereby authorize Jorge E. Ortega Moreno, student of University of Phoenix, to use the premises (facility identified below) to conduct a study entitled An Analysis of Former Undocumented Students' Access to Higher Education as an Option to Recover Social Investment.

☑ I hereby authorize Jorge E. Ortega Moreno, student of University of Phoenix, to recruit subjects for participation in a study entitled An Analysis of Former Undocumented Students' Access to Higher Education as an Option to Recover Social Investment.

☑ I hereby authorize Jorge E. Ortega Moreno, student of University of Phoenix, to use the name of the facility, organization, university, institution, or association identified above when publishing results from the study entitled An Analysis of Former Undocumented Students' Access to Higher Education as an Option to Recover Social Investment.

Renata Teodoro
Signature

June 10, 2010
Date

Renata Teodoro Renata Teodoro
Name

Development Director
Title

33 Harrison Ave 5th fl, Boston, MA
Address of Facility

Appendix C

Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FORMER UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

1. Would you describe your experience as an undocumented student?

2. Would you describe your experience as a student during the last semester (the one you just completed or are doing now) of your studies?

3. Would you describe your experience getting to this community as an undocumented student?

    - Was there a particular reason why you ended up in this community and not in another state?

4. Would you show me on a map your route as an immigrant from your point of origin to where you are today?

5. Would you describe what sustained your motivation and determination to go college, given your undocumented status?

6. Would you describe a situation that you faced in which your undocumented status had a direct effect—positive or negative—on your motivation to go to college?

7. In your community or in your school, was there a term to refer specifically to undocumented students? (If necessary, refer to the term *mojados* or "wet back" for people who cross the Rio Grande to enter the United States).

8. Do you use a term to refer to students in an immigration and academic situation similar to the one you experienced? If so, did it affect your self-esteem?

9. Now that your immigration status has changed, how would you use your own experience as a public school student as part of a message to the public?

10. How would you describe your immigration status to another student?

    - Is such description different from a description you would find at home?

    - Is such description different from a description you would find in your community?

11. What do you know about the DREAM Act or in-state tuition policy?

12. With what ethnic background do you identify yourself?

13. Describe how the immigrant status has affected your and your family's interaction with the community. If you were not affected by the immigrant status, why do you think that you were not affected?

14. Describe when your immigrant status changed in relation to your access to education. Did it change before or after you enrolled in college?

15. In what ways are your experiences and interactions as an immigrant student now different from when you were undocumented?

    - (This will be followed up with questions about gender, ethnicity, and cultural identification and perception).

16. Is typical for all students to worry about financing their education. Describe and compare your perception of the cost of obtaining a college education as a former undocumented student and as a resident of the state.
    - How have those perceptions changed?
17. What do you plan to do once you obtain your degree?

Appendix D Demographic Questionnaire

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FORMER UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

Thank you for participating in the study. Your thoughts about your educational experiences will contribute to a better understanding of the schooling process and the social investment in education. Please enter the appropriate answer to each of the following questions. Do not write your full name on this questionnaire; you may use your initials or your first name only.

Gender _____ Age of arrival to the United States _____

Grade when starting school in the United States

~~~~

Marital status: ( ) Single ( ) Married ( ) Divorced ( ) Widowed ( ) Civil Union

~~~~

Parent Education: Please write the option that best describes your parents' level of education

Mother ( ) level of education unknown ( ) grade school or less ( ) up to high school
( ) some college ( ) Bachelor ( ) Master ( ) Doctoral level

Father ( ) level of education unknown ( ) middle school or less ( ) up to high school
( ) some college ( ) Bachelor ( ) Master ( ) Doctoral level

Higher Education Enrollment Information

( ) Community College ( ) Returning Student ( ) Four year college ( ) Graduate Studies
( ) Transfer from a Community College to a 4-year college

~~~~

Class Standing

( ) Freshman ( ) Sophomore ( ) Junior ( ) Senior ( ) Graduate Student

~~~~

Housing Situation

( ) on-campus ( ) off-campus with friends ( ) off-campus with family ( ) other

~~~~

Program currently enrolled and expected academic degree

( ) Associate of Arts ( ) Bachelor of Arts or Science ( ) Master of Arts or Science
( ) MBA ( ) JD (law degree) ( ) Doctoral level ( ) other

~~~~

Highest Level of Education Sought
( ) Associate of Arts ( ) Bachelor of Arts or Science ( ) Master of Arts or Science
( ) MBA ( ) JD (law degree) ( ) Doctoral level ( ) other
~~~~

Please select all options that apply to your situation:
To finance your education, you
( ) work part time ( ) work full time ( ) use personal savings ( ) Family resources
( ) rely on student loans ( ) receive a scholarship

~~~

Please briefly describe your participation in community activities in your neighborhood

Please briefly describe your participation in extracurricular activities

Appendix E

Nodes and References Among the Respondent Data

Code #	Nodes	Responses Related to the Code	Percent of Total of Respondents	No. of References
1	Benefits to society as viewed by participants	14	70%	26
2	Change of immigrant status influence motivation in relation to education	20	100%	56
3	Civic participation related to immigrant status	18	90%	47
4	Derogatory language associated with immigration status	8	40%	11
5	Description of immigrant status as a negative connotation	12	60%	23
6	Dropping out was considered because of the undocumented immigrant status	8	40%	12
7	Ethnic identity with more than one group	20	100%	48
8	Experience as undocumented student was relevant to their formal education	15	75%	26
9	Family group reference as affected by the immigration status of the participant	13	65%	22
10	Family separation was a major influence in their education	14	70%	20
11	Family support was decisive in pursuing higher education	17	85%	38
12	Fear of deportation negatively affected their involvement in educational and extracurricular activities	14	70%	33
13	Financing education was perceived as more difficult because of the immigrant status	20	100%	59
14	The expression “good education” was used to explain motivation to pursue higher education	20	100%	41
15	Immigrant as a synonym of undocumented	5	25%	6
16	Immigrant status and the community	20	100%	104

Code #	Nodes	Responses Related to the Node	Percent of Total of Respondents	No. of References
17	Reference to immigrant status was/is not the main issue in access to higher education	18	90%	45
18	Staying motivated was a major challenge	12	60%	18
19	Some knowledge of policy on access to higher education	13	65%	18
20	Language barrier	12	60%	19
21	Linguistics and self-esteem	19	95%	60
22	Message to the public	15	75%	15
23	Migration as an effect of global economy	9	45%	14
24	Immigrant status as a positive factor for motivation	13	65%	26
25	Plans for the future in the United States	18	90%	19
26	Push-pull factors influencing their immigration	13	65%	17
27	Single mother participant family	7	35%	8
28	Social transformation opportunity through their immigrant status	17	85%	40
29	Social transmission instances through their immigrant status	9	45%	14
30	Undocumented status as a major motivation to pursue higher education	19	95%	58

Note. Total of respondents = 20.