

The Forgotten:
Narratives of Los DREAMers in Arizona

by
Angela Palacios

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Margarita Jimenez-Silva, Chair
Pablo Ramirez
Michelle Reis

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to give voice to five Arizona DREAMers. The assumption is that DREAMers have developed unique strategies as a means to navigate the education highway and ethos of Arizona laws that are seldom positive. These five stories represent a very small sampling of the many DREAMers that dot the landscape of Arizona. Their stories are important to add to the collection of literature that already exists on this topic because Arizona DREAMers confront far more challenges due to the anti-immigrant laws that have prevailed despite federal law changes. DREAMers are neither monolithic nor a homogenous group; each individual carries a unique story that merits hearing and may shed light on the reasons why most have opted to stay in a state that has so passionately rejected them despite progress in other states. It may also illuminate the benefits Arizona stands to give by accepting DREAMers as contributing members of society and may even enlighten the state public on the benefits of passing a major comprehensive immigration reform. The scope of this project is designed to highlight the personal challenges these five DREAMers face in Arizona, a state that has consistently used discriminatory treatment and purposefully created roadblocks through the creation of draconian laws. Former Governor Brewer has repeatedly labeled DREAMers as an economic drain on the state's educational system and has stated the Dream Act is nothing but "backdoor amnesty" and political pandering by the Democratic president. Despite all the negative rhetoric, this Arizonan cohort has not given up on their dreams. Their determinations and strengths are the focus of this project. Narratives will enable the DREAMers' stories to be told through their own voice through semi-structured and in-depth interviews with each of the students, transcribing the interviews with

subsequent coding and analysis. The results will be organized into major and minor sub themes to give strength to the stories. Findings of this study will contribute and enhance existing literature with the hopes that it might influence policy change at the local level.

DEDICATION

I lovingly dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, Alondra. You are my pride and joy. A hug or a smile from you is all I need when I lack motivation or strength to continue on. I love you!

To my parents, Conrado and Evita Palacios, for their educación. Thank you for making that difficult journey across the border so that my brothers and I could have a better life and more opportunities. There are no words to express my gratitude for all your sacrifices. You are the best parents anyone could ever ask for. You are the original DREAMers. ¡Los quiero mucho!

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PREFACE

I am aware that I am less than some people prefer me to be. But, most people are unaware that I am so much more than what they see.

~ Douglas Pagels

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“The Republican Party needs to take a hard look at some of the positions they’ve been taking. We can’t be anti-immigration, for example. Immigrants are fueling this country. Without immigrants America would be like Europe or Japan with an aging population and no young people to come in and take care of it.”

- Former Secretary of State Colin Powell, 2010

Due to failed immigration policies and economic push/pull factors, the number of immigrants in the United States dramatically increased between 2000 and 2010 (Camarota, 2012). According to the Pew Hispanic Center, the number of unauthorized immigrants in the United States was estimated at 11.2 million in 2010 (Passel & Cohn, 2011). The Department of Homeland Security estimated there were 360,000 unauthorized immigrants in Arizona as of January 2011 based on 2010 census data (González, 2012). Marquardt, Steignenga, Williams and Vasquez (2011) refer to factors such as poverty, economic stagnation, and political instability as examples of the “push” factors at home countries, and describe wealth, job opportunities, and political stability in the host country, for example, the United States, as the “pull” factors (p.16). The largest wave of immigration in history from a single country to the United States has come to a standstill. After four decades that brought 12 million current immigrants- most of who came illegally – the net migration from Mexico to the U.S. has stopped (Passel, Cohn & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). Young people represent a large proportion of Arizona’s state population. In fact, people under the age of 18 make up 25.5 % of the state’s general population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010); immigrant youth are estimated to make up about one-third of the state’s total under – 18 population (Passel, 2011). After

the passage of SB 1070 in Arizona, youth lost family members, friends, and neighbors, disrupting their support network. The sudden departures of family members and friends created upheaval that impacted young people's academic performance, personal health, and emotional stability (Lopez, 2011). SB 1070 forced hundreds of families to either flee to another state or return to Mexico. Some families were forced to make the difficult decision to leave behind their high school or young adult children in Arizona with family members or on their own. For most of these children, the decision to move to the United States was not their own, but their parents' who migrated to the United States with the hope that their children would, in the future, be economically better off and have access to more opportunities (Ko & Perreira, 2010).

Politicians and legislators in the state of Arizona who have opposed the Dream Act have used the arguments of depleted educational coffers, crime in the form of broken borders and criminalized illegal crossings as valid reasons to block the Dream Act and enforce SB 1070, touted as one of the harshest anti-immigrant laws in the United States in 2010 (Barry, 2011). Most children who crossed over with their parents will go to school, learn English, receive a high school diploma, and assimilate into American life (Erffle, 2011). A lucky few go on to obtain degrees in higher education, but must live in the shadows, concealing their undocumented status for fear of deportation to a country they may not even remember. For these lucky few, the chances of finding a job with their degrees are minimal; they cannot work without proper authorization. Those who oppose the Dream Act argue that states will be forced to absorb the cost of educating undocumented students placing additional strain on state funding that is already depleted (Chomsky, 2007). The misconception behind this thought is that unauthorized

immigrants don't pay taxes nor do they contribute to state economies despite the research that indicates opposing data. Undocumented families do pay taxes; undocumented families pay in the form of property taxes, which are collected in rent payments and mortgages, sales and income taxes (Germano, 2011). The Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy has estimated the state and local taxes paid by unauthorized immigrants in 2010 was 11.2 billion in state and local taxes nationally. In 2010, approximately \$433,239,486 in state and local taxes by unauthorized immigrants (Immigration Policy Center, 2011). There is no denying the harm Arizona's SB1070 has caused to the state's economy; the boycotts from industries slashed tourism by an estimated \$141 million in losses from conference cancellations alone. Additionally, there is loss to colleges and universities in the form of tuition revenue due to the loss of possible student enrollments according to higher education leaders in Arizona (Hudson, 2012). Furthermore, Hudson confirms that if all sections of SB1070 had been fully implemented, employment would drop by 17.2% and 581,000 jobs would be eliminated shrinking the state economy by \$48.8 billion. This is a fact that anti-immigrant promoters choose to gloss over or ignore.

There is a cautionary tale by other states like Alabama who passed one of the harshest immigration laws in the nation and serves as a strong fiscal tale for other states to learn from. HB 56 deters children's access to public school by requiring school officials to verify the immigration status of children and their parents; authorizes police to demand "papers" demonstrating citizenship or immigration status during traffic stops; criminalizes Alabamians for ordinary, everyday interactions with undocumented individuals (ACLU, 2012). As evidenced, the implementation of Alabama's HB 56

collapsed many immigrant neighborhoods impacting the rental market and left fields of produce rotting in the sun forcing farmers to march and protest at the steps of their state capital because they could not find the field hand help they needed to save their crops; this earned Alabama the title of worst economy in the Southeast (Le, 2012). According to Professor Addy, (2012), leader and chairperson at the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama, HB 56 could ultimately cost Alabama as much as \$11 million economic output and as many as 70,000 to 140,000 jobs. After such a debacle, much of HB 56 has been struck down declaring it mostly unconstitutional while tentatively leaving a “show me your papers” component standing.

Despite the damage caused, the move came too late and Alabama’s state leaders seem reluctant to acknowledge the consequences of HB 56 (Le, 2012). For states like Arizona and Alabama, the departure of unauthorized immigrants has resulted in the loss of workers, taxpayers, and consumers who earn and spend money in the states. Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 5.2% of the national workforce (or 8,000,000 workers) in 2010, according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center (Passel & Cohn, 2011).

Ten years after 9/11 former two-term Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard and Professor Josiah Heyman, from the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP) emphasized how the post 9/11 focus on combating terrorism has become a policy that emphasizes patrolling the vast and empty spaces of the southern ports of entry. With no evidence of terrorist infiltration across the southwestern border, state and federal agencies have increasingly turned their attention to immigration enforcement. Both Goddard and Heyman raised concerns that millions are being spent in the name of securing the border

but are, in fact, going to immigration enforcement. Amongst the urgent issues Goddard and Heyman highlighted for U.S. action is a greater focus on trafficking of illicit goods through the ports of entry. According to Heyman (2011), “The problems of ports stem from a massive, systematic misallocation of resources toward anti-unauthorized migrant measures (Border Patrol, border fence/wall) and away from border security measures (investments in security screening northbound and southbound at ports)”(p. 5). Securing the border does not mean all efforts have to be focused on the border. Disrupting the flow of money and firearms to organized crime groups in Mexico should not be limited to southbound inspections (Olson, 2011).

Many believe that if we grant legalization to children brought over illegally, we encourage lawlessness; the important point to this argument often left out is that illegal crossing into this country is a civil offense, not a criminal offense. Many politicians and outspoken immigration reform foes use the criminal aspect of illegally crossing the border as reason enough to round ‘em up and deport ‘em all (Erfle, 2011). This mentality serves to instill fear in the general public that our border is broken and poses a danger to our safety and detracts from the truth that although the undocumented population in Arizona grew steadily over the past decade, violent crimes had been trending downwards for years casting doubt on claims of some SB 1070 supporters that the law is in any way a useful crime-fighting tool (Immigration Policy Center, 2010). Violent crime in Arizona has dropped by more than 52% and property crimes have dropped by almost 49% (Erfle, 2011). However, Dream Act foes still argue that any type of immigration reform without secure borders is nonnegotiable failing to recognize that the Dream Act is about educational attainment and not Homeland Security. These

students are not criminals. They seek to become contributing members of society.

Nevertheless, congressional leaders continue to cry broken border.

Presently, for the third time in just over a month, President Obama used his weekly Saturday radio address to push for immigration reform (Good, 2013). Immigration reform is picking up steam in Congress. An immigration reform bill introduced in April 2013 and passed in June 2013 in the Senate (S. 744, Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013) has the potential to be a historic advance for the civil rights and liberties of immigrants and all Americans (American Civil Liberties Union, 2013). To ensure Republican support, the proposed amendment increases funding for border security by \$38 billion (Kelly, 2013). Federal spending on border security is already at an all-time high and it would get even higher under the current immigration proposal (Thompson, 2013). The Senate's immigration bill set aside \$3.5 billion for additional surveillance of the country's southern border, or roughly \$1.79 million per mile of the 1,954 mile border, according to leaked reports in the New York Times and other media (Munro, 2013). This comprehensive immigration reform would put millions of immigrants who contribute every day to the vitality of our country on a road to citizenship, but the push for more border security has been among the greatest impediments to comprehensive immigration reform (Raju, Kim, & Everett, 2013). Lawmakers in the Senate have come together to pass this immigration bill, now it is up the House of Representatives to do the same. The leadership of the House of Representatives has yet to put immigration legislation on the floor.

Statement of the Problem

“This is the choice the DREAM Act presents to us. We can allow a generation of immigrant students with great potential and ambitions to contribute more fully to our society and national security, or we can relegate them to a future in the shadows, which would be a loss for all Americans.”

- Senator Richard Durbin, July 13, 2007, floor statement, *DREAM Act as an amendment to the Defense authorization bill*

Over 2.8 million students graduate from high school each year in this country and move on to attain a higher education or simply start working. For 65,000 of these students, these normal milestones become nightmares as they lack the legal documentation needed to go to school or work (Perez, 2009). The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act is a proposed federal legislation in the U.S. that will enact two major changes in current law. The DREAM Act will 1) Permit immigrant students who arrived in the United States as minors, have lived continuously for at least five years in the U.S prior to the bill’s enactment, have good moral character, and graduate from a U.S. high school to apply for legal status and to eventually obtain permanent status and become eligible for U.S. citizenship if they go to college or serve in the U.S. military; and 2) Eliminate a federal provision that penalizes states that provide in-state tuition without regard to immigration status. First proposed in 2001 and reintroduced recently in 2011, the Act would allow unauthorized immigrant students pay in-state tuition and receive student aid at the state level. There is, thus far, not enough congressional support to pass the DREAM Act but several states have already adopted policies. In 2001, Texas became the first state to offer in-state tuition for unauthorized immigrants who met specific criteria. According to experts in the states with in-state

tuition, the cost of implementation has been negligible. In-state tuition is not the same as free tuition. The money paid by DREAMers actually tends to increase school revenues because it represents income that would not otherwise be there (National Immigration Law Center, 2014). California followed with its governor Jerry Brown declaring that educational opportunities for children of immigrants must be made accessible. At the present time, there are 17 states that provide in state tuition: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York, Oregon and Texas. Oklahoma and Rhode Island allow in state tuition through the Board of Regents decisions (NCSL, 2014). Currently, it is up to the states to resolve their own policies for managing these students in higher education. Texas and New Mexico provide access for grants under the state financial aid for DREAMers and California is currently seeking the same thing (Perez, 2012). Arizona, Georgia, and Indiana prohibit DREAMers from receiving in state tuition (NCSL, 2014). The biggest story according to the Pew Research Center is among Hispanics, who have made big gains in college enrollment, a measure that includes both two and four year schools. From 1996 to 2012, college enrollment among Hispanics ages 18 to 24 more than tripled (Krogstad & Fry, 2014). In Arizona, undergraduate enrollments at Arizona's public universities grew by 49% between 1991 and 2010 and increased by about 47% at public two year colleges. During the same period, the proportional enrollment of Hispanics doubled (AMEPAC, 2013).

On June 15, 2012, President Obama announced Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a temporary measure that would stop the deportation of unauthorized youth that matched the criteria previously proposed under the Dream Act. In the state of

Arizona, roughly 80,000 students would qualify for DACA. Since the implementation of DACA, only 18,449 applications have been received and 13,674 have been approved according to Citizenship and Immigration Services (Eaton, 2013). Advocates attribute the lagging numbers to the high cost of the application, a lack of access to legal advice, and, in Arizona, to perceived hostility from the state government. Another reason might be the state's refusal to issue licenses to immigrants approved under the deferred action program (Eaton, 2013).

According to the Immigration Policy Center, studies of undocumented immigrants who legalized their status through the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 reveal that legal status brings fiscal, economic, and labor-market benefits to individual immigrants, their families, and U.S. society in general. The U.S. Department of Labor found that wages of these immigrants who received their legal status under IRCA increased their wages to 15% five years later. If given the opportunity, undocumented students will better their lives. Some will expand their education, get better jobs, and pay taxes. Others will choose not to expand their education but nonetheless still become contributing members of society and self-sufficient citizens.

While the U.S. Supreme Court mandates that undocumented children in public schools be accepted as students, due to current immigration policies, they are not accepted as citizens (Perez, 2012). In 1982, the Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982), that States cannot deny a student the right to public school education due to immigration status. Unfortunately, this ruling excluded high school graduates seeking post-secondary education. The admission of DREAMers to U.S. colleges and universities is not expressly prohibited by the federal law; however, but by

increasing in-state tuition for unauthorized youth, makes college studies virtually inaccessible. States like South Carolina and Alabama actually passed legislation prohibiting undocumented students from enrolling in its state colleges and universities (NCSL, 2014). Erisman and Looney (2007) explain:

“As the United States shifts into the 21st century and incorporates into the global economy in which postsecondary education is a key to economic competitiveness, it is imperative to develop policies at the federal, state, local, and institutional levels to help unauthorized immigrants gain access to and succeed in higher education. A policy that takes such a direction is the Dream Act (p.4).’

There is a policy disconnect between providing tuition benefits to undocumented students while not providing a mechanism that allows either the students themselves or the public to gain the returns of this investment (Perez, 2012). Estimates suggest that by 2020, the United States will have created 15 million new jobs that require some college education, but will face a shortfall of 12 million workers with qualifications to fill the new positions (Carnevale & Fry, 2001).

Arizona, unlike California and Texas and most recently Florida, has taken a sharply distinct path in dealing with immigrant youth by utilizing legal loopholes to their advantage. Proposition 300, passed in Arizona in 2006, requires unauthorized immigrant youth to pay out-of-state tuition, while denying them the right to apply for merit-based public scholarships. As a direct result, Arizona has experienced a steady decline of immigrant youth enrollment in state community colleges and universities, while the high school dropout rate has steadily increased. An average of 119 students is lost each school day in Arizona, the 14th highest total in the country (Clark, 2012). The Dream Act would assist 114,000 immigrant children in Arizona or 2.1 million immigrant children nationwide. The state currently ranks fifth among the top 16 states where potential

beneficiaries of the Dream Act reside (Kelly, 2010). Arizona's political leadership, however, has not demonstrated the will to help immigrant children so far.

The problem is further exacerbated by the existence of “the immigration industrial complex.” There are powerful forces in America that deliberately push for immigration policies destined to fail. The immigration industrial complex is “the confluence of public and private sector interests in the criminalization of undocumented migration, immigration law enforcement, and the promotion of ‘anti-illegal’ rhetoric” (Golash-Boza, 2009, pp.169-170). The concept derives from the analyses of military and prison industrial complexes, as they share the same three features, including the rhetoric of fear, the confluence of powerful interests, and the discourse of othering the so-called “aliens”: communists, “common” criminals, “illegal” immigrants, etc. Golash-Boza further states that powerful interests and members of Congress have, in the last decade, pushed for various immigration laws to enrich the coffers of the Department of Homeland Security. The unleashing of the “war on terror” by the Bush Administration also contributed to the anti-immigration rhetoric as the forces behind the immigration industrial complex have conflated anti-terrorism security laws with anti-immigration policies (Golash-Boza, 2009). According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Arizona imprisons nearly 600 people per 100,000 populations, a rate nearly 50% higher than the average for all states. That puts Arizona sixth in the nation (Carson, 2014). This creates a strain on the state budget and has an effect on the communities when young people are ensnared in a system that sucks away hope for a better future (AZ Editorial board, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

“We cannot begin to understand the situation facing undocumented people in this country unless we start listening to them directly.”

-Peter Orner, Underground America

This project aims to connect the experiences of DREAMers to larger social policy issues of immigration reform and access to higher education and opportunities to more jobs. The inspiring stories analyzed in this work suggest that undocumented immigrant students' lack of access to citizenship and higher education represents a civil rights violation and travesty of social justice as well as a failure to benefit the American society of the intellectual and civic talent of the immigrant youth (Perez, 2009). Giving voice to the DREAMers' unique narratives is important to understanding that the DREAMers are not a homogenous or monolithic group although they are inter-connected by the immigration experience. The main objective of this dissertation is to narrate the experiences of five DREAMers currently in Phoenix, Arizona, and to examine the challenges they have encountered in attaining higher education or be contributing members of society. This study also explores the strategies they developed as a survival mechanism. Furthermore, this study seeks to share specific advice that these five amazing Dream Act students have for other students in the same situation, to Americans opposed to immigration, and to the local, state, and national government. In recent years, it has been witnessed that modest but increasing numbers of unauthorized students managed to enroll in colleges and universities. DREAMers with deferred action may now put their college degree to work after obtaining a social security number and a work permit. As long as you don't live in Arizona or Nebraska, you may also be issued a driver's license. DREAMers run the risk of being another group of people who are frequently

locked into detention centers, making private prisons richer. It's hardly a secret that private prison corporations like Corrections Corporation of America and The GEO group, along with right-wing lobbying group ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council) and a few pocketed state legislators like Russell Pearce in Arizona, have been deliberately promoting and designing laws aimed at incarcerating immigrants and turning the prison system into an incredibly lucrative business (Caballero, 2011). Their future still remains uncertain. More than five million youth now reside in households of mixed legal status, where one or both parents are unauthorized to live and work in the United States, a situation that heightens further the uncertainty about the futures of these youth (Passel, 2011). The situation facing DREAMers is complex and educators cannot begin to understand their needs without further study and by listening directly to their stories.

Theoretical Framework

“Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.”

-Martin Luther King Jr.

The theoretical framework that will be used to investigate the complexity of the DREAMers' experiences in attaining higher education, as well as the use of strategies for their survival under unequal and unjust conditions, is Critical Race Theory and its sub-category, Latino Critical Theory. Critical Race Theory was created in the mid-1970s in response to the inability of critical legal studies to properly address the problem of racial inequality in American society. Pioneered in the works of Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, Critical Race Theory began to critique the “hegemonic system of White supremacy” with the end goal of bringing “change that will implement social

justice” (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). The theory is built upon five tenets. The first of these is ‘counter-storytelling’ which aims at exposing myths and deconstructing common assumptions that perpetuate racial stereotypes and bias. Counter-storytelling challenges the discourses of the majority while allowing the marginalized groups to speak for themselves.

The second of the tenets is the idea about the ‘permanence of racism’ in society. This tenet attacks the structural components of racism, suggesting “that racist hierarchical structures govern all political, economic, and social domains. Such structures allocate the privileging of Whites and the subsequent othering of people of color in all arenas, including education” (Decuir & Dixson, 2004, p.27).

The notion of ‘Whiteness as property,’ suggesting that Whiteness can be considered a privilege and, thus, property due to the history of racism in the legal system in America, is the third tenet of Critical Race Theory. The fourth tenet is ‘interest convergence.’ According to this notion, the civil rights legislations passed in the last decades have been limited and only to the extent of “converging” with the interests of the mainstream White society. The last tenet of the theory is the ‘critique of liberalism,’ taking for task its three major problematic assumptions: the necessity of color-blindness, the insistence on incremental change, and the belief in the neutrality of law. Critical Race Theory argues that the notion of color-blindness obscures the extent of racial problems in America. The insistence on incremental change purposely delays the required changes and, given the history of how the legal system served racism in America, the law cannot be viewed in neutral terms (Decuir & Dixson, 2004, pp. 28-29).

In defining Critical Race Theory, Solorzano and Yosso (2001) argue that the goal of the theory is not to focus on race only but develop mechanisms to also challenge other forms of subordinate relations and oppression based on class and sex. They identify five overlapping themes that base the core of critical race studies in educational research. The first theme stresses the centrality of race and racism and looks at the intersectionality of racial oppression with other forms of subordination, such as gender and class discrimination. The second theme in Critical Race Theory emphasizes the challenge to dominant ideology. Solorzano and Yosso (2001) explain: “A CRT in education challenges the traditional claims the educational system and its institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. The critical race theorist argues that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society” (pp. 472-473).

The third theme notes that Critical Race Theory is committed to social justice by eliminating racism, sexism, and poverty. The fourth theme stresses the centrality of experiential knowledge, emphasizing people of color’s “lived experience by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos*, chronicles, and narratives” (p. 473). The fifth theme in Critical Race Theory incorporates a transdisciplinary perspective, utilizing the “transdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women’s studies, sociology, history, law, and other fields to better understand racism, sexism, and classism in education” (p. 473).

The role of Critical Race Theory is growth in educational studies (Lynn, Yosso, Solorzano & Parker, 2002). Smith-Maddox and Solorzano (2002) propose the use of this theory for developing new alternative teaching and pedagogical methodologies,

suggesting that the incorporation of the theory will require teachers to access cultural immersion as well as field experiences in the communities of racial minorities. Applying the concept of story-telling has been especially critical in educational research. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) argue that in the mainstream discourse, there is usually the “deficit of storytelling” by people of color. Critical race methodology counters this trend by conducting and presenting “research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of color” (p.23). Parker & Lynn (2002) point out that Critical Race Theory is essential for developing better approaches in educational studies because educational research traditionally has “(a) ignored historically marginalized groups by simply not addressing their concerns, (b) relied heavily on genetic or biological determinist perspectives to explain away complex social educational problems, or (c) epiphenomenized or de-emphasized race by arguing that the problems minority students experience in schools can be understood via class or gender analysis that do not fully take race, culture, language, and immigrant status into account” (p.13). Critical Race Theory is, indeed, critical for hearing the voices that the mainstream America often chooses to ignore.

Although some pioneering theorists placed the role of African Americans in the United States at the heart of Critical Race Theory, the theory has evolved since, learning to place other racial minority groups within the context of critical inquiry into the structure of White dominance (Ladson-Billings, 2005). In particular, scholars have extended Critical Race Theory into several sub-theories such as critical feminist theory and Latino critical theory. According to Fernandez (2002), Latino critical theories methodologically “direct us to capture the stories, counter-stories, and narratives of

marginalized people. They suggest that we must recognize and address the lives of students of color who are often the objects of our educational research and yet are often absent from or silenced within this discourse” (p.46). As Huber (2009) notes, Latino critical race theories are helpful in disrupting what she calls the “apartheid of knowledge.” The traditional process of knowledge production, Huber argues, is built on Eurocentric epistemologies and certain ideological beliefs, forming the “apartheid of knowledge in academia,” and Latino critical race theory can disrupt it by centering the stories and counter-narratives of Latinos within the mainstream discourse (Huber, 2009).

Critical Race Theory and Latino critical theory, as well as gender-based critical theories, are also important for a project like this because they recognize that students of color are “holders and creators of knowledge” (Bernal, 2002). The voices of students of color, these theories emphasize, are necessary to challenge and counter the dominance of Anglo- and Euro-American discourses which have historically devalued, omitted, and misinterpreted the experiences, cultures, and languages of students of color. Critical Race Theory and Latino critical theory complement each other and, together, work “as a framework that challenges the dominant discourse on race, gender, and class as it relates to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups” (Bernal, 2002). As the purpose of this dissertation is to interview and learn from five DREAMers in Arizona, the use of both Critical and Latino critical theories would be most appropriate as these theories emphasize the centrality in the narratives the DREAMers can provide us with.

Critical Race Theory is most fitting for this project as a theoretical framework because it has the potential to be interconnected with narrative methodology. Critical

race theory prioritizes the voices of marginalized groups while the narrative methodology can be used to produce a broader story of the students' lives and experiences as DREAMers. Because stories are told, in one fashion or another, story-telling begins as a vehicle for placing experience into a broader context, but it can also be used as a powerful tool for creating meaning from experience. Stories are a representation of reality and as such are socially constructed (Delgado, 2000). Stories are critical to creating shared memory and history and serve to counter the internalization of self-blame that results from racism (Solorzano-Yosso, 2001). Both the theory and the methodology aim at giving members of marginalized groups a human face with aspirations, dreams, and voices that should be acknowledged, respected, and aired to the mainstream public. Adopting both Critical and Latino race theories in combination with the narrative methodology is, therefore, the most appropriate approach for narrating the stories and experiences of five DREAMers who are the subjects of this study. Grounding this study in the theoretical framework discussed here will, hopefully, present a complex and fuller story of the students' lives and experiences.

The choice of the theoretical framework for this study also stemmed out from the need to work for the cause of social justice. Social justice is conceptualized as an overarching framework centered around: 1) Ensuring that all individuals are treated with respect and dignity; and, 2) Protecting the rights and opportunities for all (Shriberg, Wynne, Briggs, Bartucci, & Lombardo, 2011). Social justice challenges the existing social and organizational power and the status quo to empower the members of marginalized groups. Critical Race and Latino Critical Theories were developed with the same aim in mind. The conditions under which the DREAMers have lived and operated

suggest that activists need to work for social justice in addressing the problems they have suffered from. Also, in the DREAMers' struggles, being conscious of social justice will aid them in developing strategies that will guide them on their journey towards attaining a higher education and, thus, in the future, become competitive in the job market.

And finally, since this project bases its findings on interviews, Seidman's three-interview series was utilized for the study (2006). Interviewing is important in understanding and constructing meaning in the experiences of the DREAMers. In public forums, the media, school textbooks, and other venues, we hear a great deal about DREAMers and their roles in the society. We are especially inundated in the media with negative characteristics and stereotypes attached to them. For instance, we hear that they are responsible for most of the crime. We also hear that they take our jobs and our social benefits. We also hear that they refuse to speak English. But how often do we hear *from* them (Orner, 2008)? Through their stories, this project will capture and narrate the successes, the struggles and daily indignities that take a toll on the integrity and livelihood of the DREAMers. It is also the hope of the researcher to make a modest contribution to social justice in American society.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to direct this study:

1. What do Dream Act students identify as the main obstacles for obtaining a higher education or being contributing members of society?
2. What strategies have been developed as a survival mechanism?

Definition of Terms

- *American*: Refers to a citizen of the United States or of or relating to the United States, its people, language, or culture. This term is misleading because it can also refer to inhabitants of North, Central, and South American.
- *Cultural Citizenship*: The process of bonding and community building, and reflection on that bonding, that is implied in partaking of the text-related practices of reading, consuming, celebrating, and criticizing offered in the realm of (popular) culture (Hermes, 2005). Renato Rosaldo, one of the world's leading cultural anthropologists argues that cultural citizenship is concerned with 'who needs to be visible, to be heard, and to belong.' What is defining here is the demand for cultural respect (1994).
- *DACA*: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. DACA began on August 15, 2012. Individuals may request consideration for deferred action if they meet the following guidelines according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services:
 - Were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
 - Came to the United States before reaching their 16th birthday;
 - Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time;
 - Were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making their request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS;
 - Entered without inspection before June 15, 2012, or your lawful immigration status expired as of June 15, 2012;
 - Are currently in school, have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, have obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, or are an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States; and
 - Have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, three or more other misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety.

- *Dream Act*: The bipartisan Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. The DREAM Act was first introduced to Congress in 2001 and aims at providing a solution to the current dilemma over how to deal with undocumented students. The objective of the DREAM is to provide undocumented students educational opportunities and also bring revenue to colleges that are willing to offer in-state tuition as well as financial aid to undocumented students. If passed, “the DREAM Act would provide 360,000 undocumented high-school graduates with a legal means to work, and could provide incentives for another 715,000 youngsters between the ages of 5 and 17 to finish high school and pursue post-secondary education” (Gonzales, 2007).
- *DREAMer*: An unauthorized person whose parents brought them to the United States at a very young age. They have lived the majority of their lives in the United States and consider themselves cultural citizens of the United States. They are neither homogenous nor monolithic. In addition they are in danger of being removed from the United States to their country of birth.
- *Ganas*: desire, inclination (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary)
- *Illegal Immigrant*: This is a problematic term because of the way it is defined in the government’s official and public discourse. Both the words “illegal” and “immigrant” are often defined to serve certain interest groups. The term “illegal immigrant” may be applied to someone who has entered the country without a passport or someone who has entered the country without going through the established customs control, or a foreigner who has committed certain kinds of

crimes. The whole concept, as Couper and Santamaria (1984) explain, is “elusive” and used by governments as a means of control. In the United States, the meaning of “illegal immigrant” is interconnected with racial biases in the mainstream society. In the consciousness of anti-immigrant Americans, the term is associated with Hispanics, including those who were born in the United States. The use of the term “illegal immigrant,” therefore, requires care and sensitivity. It should not be used indiscriminately to dehumanize an entire people or a race. Some scholars avoid using the word “illegal” because of the negative connotations attached to it and instead opt for “unauthorized immigrant” (Marquardt et al., 2011).

- *Las Carruchitas*: A game simply translated - The human wheelbarrow. Partner one grabs partner two’s legs. Partner two must use their hands to move forward.
- *Undocumented Immigrant*: A person who has no documents showing the legality of that person’s status in the country. It would be a mistake to assume that unauthorized immigrants do not have any documents. Many of them do, such as driver’s licenses issued by the state of residence in the United States, passports from their home countries, and identification cards issued by the consulates. Many of them, however, do not possess social security numbers, permanent residency documents (green cards), or American passports—“documents that mark their formal status as members of society” (Marquardt et al., 2011).
- *Unauthorized Immigrant*: A person who is in the country but is out of status for not following the formal procedures of legalizing one’s stay in the country—either as a foreigner or as an immigrant (Marquardt et al., 2011).

Delimitations

The following are delimitations of the investigation:

1. The investigation is limited to only five DREAMers in Phoenix, AZ.
2. The views in this investigation were limited to five DREAMers and their personal experiences as undocumented students.
3. The investigation focused on the challenges and strategies to cope with the challenges of high school students and not elementary and middle school students.
4. The investigation does not utilize quantitative research methods but is limited to qualitative analysis.
5. The project does not involve any ethnographic studies of any area but focuses on the lived experiences of five DREAMers whose voices constitute the primacy source for this investigation.

Significance of the Study

“In matters of truth and justice, there is no difference between large and small problems, for issues concerning the treatment of people are all the same.”

- Albert Einstein

This research is essential for increasing our knowledge and understanding of the DREAMers and their lived experiences as individual human beings. Their voices have been ignored and their concerns neglected. They have been subjected to negative attitudes and stereotyping, without making serious attempts to understand complex humanitarian issues related to their status. The epithet “illegal” is too often used irresponsibly, dehumanizing undocumented students who were born in the United States and whose “illegality” was not of their own choice. It is necessary to stop dehumanizing responsible and decent young adults who have much to contribute to the health of the

American society. It is necessary to uphold the basic humanitarian principles of equality and social justice (Perez, 2009).

This study is also significant because past studies have focused primarily on unauthorized immigrants as whole groups. Also, only high achieving Latino students have been the primary focus. There is a need to hear the voices of individual DREAMers. Given the difficulties and obstacles placed upon their aspirations, there is also a need for urgent federal legislation to address the problem. By identifying and analyzing the challenges the DREAMers face and by identifying the strategies they have used towards obtaining higher education or contributing members of society, this study will contribute to the research literature on successful DREAMers and their strategies implemented for success. Thus, this study will not only provide further insights about the lives of DREAMers to the general public but also offer resources for guidance or inspiration for other DREAMers in their quest for higher education or a better quality of life.

This investigation will also address the question as to why some DREAMers, for whatever reason, do not pursue their education. The five DREAMers whose lives are analyzed in this project are a subset of the larger Latino group and their experiences in the educational pipeline in the United States. Often, Latinos, both authorized and non-authorized, face the same hurdles in their pathway to higher education or job opportunities. So, this study is significant in contributing to the general Latino studies, as well as scholarship, on immigration studies. For many people, the lives and experiences of immigrants and their children seem easy to explain. When asked about their lives, some people react as if the answers to the questions about unauthorized immigrant

students are obvious, but they cannot be obvious unless we hear *from* the students directly.

Organization of the Study

The chapters in this study will be organized thematically. The first chapter deals with such basic components as the introduction, purpose of the study, significance of the study, and research questions. A theoretical background will discuss the theories that will be used in this study and the reasons for choosing those specific theories. Chapter two brings together related literature as well as information about recent political and social developments that affect the lives of immigrant children in Arizona and nationwide. The literature review covers scholarly works on related topics, starting from general books and articles on Latino/a and Chicano/a studies to, more specifically, the lives of immigrant children. This will provide a more detailed background discussion about the subject, using available statistical data as well as scholarly literature. Research methodology will discuss in chapter three why qualitative research methodology, specifically narratives and Seidman's interviewing model, were utilized for this study. Chapter four contains an analysis of the data and presentation of the results. DREAMer profiles were created and DREAMers' experiences, answers, and discussion, in relation to specific themes such as adaptation, self-efficacy, and recommendations will be presented. This chapter will consist of relevant discussions and references to other studies to make meaningful comparisons and implications. Chapter five will be the concluding chapter, making final comments and recommendations alongside a brief review of the methodology used and its effectiveness for such a study. The chapter will also summarize the delimitations of this study. The appendix section at the end will

include the research and interview questions and relevant statistical data in the forms of tables and graphs.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

“I want to encourage you and your communities to continue to welcome the immigrants who join your ranks today, to share their joys and hopes, to support them in their sorrow and trials, and to help them flourish in their new home. This, indeed, is what your fellow countrymen have done for generations. From the beginning, they have opened their doors to the tired, the poor, the ‘huddled masses yearning to breathe free.’ These are the people whom America has made her own.”

- Pope Benedict XVI, addressing an American audience, 2008

“Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life.”

- John F. Kennedy, 1962

Historical Perspectives on Immigration in the United States

Immigration remains to be one of the most controversial and misunderstood subjects amongst people, as well as the public venues such as the media. The United States is a country largely made up of immigrants, where the native population has been reduced to become one of the smallest minority groups in the country. The United States has been built with the energy and contributions of immigrants of various kinds. Immigration gives the United States an economic edge in the world economy. Immigrants bring innovative ideas and entrepreneurial spirit to the U.S. economy. They provide business contacts to other markets, enhancing America’s ability to trade and invest profitably in the global economy. They keep our economy flexible, allowing U.S. producers to keep prices down and to respond to changing consumer demands. The contribution of immigrants is evident in the high-technology and other knowledge-based sectors. These immigrants represent human capital that can make our entire economy more productive. Immigrants have developed new products, such as the Java computer

language, that have created employment opportunities for millions of Americans (Griswold, 2002). In the words of Portes and Rumbaut (2006), the country has become a “permanently unfinished” society where the country continues to change with the influx of new immigrants.

First and second generation immigrants, as well as their children, continue to shape and contribute to the development of the American society. While the European immigrants have become part of the mainstream America and are viewed as native citizens, non-European immigrants, because of their color and ethnicity, have had a hard time trying to become full-fledged American citizens limiting their participation in society. Of all these groups, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the relationship between mainstream America and Latinos, specifically Mexican origin people has been most perilous. Constant educational disadvantages across generations and repeated accounts of discrimination and stereotyping reinforce the racialization dispute. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed by the United States in 1848 and allowed the United States to annex all or part of present-day Oklahoma, New Mexico, Kansas, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, and California (one-third of the Mexican territory at the time). The relationship has been complicated, contested, and painful (Hernandez, 2010). The American conquest of the new territories left many Mexicans as foreigners and aliens in their own homeland. The ethnic ties between Mexican-Americans and Mexicans has often blurred the distinction between American citizens of Mexican origin and Mexican citizens, and allowed the nativist Euro-American groups throughout U.S. history to classify both Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants in the United States along racial and ethnic hierarchies (Telles & Ortiz, 2008).

History of Regional Migration

Immigration to the United States from Mexico has followed three main phases since the start of the 20th century: Limited flows prior to the Second World War, Mexican government sponsored flows during and after World War II, and illegal immigrant flows since 1965.

Pre-World War II: Limited Migration and Early Migration Controls

Before World War II, most of the migration that occurred consisted mainly of short term flows between the American Southwest and Mexico. Around 60,000 Mexicans per annum got into the United States at the start of the 20th century. They mostly worked in agriculture and the railway construction industry with the majority of them returning home in the course of the winter. The development of agricultural, as well as transportation technology in the United States and the Mexican Revolution created additional push and pull factors in the region. As a result, migration rates grew four folds, doubling in the 1910s and doubling again during the 1920s (Ko & Perreira, 2010).

Mexican immigrants were not put through tough restrictions between the 1880s and 1920s because there was strong support by US business interests in the Southwest. By the late 1920s, anti-immigration backlash sentiments finally took shape and the United States responded by putting in place tougher screening measures. This resulted in 75% reduction of Mexican inflows between 1928 and 1929 (Johnson, 2005). The Great Depression made the U.S. further lose its job appeal to Mexicans. There were also large numbers of deportation of Mexicans and even U.S. citizens of Mexican descent from the

U.S. This caused a 40% drop in the Mexican population in the United States during the 1930s (Rosenblum & Brick, 2011).

The Bracero Program: Wartime and Post-War Migration

The United States fought in World War II between 1941 and 1950. Military draft, agricultural labor shortages and the growing demand for factory workers became a concern for the United States. Social networks were degraded during the 1930s and the U.S. government had to make deliberate steps to address this shortage. This led to the signing of the migrant guest worker program in 1942 which came to be known as the “Bracero Program”. Initially, the agreement was very favorable to Mexican workers giving them transportation, housing and health benefits along with a guaranteed minimum wage. “Bracero” contracts were signed by both the United States and Mexican government officials. Mexican diplomats in the United States helped in the enforcement of these contracts. With American soldiers returning to America after the Korean War in 1953, the Eisenhower government removed the consular oversight and also put in place more grower-friendly contracts. Almost two million unauthorized Mexicans were also deported in the so-called “Operation Wetback” campaign.

The “Bracero Program” remained until 1964 when the Kennedy administration was persuaded to terminate the program. By this time, 4.8 million “Bracero” contracts had been signed with a number of them consisting of returning workers. By 1964, the demand for low-wage foreign workers had spread throughout the whole U.S. agricultural sector whereas when it started, the demand only involved a few Mexican and American states. Huge numbers of Mexican communities had come to rely on emigration as a source of income and employment. Migration was not structurally embedded in the

socio-economic systems of a growing group of migrant-sending and migrant-receiving communities.

1965 – 1986: Building an “Illegal” Regime

In 1965, major reforms to the “U.S. Immigrations and Nationality Act” (INA) were passed. This established the outline of U.S. immigration law that still remains in place today. The main purpose of the 1965 reforms was to modernize the U.S. immigration law by eliminating the 1924 race based national origins system and also replace the variable per-country caps with a non-discriminatory equal allocation of visas. This law also created a seven-tier based migration and limited number of employment based visas.

However, this new policy did not compliment the structural forces that were taking hold of U.S. migration system. INA did not take into consideration employers that were seeking foreign employees as the law put a lot of emphasis on family immigration. Moreover, legislation passed in 1952 made it illegal to help or harbor unauthorized immigrants, but openly exempted businesses from being liable under the law for employing or hiring them. This favored unauthorized employment. Problems were aggravated by the rigid per-country limits and the inability of the preference system to respond to evolving employer needs and interests of families to be reunited within reasonable time frames. Thus, a lot of U.S. citizens and immigrants took advantage of generous family preference rules to petition for relatives. Long waiting lists developed for visas in certain preference categories and for immigrants from certain countries.

The law also failed to anticipate massive economic, political, and social changes in Mexico and Central America. Advancements in transportation and communication

technology reduced cost of international migration. As economic shocks in Mexico and civil wars in Central America in the 1970s and 1980s together with the per-country caps still in place, a scenario was created where the demand was greater than the supply of visas available.

Consequently, an “illegal alien problem” became an issue for U.S. policymakers. Congress held hearings on illegal immigration and task forces were convened to study the problem. Spending on migration control increased five-fold between 1970 and 1985. Nonetheless, with liberals and business groups opposed to enforcement measures, and labor unions and social conservatives opposed to the new admissions, Congress had no appetite for genuine reform efforts and the demand for low-wage workers was increasingly met by unauthorized immigrants.

Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986

Growing public pressure for the government to deal with illegal immigration eventually led to the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986. The topic of deportation is not a new occurrence produced by draconian laws like SB1070. The United States has struggled with the issue of unauthorized immigration and immigration reform before. IRCA was the product of that struggle, and provides valuable lessons as immigration reform options are considered today (Cooper & O’Neil, 2005). IRCA stipulated the legalization of undocumented persons who had been continuously unlawfully present in the United States since 1982, made it illegal for employers to knowingly hire undocumented workers, increased enforcement at U.S. borders, and legalized certain agricultural workers.

As President Obama and lawmakers from both parties begin to take their first tentative steps towards rewriting the nation's immigration laws, opponents warn that they are repeating the mistakes of the 1986 act, which failed to solve the problems that it set out to address. Critics contend that the law actually contributed to making the situation worse (Tamulty, 2013). Critics also argue that IRCA did not give answers to future unauthorized immigration. However, there are various successes of IRCA that legislators should keep in mind as they debate the immigration reform.

IRCA allowed around 3 million immigrants who met the strict eligibility criteria to get legal status. This legal status allowed for previously unauthorized immigrants to improve their living standards and contribute more to the growth of the U.S. economy. Research conducted between 1990 and 2006 by Rob Paral shows the educational levels that IRCA immigrants attained increased substantially. Their home ownership also greatly improved and the poverty rates of newly legalized immigrants dropped a great deal. From the shortfalls of IRCA, we can learn that legalization, enforcement, and visa reform must go hand in hand so as to create a better immigration system. Mazzoli and Simpson (2006) state that if "we quickly realized that if immigration reform was to work and be fair, it had to be a three-legged stool." If one leg failed, so would the entire bill.

There have been studies done that show that higher wages of legalized immigrants lead to more tax revenues, higher purchasing power and creation of more jobs. The American Immigration Council (2008) depicts that the higher earning ability of newly legalized immigrants would in turn lead to a net increase

in personal income of up to \$36 billion within the first three years of getting legalization. A net increase of up to \$5.4 in taxes revenue would then follow. This increase would generate consumer spending that could sustain up to 900,000 jobs. It is clear that not only is reform the humane thing to do, but there are also many economic benefits that are clearly backed up by studies conducted by respected organizations and individuals.

Kossoudji (2013) states that legalization for otherwise law-abiding undocumented immigrants is humane for them and their families, develops a better workforce for U.S. companies, and acts as a workplace development program for young people. Legalization would also create a level playing field and fair and fair competitions for U.S. workers, improve the earning of law-abiding companies, increase tax revenue of local, state and federal governments, and free local police to return to crime prevention, crime solving and building safe communities. Kossoudji goes on to say that there are few federal policies whose beneficial effects would be felt this widely. Our values demand comprehensive immigration reform and our economy is counting on this (2013).

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed 30 years ago in January of 1994 between the USA, Mexico and Canada. This agreement created a trade block comprising of these three countries. NAFTA's main objectives were to promote trade between these three countries, to remove tariffs among member states and to also grow the economy of Mexico to be at par with the other NAFTA counties (United States and Canada).

NAFTA has over the years had various successes as well as criticisms.

Benefits include:

- Real increases in wages in all three member countries
- Trade between member countries increased Created jobs for US workers
- Great improvement in industrial integration between the United States and Mexico
- Tariffs that previously discouraged trade were removed

Criticisms of NAFTA include:

- Mexican farmers have not benefited as much as anticipated
- The USA made many investments in Mexico as a result of NAFTA mostly in the form of factories where Mexicans provide cheap labor for American bound goods. This however has failed to grow the size of Mexico's middle class because Asian labor proved to be much cheaper than Mexican
- NAFTA lifted tariffs but a lot of the regulations that stifle trade are still in place

The dilemma is lack of opportunities in Mexico and other countries, not immigration. NAFTA served to increase immigration and depleted or annihilated the agrarian economies of rural Mexico (Germano, 2009). Instead of creating more economic opportunities south of the border and reducing the pressure to emigrate, NAFTA accomplished the opposite. History follows a pattern in the integrated economy. When a major economic downturn occurs, hysteria against

Mexican labor begins. Mexicans are seen as commodities to be bought and sold, but also as a danger (Vélez-Ibañez, 2011).

September 11, 2001

The U.S. immigration system is broken, but it is not the nation's job to terrorize, intimidate, and criminalize families. Immigration policy is inconsistent with American ideals. It seems like a day does not go by in the United States without hearing about immigration on televised news broadcasts, print news stories, radio talk shows, or Internet blogs (Shattell & Villalba, 2008). On the 12th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Americans for Legal Immigration PAC, a group opposed to comprehensive immigration reform, compared millions of the nation's undocumented immigrants to the Sept. 11, 2001 plane hijackers (Foley, 2013). There has been a continual intensification in language that outlines unauthorized immigrants as a criminal problem. "Elevating our country's conversation on immigration means focusing less on the often angry, overheated rhetoric coming from groups such as the Minuteman Project," wrote Vargas (2011) in late September, and instead telling the stories of those "who are aiding undocumented immigrants . . . to address an issue that the federal government has not." (www.defineamerica.com). Shattell and Villalba (2008) state:

The post- 9/11 U.S. and its "war on terror" assuredly contributes to these anti-immigrant sentiments. Take, for example, a letter to the editor that appeared in Greensboro, North Carolina's daily newspaper, the *News & Record*. In this letter to the editor (Moschetti, 2007), the author implied that a homogenous city is a better city (and the author was not advocating for an all-Hispanic or Latino/a, or an all-African American city). Moschetti's not-so-veiled implication that non-diverse, that is, White people, are not "dropping out of school, doing drugs, joining gang[s], [and] having multiple children that they cannot afford" points toward ignorance, xenophobia, and racism. Interestingly, most individuals who align themselves with these opinions and patterns of thought would reject the notion that these statements are "racist," opting instead to explain that they are

simply stating “the facts” and that there is nothing discriminatory about their stereotypic comments (p.1).

Deportations from the U.S. have nearly doubled as a result of the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States. One reason for this is increased funding by the U.S. government on border security. Immigrants of middle-Eastern descent faced discrimination in the workplace, bullying at school, and racial profiling by law enforcers since 9/11 (Barry, 2011). The immigration policy that the country adopts should preserve the civil rights of all immigrants in the United States. DREAMers believe Arizona is ground zero for immigration reform and believe what happens here sets the tone for the rest of the nation (Resendez, 2013). A post 9/11 generation of Latinos will foster new engineers, teachers, military and political leaders, scientists, and many other productive members of society that will improve America’s competitiveness and quality of life. In the words of Spanish language TV talk show host, Cristina Saralegui, we must move “Pa’lante,” or “Forward.”

Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhood Acts

Former Governor Brewer, who helped craft the final version of SB 1070, has made a career out of criminalizing immigrants. Arizona’s Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhood Acts, better known as SB 1070 was signed by then Governor Brewer on April 23, 2010. On May 29, 2010, tens of thousands of protestors engaged in a march through downtown Phoenix to denounce SB 1070 as racist making it the second-largest demonstration in Arizona history (Cisneros, 2013). The streets were packed from curb to curb for over three miles

as demonstrators made their way along the six mile route that began at Steele Indian School Park, snaked its way through downtown and ended at the state capitol building (Teitelbaum, 2010). Despite the massive protests, the bill was passed July 29, 2010. Arizona state legislator Juan Mendez introduced the TRUST Act on March 10, 2014, a bill that starts the fight against anti-immigration measures like SB1070.

The law makes it a state crime to be in the country illegally. It states that an officer engaged in a lawful stop, detention or arrest shall, when practicable, ask about a person's legal status when reasonable suspicion exists that the person is in the U.S illegally. Despite the rising opposition, polls have consistently indicated that the majority of Arizonans support the measure. The Pew Research Center opinion poll showed that 59% of respondents nationally favor the Arizona law. Support for police involvement in immigration enforcement showed an even higher number, 67%. Despite voter support for SB 1070, a whopping 77% also support federal reform that includes both enforcement and a path to citizenship.

Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric and Hate

The American public's attitudes and rhetoric in TV news, newspapers, political platforms, and radio stations have become more anti-immigrant. Dehumanizing rhetoric has become part of the regular media vocabulary depicting them as criminals. When a Congressman can say "illegal" immigrant woman "multiply like rats" and do not have to provide an apology for such derogatory statements, it is evident that public discourse has hit rock bottom (watuga, Rep. Curry Todd "Breeding Like Rats" Rant - TNGA Fiscal Review

Committee Nov. 9, 2010). When Pulitzer Prize winner, Jose Antonio Vargas came out as an undocumented person, the mainstream media ignited a firestorm (Rubio, 2011). Mónica Novoa (2011) from *Colorlines* explains that Varga's story drew "enormous media attention and drove 'undocumented immigrant' up to a top-trending term on Twitter...But it's a shame that in the dissection and retelling of this story, a fine point has been lost on many of Vargas' colleagues; He came out specifically as an undocumented immigrant and not as 'illegal.' The Vargas story is a telling example of the media coverage of the immigration debate in the United States in recent years – inaccurate, incomplete, and insufficient (Rubio, 2011). Steve King of the Republican Party in the recent past compared DREAMers to drug mules. Such is an example of the aforementioned anti-immigrant rhetoric made by a politician.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the number of hate groups targeting immigrants grew by 33% between 2000 and 2005, while anti-Latino hate crimes have increased 40% annually between 2003 and 2007. Associated Press-Univision Poll revealed that 81% of Latinos say they experience some or a lot of discrimination. This growth of hate and violence has occurred in tandem with the crackdown on immigrants taking place across the country (Chacon, 2010). In addition, the number of hate groups increased by 48%. There are 939 active hate groups in the United States, 20 in Arizona in 2013 (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2013). According to the *New York Times* these groups were influential in the congressional defeat of the Dream Act in 2010, and the drafting of Arizona's notorious SB 1070 legislation (DeParle, 2011). The Dream Act was

short five votes in the Senate after having barely passed in the House of Representatives.

Current Outlook on Immigration

Mexican immigrants today encounter various policies that are discriminatory. Xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiment have increased and permeated their political, social, and cultural surroundings. By an electoral landslide on November 7, 2000, Arizona became the second state to adopt an English-only schools initiative. Proposition 203, modeled on a California measure adopted in 1998, aimed at banning bilingual education for virtually all children learning English as a second language (Crawford, 2001). SB 1070 unlocked the gate for other reactionary anti-immigration laws. Ethnic studies courses in K-12 schools were banned, a policy that requires heavily accented teachers and those lacking fluency be removed was established. Other examples of such policies include the attempts by Congress to construct a wall along the border of the United States and Mexico in 2006, and the banning of Mexican American books in the state of Arizona. Despite the struggles, Dulce Matuz (2014) states that some positive changes have occurred as well. This includes removing the creator of SB1070, Russell Pearce out of office, in state tuition at the Maricopa Community Colleges for undocumented students in AZ, and the changing of Arizona image and perception one day at a time.

The United States finds itself in the midst of what historian Daniel Kanstroom (2007) describes as “large-scale, decade-long deportation experiment” that is testing America’s core founding principles as a nation of immigrants that

has lifted the “lamp beside the golden door” for “the huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” “Deporter in Chief”, a new title given to President Barack Obama by the president of National Council of La Raza, a prominent Latino advocacy group, denouncing the administration’s deportation of 1100 people every day, nearly two million immigrants to date; more people than those that live in the entire state of Nebraska (Llorente, 2014).

In order to advance the status quo with Latino immigrants and their connection with the rest of the United States, it is imperative for us to raise our shared cultural understanding, and to create new relationships based on equality and mutual understanding. According to national estimates, 30% of Mexican adults and 50% of Mexican youths, 18 to 24-year-olds experience unfair treatment on a daily basis due to their ethnicity (Perez, Fortuna & Alegria, 2008). Undocumented students face many social and emotional hardships. According to Perez (2012) the fear of deportation is central to their daily existence that it influences almost every aspect of their lives. They also attend low-performing and poorly funded schools with extremely low college-going rates (Abrego, 2006). This is alarming considering only 10% of Latinos ages 25-29 completed a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2000 compared to 34% for whites. According to the Lopez and Fry (2013) from the Pew Hispanic Center, the Hispanic high school dropout rate continues to decline for Hispanics and the enrollment of Hispanics in college has increased, surpassing whites. However, despite these recent milestones, Latinos continue to lag other groups when it comes to earning a bachelor’s degree. In 2012, 14.5% of Latinos ages 25 and older had earned a

bachelor's degree compared to 51% Asians, 34.5% whites and 21.2% blacks.

Lopez and Fry (2013) also express that Hispanic college students are less likely than whites to enroll in a four year college, attend a selective college, and enroll full-time. Gonzalez (2002) asserts that Latinos have not been able to catch up economically with non-Hispanic whites because of two reasons: their immigrant status and relatively low levels of education.

Politicians and social scientists accuse immigrants of being “unassimable” and fail to base their anti-immigration views on knowledge. In his book, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, Samuel Huntington declared that Mexicans posed a serious threat to the U.S. national unity and that “Mexicans and their progeny have not assimilated into American society as other immigrants did in the past and as many other immigrants are doing now” (2004). Undocumented students dress and speak English in ways that make them largely indistinguishable from their U.S. born peers (Olivas, 1995). DREAMers are full-fledged Americans but lack the paper that legalized them. Given the current economic crisis, there is a strong temptation to dehumanize these immigrants and to portray them as overwhelming masses of faceless invaders who challenge the principles upon which our country is built (Marquardt, Steignenga, Williams & Vasquez, 2011). DREAMers, however, remain hopeful and challenge daily the constant anti-immigrant rhetoric that stereotypes them as “un-American”.

Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut (1996) explain: “Immigrants do not come to escape perennial unemployment or destitution in their homeland. Most undertake the journey instead to attain the dream of a new lifestyle that has reached their countries but that is impossible to fulfill in them. Not surprisingly, the most determined individuals,

those who feel the distance between actual reality and life goals are poignantly, often choose migration as the path to resolve the contradiction” (p. 19). Marquadt, Steignenga, Williams and Vasquez (2011) challenge our notions about why immigrants come to the United States. They convey narratives that challenge current policies that are destructive to families and often unconstitutional, not to romanticize unauthorized immigrants, but to gain a better understanding of the 12 million people who are “living illegal” in the United States. Immigrants are presented as living people in our midst that perform a wide array of jobs from clean our houses to cultivating the food we consume. All of them, however, seek to overcome the politics of fear and promote change in an immigration system that trades in the currency of fear.

Immigration is a problem, but not in the way it’s generally defined. Immigration is a humanitarian problem (Chomsky, 2007). Immigrants do not abide by the rules because the rules are designed to keep immigrants out. Chomsky’s (2007) book *“They take our jobs!” and 20 other myths about immigration* exposes all the falseness about the myths and fallacies about immigration issues in the United States. The author provides data, statistics, and answers based on sound logic. The myths coincide with Marquadt, Steignenga, Williams, and Vasquez’s, (2011) four broadly articulated claims about unauthorized immigrants.

- Unauthorized immigrants flood across the U.S. – Mexico border to take advantage of public benefits and social services, while contributing very little to U.S. society.
- Unauthorized immigrants are a burden on the U.S. economy.

- Unauthorized immigrants are closely associated with criminality, violence, drugs, and gangs.
- Unauthorized immigrants cannot be integrated into U.S. society because they bring values that are contrary to the values of this nation.

Immigrants are an asset to America. Similarly, Riley (2008) in his book, *Let Them In: The Case for Open Borders* advocates for opening up of the Borders. Riley argues that Latino immigrants, even low-skilled ones, are an asset and not a liability to the United States.

One of the first thing people question is why undocumented immigrants do not come here legally to begin with or simply “get in line.” The U.S. Immigration system has restrictive limits on the number of visas granted each year. For many DREAMers the enormous backlogs and delays of processing the necessary paperwork makes it almost impossible. Perez (2012) provides an example of the “line” for most people to gain permanent U.S. residency:

For example, according to the visa bulletin published by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs, if a Mexican-born eight yr. old child arrives in the United States with his or her parents and the family files a petition for permanent legal residency on the basis of one parent having a sibling who is American citizen, the petition would take 18 years to be processed, at which time the child would be 26, and no longer eligible for benefits since he/she is not a child under 21. This is considered “aging out.” Although the parents can finally become permanent residents after almost 20 years, the young child, who was brought to the United States through no choice of his/her own, remains undocumented. The parents, after becoming permanent residents, could petition for the child, but it would again take many years.

In *Illegal: Life and Death in Arizona's Immigration War Zone*, Terry G. Sterling (2010) puts a face to the immigration story – the good, the bad, and the ugly. Sterling gives a human face to a few of the thousands of immigrants living in the hostile and

unwelcoming state of Arizona. The compelling stories are presented alongside those who persecute undocumented immigrants like Sheriff Joe Arpaio. The book was written prior to the enactment of SB1070. As Sterling writes, "The Mexicans you'll meet risked their lives to get to Phoenix for a number of reasons. Adventure. Ambition. Love. Survival" (p. x). It is a human drama, and we are right in the midst of it.

Latino Students and the DREAM Act

Among the literature on Latino students in American schools, in general, one of the most important and comprehensive monograph is *The Latino Education Crisis: The Consequences of Failed Social Policies* by Gandara and Contreras (2009). The authors in this book use both demographic data and case studies of Latino students to present a larger picture of the educational crisis. They found that many Latino students are academically lagging behind their peers because of the existence of a web of social problems, such as living in dangerous neighborhoods or living with parents who speak little English. Latino students experience a host of difficulties in school systems which subject them to institutionalized discrimination and, sometimes, even segregation. But Gandara and Contreras (2009) also explain that many Latino students, nevertheless, manage to succeed. "That they survive these various hurdles to meet minimum demands of schooling and become competent citizens is a testament to human fortitude," (p. 120) they explain. "To expect that they would demonstrate high levels of intellectual competence or aspire to go to college would seem overly optimistic. Yet some of these students do defy the odds by demonstrating superior intellectual competence in school settings and going on to college" (Gandara & Contreras, 2009, p. 120). This book

discusses the difficult experiences of Latino students, their resilience and perseverance in the face of so many obstacles placed upon them by the mainstream society.

Another important book on this topic is *Learning a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society* by Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco and Todorova (2008). This is an extremely well-researched book, covering the experiences of around 300 students from China, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Central American countries enrolled in the schools of San Francisco and Boston areas. They compiled their data for five years and presented a range of findings, cataloguing the difficulties the students faced. For instance, immigrant students attend de facto segregated schools where violence, poverty, and pessimism are rampant. Some students fail to achieve success because of unstable family relations. And, considering that leaving their homelands is already a painful experience for many immigrant students, hardships and discrimination that they face on American soil further decrease their expectations in life. Nevertheless, the authors note, immigrant students find coping mechanisms and that there is much others can learn from them: “Because of global migration, children and youth growing up today are likely to work and network, love and live with people from different national, linguistic, religious, and racial groups And to the extent that immigrants succeed in accommodating and contributing to these multiple cultures, they have much to teach their native-born peers” (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008, p. 372).

The literature survey on the lives of undocumented students in the United States is not complete without mentioning William Perez’s (2009) thoroughly researched and analyzed *We ARE Americans: Undocumented Students Pursuing the American Dream*.

Perez recounts the stories of sixteen undocumented students and four formerly undocumented individuals. He tells the stories of aspirations and dreams being shattered because most of the undocumented children were born in the United States and grew up with the hope to achieve the American dream in the same manner that their documented peers did. But the undocumented students faced numerous hurdles in their pursuit of education because of their immigration status. Perez effectively constructs the portraits of each person whose story is narrated in the book, but he also combines the narratives with policy argumentation and recommendations. His newest book, *Americans by Heart*, (2012) investigates the plight DREAMers face and their academic and civic engagement throughout their academic years and describes the complex situation faced by millions of students today. Perez provides the reader with new visions of Latino students in the U.S. education system and sheds light to the perseverance and hard work of these students. It demonstrates the need to link their situation to larger social and political issues of immigration reform and higher education access.

Another book that helps us understand the condition of U. S. immigration through the experiences and voices of undocumented youth is *Dreamers: La lucha de una generación por su sueño Americano*, by Eileen Truax (2013). This awarded journalist reminds us that in one way or another, we are all DREAMers. She vividly portrays the life of nine Dreamers and their struggles in their pursuit of the “American Dream”. Currently, the book is only in Spanish, but the English version is set to launch soon. Truax states “Their political activism has caused public opinion to revisit the meaning of “national identity.” These are their stories. With Arizona being ground zero for immigration, it is no surprise that one of the DREAMers presented in her book is a an

Arizona DREAMer who along with five other people were arrested in a protest staged against Joe Arpaio and in favor of the Dream Act in 2010.

Although there is a growing body of research on first and second generation immigrant youth, literature specifically dealing with DREAMers and the Dream Act is relatively scant. Part of the reason is because the Act has not been passed on the federal level yet. So, the existing literature discusses the impact of the DREAM Act on specific states. Galindo, Medina, and Chavez (2005) discuss the elements of the DREAM Act and how individual states have been embracing some provisions of it, even though the federal government has not passed it. Flores (2010), in her study of the DREAM Act's impact on the state of Texas which passed it in 2001, finds that older Latino high school students became more likely to enroll in college after the passing of the Act than they would have, had the Act not been passed. Contreras (2009) focuses on the effects of the Washington State's DREAM Act and makes valuable recommendations for educational institutions to better help undocumented children pursuing higher education. Adams (2011) and Barron (2011) discuss why the U.S. Senate failed to pass the DREAM Act in December 2010 but suggest that, at the moment, the Congress is not ready to pass it and, therefore, States should individually embrace the provisions of the DREAM Act. The historical analysis of landmark educational developments, such as the DREAM Act, was studied by Hernandez (2008).

The DREAM Act has been analyzed in a number of recent dissertations. Ironside (2011) discusses the rhetoric of exclusionary Anglo-elitist nationalism and racism that view immigrants as the "other," and makes suggestions for advocates of the DREAM Act on how to counter the exclusionist rhetoric. Anguiano (2011) learned the strategies of

DREAMers through extensive fieldwork, interviewing DREAM activists and analyzing secondary accounts of several DREAMers. Anguiano also used critical race and Latino critical theories in understanding the way DREAMers constructed their demands during the years 2001 and 2010. In 2003, Gary Locke, the governor of Washington State, signed into law HB 1079 The Student Residency Tuition Adjustment Act, a provision of the DREAM Act, to allow undocumented children pay in-state tuition. The implications of this law and how seven students enrolled in college, thanks to this legal provision, experienced their pathway to higher education was the subject of Nerini's (2011) dissertation. And, Ellis (2010) conducted a qualitative research on eleven undocumented youths to understand the meaning they attributed to their experience of being undocumented students.

The literature surveyed here touches upon the subject of the researcher in different ways. Some of the works provide the researcher and the readers with general background information about Latinos in America, while others provide more narrowly focused studies on the lives of undocumented immigrants, with some using demographic data and others interviewing the students themselves. There are still missing gaps that should be filled with further research. As noted earlier, some researchers have studied the impact of the DREAM Act on States which have embraced some of its provisions. The purpose of this dissertation is to study the experiences of DREAMers from the state of Arizona, the state which has one of the most restrictive policies vis-à-vis Latino immigrants. In this regard, this project will contribute to our understanding of the lives and experiences of undocumented students DREAMers not just in Arizona but also nationwide, as it adds to the existing literature which has already covered a few other states.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

There are five particular research purposes for which qualitative studies are especially suited to 1). Understand the meaning, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, and actions they are involved with and of the accounts of their lives and experiences. 2). Understand the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions. 3). Identify unanticipated phenomena and influences, and generate new grounded theories about the latter. 4). Understanding the process by which events and actions take place; and, 5). Develop causal explanations (Maxwell, 1996).

Why Qualitative Research?

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of the participants; therefore, the research topic will be analyzed qualitatively. Qualitative research, in general and narrative inquiry in particular is concerned with narrating and interpreting human lived experiences from the perspective of those who have experienced them (Milachi, 2003). As Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) stated, “Understanding is the primary goal of qualitative research” (p. 12). To understand how DREAMers have restructured their lives under Arizona’s laws that deny them drivers licensees and further opportunities for better jobs and higher education, the researcher will need to ask them to narrate their stories.

This dissertation constructed narratives of five DREAMers who deserve to express themselves and their experiences were analyzed by listening to them directly. Quantitative analysis of responses and demographic data often omit personal narratives,

feelings, and emotional experiences that can be expressed only in a face-to-face dialogue. The primary data for this dissertation comes from interviews and the nature of this work is more interpretive than descriptive. Qualitative data emphasizes the importance in understanding how people see themselves and their lives, what their situations mean to them, and how they adapt and cope with problems that arise (Wegner, 1999). For these reasons, qualitative research is a better fit for this project.

As Merriam (1998) explains, educational research may take three forms: positivist, interpretative, and critical. In positivist research, the subject of the study becomes an object that can be scientifically and objectively studied through calculations and other quantifiable methods. This perspective assumes that the “reality” can be observed, measured, and viewed as a stable phenomenon. The interpretative research views education as an ongoing process and schooling is considered a lived experience. And, the critical research looks at education and schooling as a social institution designed for social and cultural reproduction and transformation. Drawing from Marxist philosophy, critical theory, and feminist theory, knowledge generated through this mode of research is an ideological critique of power, privilege, and oppression in areas of educational practice. Some forms of critical research have a strong participatory, action component (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam explains the differences of these methodologies with a hypothetical example. If a researcher, say, is studying the reasons for non-completion, such as dropping out of high school, a positivist researcher may hypothesize that students may drop out because of self-esteem problems or another specific reason. The researcher will then investigate the issue by building on the hypothesis and experimenting with possible

variables. A researcher with an interpretative or qualitative approach, however, would not address the question by setting up a hypothesis and measuring variables. The researcher of this type would “be interested in understanding the experience of dropping out from the perspective of the noncompleters themselves, or . . . might be interested in discovering which factors differentiate noncompleters from those who may have been at risk but who nevertheless completed high school.” And finally, the researcher “would be interested in how the social institution of school is structured such that the interests of some members and classes of society are preserved and perpetuated at the expense of others” (Merriam, 1998). These characteristics of the qualitative research mode make it more appropriate for interviewing the DREAMers.

It should also be noted that qualitative research as a form of inquiry began as a reformist movement in the 1970s, challenging the existing positivist and scientific approaches that had dominated the research inquiry in the preceding decades. Qualitative research inquiry employed interpretive, epistemological, methodological, and ethical criticisms, as well as hermeneutics to question the applicability of experimental and correlational research strategies in all cases. As it has developed in the last four decades, qualitative research also incorporated ideas from “intellectual developments in feminism, postmodernism, and post structuralism,” making it “more comprehensible as a site or arena for social scientific criticism than as any particular kind of social theory, methodology, or philosophy” (Schwandt, 2003). The sophistication and comprehensiveness of the qualitative inquiry are more useful in addressing the objectives and aims of this dissertation.

Even though qualitative research was used to understand the DREAMers' challenges and strategies to overcome the challenges, integrating quantitative data provided a more complete story and put a face on the numbers. Qualitative and quantitative research worked well together for this research project. The numbers revealed the importance of each DREAMer as a human being and enhanced the understanding of the study. The numbers showed us how many DREAMers are affected in Arizona and the impact on affected communities.

Why Narratives?

There are many forms of qualitative research. This research project will use narrative methodology as it is fitting to allow people to make sense of their lives according to narratives available to them. Stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell our experience. A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history.... Experience is the stories people live. People live stories and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Connelly and Clandinin (1990), pioneers in the field of narrative inquiry, note that, "Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world." In other words, people's lives consist of stories. As Pinnegar and Daynes (2006) suggest, narrative can be both a method and the *phenomenon* of study. As a method, it begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals.

The researcher sought to record and interpret the perspectives and experiences of DREAMers being studied documenting their voices, vision, and knowledge to create

compelling narratives that advocate change. Researchers are using narratives to enable people to give authentic account of their lives with the belief that telling a story may empower the teller (Goodley, 1998). As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) note, narrative inquiry produces a mutually constructed story out of the lives of both researcher and participants. It is through our shared stories that we become fully known to ourselves and others, and see possibilities for educational change.

Wetherall and Noddings (1991) sum it up when they suggest that

... telling our stories can be cathartic and liberation. But it is more than that. Stories are powerful research tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems. They banish the indifference often generated by samples, treatments and faceless subjects. They invite us to speculate on what might be changed and with what effect. And, of course, they remind us of our persistent fallibility. Most important, they invite us to remember that we are in the business ofand researching to improve the human condition.
(p. 280)

Seidman's Three-Part Interviewing Model

As part of the narrative qualitative research, this study utilized Irving Seidman's three-part interviewing model. Seidman explains that "interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior. A basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience... Interviewing allows us to put behavior in context and provides access to understanding their actions" (Seidman, 2006). Interviewing, in this sense, is helpful in constructing the narratives of participants and understanding the context, as well hearing the voices and arranging the interviews in chronological order.

Seidman's three part interviewing model consists of three parts. The three steps in interviewing a person allows us to view life from a larger perspective and makes it possible to comprehend an individual's inner perception of life as well as his/her experiences. Seidman's three step interviewing model entails:

1. *Interview One: Focused Life History.* In this stage, the interviewer asks the participant simple questions about his or her past, education and career achievements, the lives of friends, neighborhoods, and relatives and, thus, places the lived experience of the participant in a larger context. The purpose here is to ask the "how" questions rather than the "why" questions.
2. *Interview Two: The Details of Experience.* In the second stage, the interviewer's purpose is to ask for details about the specific topic being studied. The interviewer here seeks for social context by asking the participant to reconstruct the details related to the topic of the study and allow the participant to talk about his or her opinions about, as well as interactions with, others in his or her social surroundings.
3. *Interview Three: Reflection on the Meaning.* In this stage, the interviewer asks the participant about the meaning of his or her lived experience by asking questions such as "what is the meaning of this experience to you or to a larger society?" or "given your specific experience, what do you see as a viable option for future action?" Seidman explains:

Making sense or making meaning requires that the participants look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation. It also requires that they look at their personal experience in detail and within the context in which it occurs. The combination of exploring the past to clarify the events that led participants to where

they are now, and describing the concrete details of their present experience, establishes conditions for reflecting upon what they are now doing in their lives. The third interview can be productive only if the foundation for it has been established in the first two. (Seidman, 2006).

This three-stage interviewing model and the narrative methodology, together with the theoretical foundation grounded in the critical race and Latino critical theory provided a solid guide in carrying out and completing this dissertation. The researcher maintained integrity and a sense of justice while carrying out this project and use the utmost objectivity within the limits of IRB guidelines, in interpreting and presenting the findings of this study. The three interview structure also incorporates features that enhance the accomplishment of validity. If the interview structure works to allow them to make sense to themselves as well as to the interviewer, then it has gone a long way toward validity (Seidman, 2006).

Limitations of this Design

No method is perfect and there are limitations to any methodology. Qualitative research has subjectivity that is inherent. Thus, the researcher has substantial control over both the design and the analysis; hence, the study is influenced by the researcher's own perceptions (Ratner, 2002). Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of narratives is very labor intensive and time demanding. Critics question the validity and 'truth' of narratives. Narratives are designed to be reflective and critical of their own functioning. In addition, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) note that the researcher must be cautious about the distinction between "the events as lived and the events as told" and to avoid the illusion of "causality". Simply put, a correlation between two variables does not mean that one variable caused the other. Due to the time commitment that is required, it is not

fitting for a large number of participants and is not compatible with all studies. The emergent narrative therefore achieves a richness of depth which empirical research involving larger samples is unlikely to yield (Dhunpath, 2000).

Interviews

A questionnaire with open ended questions was created. The questionnaire was reviewed and approved by the members of my committee. With both IRB and questionnaire approved, I conducted a pilot interview. The pilot interview not only allowed me to practice interviewing, but also provided practice using my new recorder and made it possible to see the strengths and weaknesses in my questionnaire. This allowed me to modify the questionnaire accordingly.

The first phase of this investigation included conducting research interviews with the five DREAMers and placing the findings within a broader context. The interviews were taped and transcribed. Each interview was analyzed immediately after transcription. The researcher personally transcribed the interviews to become more at ease with the data. The transcriptions were given to the participants prior to each interview to check for accuracy. The findings were placed within the existing literature regarding the lives of immigrants and Latinos as well as their struggles in the educational sector in the United States. The timely analysis of each interview allowed the researcher to gain better insights into the lives and experiences of the DREAMers. After finishing the interview process with all the participants, the findings were reviewed and analyzed again to make sure that important points and implications were not omitted from the final analysis. The interviews started August 15, 2014 and were completed by October 6, 2014. It took approximately seven weeks to complete all five interviews.

Purposeful Sampling

The DREAMers selected for this study were purposefully selected. Purposeful sampling was used because individuals who fit the study's criteria were capable of understanding the research problem by virtue of the shared experience of being undocumented and Latino (Creswell et al., 2007). Purposeful sampling is considered by Seidman (2006) as the most important kind of non-probability sampling. Purposeful sampling seeks information-rich cases which can be studied in depth (Patton, 1990). The researcher selected the sample based on her judgment and the purpose of this research. The researcher looked for participants that were correlated to the research questions and made appointments directly with them. A questionnaire with open ended questions was developed to interview the DREAMers and the questionnaire was submitted to the committee for approval. This dissertation project is in compliance with IRB requirements.

The participants were recruited with the assistance of major informants who have created relationships with the participants who match the study's criteria. Potential participants were contacted via email, phone, or in person. This first contact we established an interview schedule mutually agreeable to both parties. In the last reflection, the researcher allocated five days to pass prior to employing a follow-up telephone call to question whether respondents had more knowledge to share or make clear.

After several cancellations and/or no shows from the few participants interested, I sent a follow up text. From the follow up text, I had a response rate of 0%. I did not have access to sufficient people for the study. Other potential interviewees were

identified using a referral technique, called snowballing sample (Seidman, 1998). A snowball sample is achieved by asking participants to suggest someone else who might be willing to participate or appropriate for the study. My number was given to one of the participants and she shared it with other prospective participants for possible inclusion in the study. Once they contacted me, I made an appointment for their first interview. It may not have been a representative sample of DREAMers in Arizona, but it was the only method available to me because of the difficulty finding and reaching out to the participants. Four initial participants who declined to be in the study profusely apologized, but affirmed to me that their stories were not worth mentioning.

“My story is not exciting; no one wants to hear about it.”

-Anonymous DREAMer

The other two initial participants, I never heard back from.

Coding and Data Analysis

Once I received the participant's consent form, each interview was recorded. My goal was to transcribe each recording within a week of the interview so that the transcription was available to the participant at the following interview. The interviews were transcribed in the order they were given. Transcribing the data myself was a demanding process, but it also allowed me to familiarize myself with the data effectively. Additionally, I further engaged myself in the data by reading through each transcript numerous times. I chose a pseudonym for each of the five participants, one that was relevant and easy to remember, but still kept the participants anonymous. The first time I went through the transcripts, I highlighted and marked passages of interest and labeled those passages. Seidman (2006) suggests developing a profile of each participant. I did

this by organizing excerpts from the transcripts into categories. I searched for connecting threads and patterns among the excerpts within those categories and for connections between the various categories that might be called themes. In addition to creating profiles of the individuals, I presented and commented upon the excerpts from the interviews thematically organized as Seidman suggests. The process of noting what is interesting, labeling it, and putting it into appropriate files is called “classifying” or, in some sources, “coding” data (Dey, 1993). I broke down the data with master categories with sub categories. I used different colored highlighters to distinguish each broad category. At the end of the process, I had more than five colors of highlighted text. I transferred the categories to a brief outline. The final categories were transferred into a table. The coding process appears to be quick, but was long and tedious.

Other qualitative methods encompassed analyzing prior research documents, articles related to SB 1070, literature related to DREAMers and books. I compared and contrasted what preceding researchers have learned from interviewing DREAMers concerning the trials confronted and effective strategies utilized in vanquishing those barriers alongside this study’s results.

The researcher makes meaning of (interprets) what he learns as he goes along. Data is filtered through the researcher's unique ways of seeing the world, his lens or worldview (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). My being has been molded by my own preceding perspectives and experiences; My perceptions are framed via my own lenses, biases, opinions, and prejudices, and as the researcher, I had to be cognizant of my own perspectives in order to craft the study and create the inquiries that I asked the members

of my study. Therefore, narrative, delineating who I am and where I come from, shaped this undertaking in significant ways.

Personal Narrative:

“The construction of my public persona includes all that I am. My public face is an adjustment to the present and a response to the past”.

-Margaret E. Montoya

My father emigrated here as a young boy and my mother as a young woman from Chihuahua, Mexico in the mid-1960s. Both my parents, Conrado and Evita were unable to continue their education. They were forced economically and by their parents to quit school and start working to help out. My father has a 5th grade education and my mother has a 6th grade education. Their initial plan was similar to that of many immigrants: go the United States, work, and return to their “Mexico, lindo y querido”. And they did. Even though I was born in the United States, my first years were spent living in Mexico where my eldest brother was also born. With two children and tough times, my parents believed that by coming to the U.S., their children would have the opportunities that they were denied and could not afford, even if that meant risking their lives crossing the Rio Grande with two babies. They have thrived in being productive hardworking members of society and making sure that their children did too.

My parents are grateful of my opportunity to obtain an education past what would have been accessible to them, suppressed any complaints my four younger brothers and me would’ve had in respect to my schooling. My father eventually obtained his G.E.D and other certifications to work for the state of Texas until his retirement recently. Although my mother never pursued a formal education, she was the primary person responsible for my *educación*. *Educación*, a broader term than its

English language cognate. It refers to the family's role of inculcating in children a sense of moral, social, and personal responsibilities and serves as the foundation for all other learning (Valenzuela, 1999). There were always constant reminders from my parents to be appreciative to live in the country of opportunity and that anything that we wanted was achieved through hard work and strong values. Their lack of opportunities motivated me and inspired me to be a successful dedicated student.

I did not just challenge the odds of growing up poor; I also confronted many stereotypes countless people maintain of young Mexican women. Although my family has been supportive, to this day, I challenge their stubborn old fashioned views about the proper role of a young Mexican woman. Throughout my life I have felt like I'm not Mexican enough, yet I am not American enough either. This has impacted my educational journey in many ways.

My first language was Spanish. It was through television that I acquired most of my English proficiency. When I commenced kindergarten, there were no ESL classes; I was fully immersed into an English only kindergarten class. It was in that kindergarten class one day in P.E. that I learned the value of knowing English not just because my parents deemed it important. There was a girl picking on me that day as we waited in line for the next activity. It kept on, and on until her aggression increased and she bit me. My reaction of course was to bite her back, and I did. She ran crying to the P.E. teacher, who did not bother to find out what happened. Not that I could explain due to my lack of English, but she also failed to call my parents. Needless to say, my parents were up at the school immediately after finding out what had happened. All the teacher knew was that I had bitten the girl, daughter of another teacher on campus, and that is all she needed and

wanted to know. I immediately received a paddling followed by lots of crying for the remainder of the day. It was that day that I knew I had to learn English to defend myself. No one would ever bully, harass, or touch me again...EVER!

By first grade, I was reading at the top of my class, in third grade I was the math champ, and the honors continued to increase each school year. I had no idea why all of a sudden in 6th grade I was put in a Special Education class along with two other Mexican boys. That lasted a couple of days before my parents realized what had happened and my parents immediately expressed their concern to the principal about my situation. I now understand it was simply discrimination and prejudices because I had already proven myself intellectually. When I graduated high school, I graduated at the top of my class and received many scholarships. Like many DREAMers, my parents could not assist me in selecting a university, completing the paperwork and searching for scholarships and other opportunities. Key relationships with teachers who had access to resources and information necessary to move from high school to college made that dream a reality for me. I attended college in a small west Texas town thanks to my wonderful Spanish teacher, Mrs. Stapleton who believed in me and guided me into higher education. She assisted me through the application and scholarship processes in addition to providing me with a list of people to contact once I arrived there.

Everyone is entitled to an opportunity and unlimited opportunities for happiness and accomplishments await everyone regardless of gender or race. My parents and one of my brothers were given an opportunity thanks to the Immigration and Reform Control Act of 1986. IRCA legalized my family and allowed us the privilege to remain together, a privilege that many families today do not have and are being broken due to the

immigration system. Also, my brother who was born in Mexico is hours away from a Bachelor's Degree that he has no desire to finish. Had IRCA not passed, he would fit the criteria to be a DREAMer. Nonetheless, he has a clean record and is a contributing member to society. My family members are not criminals, rather hardworking, tax paying residents that are also great members and contributors to society. As the daughter of immigrants, I am aware of the sacrifices and contributions that immigrants make.

As an educator, I strive to develop leaders that are critical thinkers. In my work with young people, I encountered many students with dreams of becoming doctors, teachers, lawyers, dentists, and every other kind of profession conceivable. Some, like my brothers, just want the opportunity for a better life. The high school dropout rate is already atrocious, why decompose even more? I have seen dreams shattered, deferred, and abandoned. I can vividly recall the day of the passage of SB 1070. I was in the library with my class, but nobody was on task, they were all glued to the live broadcast of whether SB1070 would go into effect or not in the computer lab. My heart sank to the floor when the verdict hit. The library was flooded with tears of pain and helplessness. You could hear a pin drop. Some students walked out in rage and others never came back to school that year.

My family, the challenges that I have encountered, and instances like the passage of SB1070 in the library, influenced my decision to choose the DREAMers as the main focus for this dissertation study. I am interested in the perceptions that the DREAMers have to share in regards to the challenges they face as well as strategies they used to overcome them in their life journey, educational or not.

Lastly, it was during my dissertation coursework that I welcomed my daughter, Alondra into this world. One of the best predictors of whether a child will one day graduate from college is whether his or her parents are college graduates (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). I am accountable for her future, education, and *educación*. That is why it is important for me to be a good role model and excel academically. My job is to be braver than I am (Urrea, 2011 Comparative Borders Conference).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

“If you never give up, you’ll be successful.”

- Dan O’Brien

The purpose of this dissertation was to describe the experiences of five DREAMers to assess the challenges they faced in pursuing a higher education or being contributing members of society and identify what strategies have been developed as a survival mechanism. This chapter illustrates the findings of this research study. Three thirty minute interviews with each participant were utilized to acquire an in depth narrative of each DREAMer. The profiles offer a background for examining and comprehending the findings of this study.

Participants were contacted by phone. After several cancellations and multiple rescheduling issues, it was clear that time was a challenge. Three of the DREAMers’ interviews took place the same day in sequential order. Each DREAMer was asked the same open-ended questions. The interviews with the participants were approximately 90 minutes long. Three DREAMers’ interviews were held in my classroom after school hours, one interview took place at a Starbuck’s close to one DREAMer’s school, and one interview took place at the library. The pilot interview took place in my classroom as well. Once the interviews were transcribed, all audio files were permanently destroyed to protect the identity of the DREAMers. Transcripts were read countless times and coded in order to generate themes.

Stories create their own bonds, represent cohesion, shared understandings, and meanings. The cohesiveness that stories bring is part of the strength of an out-group. An

out-group creates its own stories, which circulate within the group as a kind of counter-reality (Delgado, 1989). Some of the DREAMers interviewed as well as DREAMers who were reluctant to share their story believed that they did not have a story to share or did not feel like their story was worthy. They are part of a larger out-group that needs to be heard to enrich their own reality as Delgado (1989) suggests.

American society forces individuals to label themselves by race and gender. Not surprisingly, race and gender are the categories that correlate to power. A person's race and gender correlate to the likelihood that one will have an educational opportunity, be in a particular income class, be in prison, or be the victim of a violent crime (Espinoza, 1994). Espinoza goes on to state that the choice to assimilate or be pushed into a category of "other", whether it fits or not, thus reflecting and perpetuating current power structures. This is evident in the narratives these five DREAMers shared.

DREAMer Profiles

Yarely

"You learn from everyone to be who you are now. Even if it's the bad things, you still learn."

Yarely describes herself as responsible, sensitive, and respectful. The eldest of five siblings, three sisters and one brother, she was brought to the United States from Durango, Mexico by her parents when she was five years old. She attended kindergarten in the United States, returned to Mexico where she spent four years, and returned to the United States when she was nine years old. She grew up speaking Spanish and learned English at school. Her greatest accomplishment is graduating high school. In Yarely's opinion, if you live in this country, care for this country, then you are an American. The

color of your skin, your parents, whatever language you speak, doesn't really matter. She firmly believes that we are all here in this country for something.

Lily

"I don't think about all this. I just do it! If you fall, get up! It's just a moment when you think you can't do it."

Lily comes from a big family. Both her parents are from Zacatecas but established their home in Nayarit. She is the ninth of 11 children. There would be 15 siblings, but four did not make it. Her father brought all her siblings to the United States except the last three which included her, a younger brother, and la güera – a younger sister. She was brought here at the age of 15 and a half by an older brother. Her English is not 100% accurate, but it is understandable and strives to make it better every day. She is thankful for the opportunity to live in America and speak up, even if it is broken English. She views being brought to the United States as a lesson to learn in life rather than punishment. Lilly describes herself as smiling, nice, and fun.

Jenni

"I am human and I'm going to defend myself like a human! I am undocumented, unafraid, unapologetic, and tired of having society tell me that I am nobody."

Jenni, who describes herself as resilient, passionate, and driven started school in the United States in 4th grade. She is Lily's sister, la güera. Her older brother convinced the rest of her brothers and sisters to pitch in for "el coyote" where she almost drowned in the canal while crossing to reunite with her mother and other family members. Jenni speaks, reads, and writes both English and Spanish but prefers to express herself mostly in Spanish. She often hated herself for being Mexican and would often question herself about the injustices and unfair treatment she encountered since her arrival. These

injustices have caused her pain, but more than anything, have given her “ganas” – ganas (desire) to keep going. She doesn’t call herself a DREAMer because of all the unpleasant encounters with people who call themselves DREAMers in California, where she now resides and is working on a script of a play based on her life story.

Mario

“We’re trying to make a life, a life that the books taught us.”

Mario is a second year full time student majoring in Communications. He realized when he started working with his dad in high school that he did not want to be a construction worker. His only job right now is to study, succeed, and persevere. He was brought here at the age of three from Chihuahua, Mexico. They returned to Mexico in 1998 where his dad was caught when they were coming back to the U.S. His parents had instructed him to give a false name when they were taken into custody. Due to the corrupt system in the United States, his family made it back. He is an only child who describes himself as relentless, charming, and humble. Even though he is from Mexico, he explains that it’s a strange limbo between both worlds. He feels that if his parents left Mexico for a better future, then that means there is no future for him back in Mexico.

Valeria

“Not going to college was based on a decision because now that I’m more grown, I’ve realized that if you really want something, you got to go for it.”

Valeria started school when she was six years old in kindergarten. She states that she was not asked to be brought to the United States and that everyone has different reasons for being brought to the United States. Regardless, she believes everyone should be treated the same. Valeria was brought from Durango, Mexico because she broke her

arm at the age of two playing “las carruchitas”. With tears in her eyes, she retells how in Mexico they did not want to take care of her because her parents did not have any money. Her parents tried to take her to the hospital in Mexico but because they did not have the money to pay the hospital upfront, she was denied services. She has two younger brothers and one younger sister. She describes herself as strong, brave, and caring.

Challenges Confronted by DREAMers

DREAMers confront many challenges. The chart below illustrates the challenges these five DREAMers faced. Although they vary, they all shared common struggles that included money, family, choices, legal status, and discouragement. Language was the primary challenge for the ladies followed by pregnancies as the primary challenges for not continuing their education. Some of the challenges went hand in hand for some of the participants.

In general, the findings of this study are similar to previous studies on DREAMers. We cannot forget that DREAMers are neither homogenous nor monolithic. Prior research indicated that the majority of DREAMers cannot gather enough strength to pursue their educational endeavors. Studies show that only one in five of those who graduate from high school continue to battle the daily challenges, the financial worries, and the ongoing challenges in the quest for a higher degree. The impediments are too much and the challenges too severe.

Table 1					
Challenges Faced by DREAMers					
	Yarely	Lilly	Jenni	Valeria	Mario
Money/Tuition	●	●	●	●	●
Family	●	●	●	●	●
Choices	●	●	●	●	●
Legal Status	●	●	●	●	●
Discouragement	●	●	●	●	●
Language	●	●	●		
Pregnancy	●	●		●	
Fear		●			
Talkative					●
No goals	●				
Making Friends				●	
Driver's License			●		●
Discrimination	●		●		●
Anxiety			●		

Their struggles reflect the experiences of many U.S born, working class youth who are the first in their family to pursue a higher degree beyond high school. Additionally, it is important to clarify that some of the challenges overlap.

Money

Scholars all agree that poverty is a key issue for the Latino community. Nearly 40% of undocumented children live below the federal poverty level (Passel, 2005). This was the case for the five participants of this study. Money was the main concern expressed as a big contributor for not pursuing a higher education or taking more classes. Even with DACA, the cost of attending a community college or the university is still not affordable. Jenni has chosen to not return to school this semester for personal and financial reasons. Upon graduating from high school, Jenni wanted to go to Arizona State University.

I wanted to go to ASU and I told my Spanish teacher, but I also knew that I couldn't afford it. All those crazy laws had passed and people had abused the full ride scholarships that ASU had back then.

-Jenni

With \$500 in her pocket from babysitting, Jenni accepted the offer from her sister and niece who were visiting from California to go to Santa Ana. She was not informed of the laws in California and Jenni's niece thought that AB540 (GED in CA- or 3 years in HS) law would apply to her.

I registered for classes and was floored when I saw my tuition bill. I started crying. My niece reassured me that everything was going to be ok. I didn't want to go back to Arizona. What was I going to do?! It was \$4000 for four classes at a community college. All I could afford was one class. I registered for Chicano Art History and would enroll for another class later in the semester so I could be a part-time student.

-Jenni

Not being able to afford school and finish her bachelor's degree has taken a toll on her and feels that she has not been successful enough to complete a task that is "damn near" impossible. Hearing that others will finish before her is painful and makes her anxious.

I do not think is fair that I have a brain to acquire knowledge and that I am not given the opportunity due to lack of funding.

-Jenni

After finishing her associate's degree in California, she returned to Arizona and enrolled at Arizona State University. Jenni ended up taking only two classes instead of three due to financial reasons.

I dropped one because I chose my job over the class because if I didn't have the money, I wouldn't be able to pay for the next semester. I felt so bad because now I have a W on my transcripts and that feels so wrong. I feel so not worthy of anything.

-Jenni

Mario is the only one currently enrolled in school this semester. His satisfaction is evident as he talks about his tuition.

As a DREAMer, I have the satisfaction that I can actually go to school full time and not pay so much money because of my status. Between my English 101 and English 102 class, I paid at least \$2000 and this semester I'm paying \$1200 for a full time of 12 credit hours which I think is really awesome. This triple \$350/credit hour as opposed to \$75/credit hour is something that's a little vulgar and you're just trying to keep the oppressed people down and you really can't fight it. There's nothing that we could legally do back then to fight that. It was a big setback for me and a lot of other people that were in my position. Taking one class and then having to work all day was something that really didn't make sense.

-Mario

He also talks about his junior year in high school and he wanted to enroll in the ACE Program. The ACE Program pays for college classes while students are still in high school so that when they graduate, they have college hours already.

I talked to the Dean of Students at my high school. To take one of these classes, it's above \$300. It's triple the amount and it's because of a law in Arizona that requires me to pay out of state tuition. I find this very unfair because they're always complaining about crime and people not going to school, and violence but at the same time the people like us that are trying to get an education, they're shutting these doors on us that are limiting us extremely. Limited people have \$1000 to spend on class alone.

-Mario

I wanted to become a hairstylist and I started investigating to see what was needed to get that achieved, but my legal and economic situation was not good so I just let those dreams go.

-Valeria

Without papers, it was hard to get scholarships.

“School was expensive and my family couldn't help me because they all had to pay money – the expenses of my mom, us, bills, so I had to work.

-Lily

Yarely also looked for financial aid, but most of the places that she went to would tell her that she was undocumented and that she could not get loans. She ended up having multiple pregnancies that added to her financial troubles. Pregnancy attributed to the

financial struggles and played a big role in why three of the four female participants have postponed their dreams of attending the university until their children are older.

My pregnancy prevented me from continuing higher education. I graduated high school in May and I got married right away and a month later I was already pregnant. I had plans of going to school. I looked for financial aid, but most of the places that I went to would tell me I was undocumented and that I couldn't get a student loan or anything like that. So, I just decided, I'm pregnant, I'm going to wait until after the baby to go to school. Six months after I deliver, I went back to one of the schools. I went to orientation and everything, but once again, it was the money and everything and at that moment my parents saw that I really wanted to go back to school. And they all offered to pitch in, but the monthly prices were still too high. So then I had another baby. I then had my twin boys. My girl is five, my twins are four, and my baby is 18 months. After my third kid, I was just gonna work. It's hard enough to go to school alone, now with three kids and not having any financial support. I now had to support my kids as well. So I decided to focus on working and there I go again, I'm pregnant. My baby is 18 months. Then I said maybe after this pregnancy. I guess I'll just have to work for the rest of my life and not go to school.

-Yarely

Right now I have two daughters and a third one on the way. She will be due in January. My oldest is five and the second one is three years old. So right now my main focus is just to become somebody better until I make that decision of going back to school. If I knew DACA was going to be passed, I think I would've

continued with school, but I also think that if that would've happened, I also wouldn't have my daughters. They're my biggest thing right now so I wouldn't change anything.

-Valeria

I've had to reevaluate my dreams sometimes because I'm a single mom. I got pregnant, so I stop. I have no support by the dad. I have a three year old girl and an eleven month old boy.

-Lily

Family and Choices

All five DREAMers had different responsibilities and strong familial ties that had effects on their careers. Family is very important in the Latino community. Individuals have a moral responsibility to help other members of the family experiencing financial problems, unemployment, poor health conditions, and other life issues (Clutter & Zubieta, 2009).

For Mario, he was the main provider when his father's life was on the line until his health improved. With his confidence, a five page essay, three monologues in front of a panel of five judges, and an early application, he was accepted to Arizona State University. He made the choice to help out his family during this difficult situation.

I was accepted, but financial troubles came. My dad was sick and there were hospital bills to be paid. My college dreams pretty much went down the drain there. My dad didn't work for about two years. He was on the verge of getting stomach cancer and I had to help out around the house at that time. I had to get a

job and help out financially. It's just me, my mom, and my dad, but coming out of high school at 16 and your dad is sick and he can't work.

-Mario

He recalls being 16 and going around the alleys in the truck with his dad, picking up scrap metal to sell. With \$20 from the metal, he bought a video game that to this day is very special to him. The following year he got a pair of socks for his birthday.

So many kids nowadays look down on getting a pair of socks. When I began working a plumbing job, and I was getting a little bit of money, I bought my mom jewelry; I bought my dad clothes, anything I could. I had seen how tight money was and now I could help them out. It was an internal gratitude that I really had.

-Mario

Lily is currently the main provider in her home. Her brother bought a house, but because he left to the seminary, she is responsible for paying the mortgage.

Everything comes first before me. My mom lives with me. I pay for everything. I'm the provider for my mom. I'm the one responsible for her, my kids, and my older brother. He's trying to get a permit. He's not DACA. He can be a DACA, but he just started going back to school. He's in process to get a permit and get a job. Right now I'm responsible for him too.

-Lily

Yarely acknowledges that she really wants to go back to school and it's one of her goals in life. She specifically talks about her kids being a priority and with a job that takes away time, school will just have to wait.

It may not happen right now because I have my four kids and now I have to get THEM through school. Maybe in a couple more years if I can save up money or if the law changes, or anything. I save every penny I can to try go back to school, not just for me, but now for my kids as well. I do have a job right now and it's good, but it takes too much time away from my kids.

-Yarely

They all mentioned that they had obligations and a sense of responsibility to their family first before pursuing their dreams of a college education. For Jenni, there were several occasions where her sense of family obligations came first.

One Friday, his kids came over and took over the bed where my sister and I were sleeping, and nobody said anything. I needed to study for my midterms. I was forced to be in the living room. I couldn't go to the library because I knew the other kids needed me. That was probably just an excuse now that I think about it because I wanted to help my mom with the kids.

-Jenni

She has another brother who got deported whom she refers to as the black sheep of the family. He has made a lot of bad choices with his life and Jenni has been taking care of his kids since she was 13. She feels like she is always taking care of someone's kids. He is also the reason why she chose to move back to California.

He has even threatened to kill me, even. He's like that. I don't blame him because he had a difficult life growing up, but he needs to grow up and be a good dad. I've never told him this because it would be like talking to the wall.

-Jenni

Being with family members and making a bad choice also affected Jenni. She did not apply for DACA right away because of an incident with her niece her freshman year in high school.

We went to Fry's and she liked to shoplift. She just likes to shoplift and I was with her and I was afraid that this incident was going to get me disqualified. I was with her and I had to do community service and attend some classes. I don't even think she got punished for it. All the blame went to me because she wasn't even living here. I don't know if it got expunged. I went to a hearing and I didn't even understand what was going on. I don't think it got expunged. Every time I'm going to apply for something and a background check is needed, I get nervous. It's been a long time and I know better now. My counselor saw my transcript and noticed I was an honor student and questioned why I did that. I simply responded that I was with the wrong person. What do you want me to do?! I don't want to blame anybody.

-Jenni

This is just one example of many where Jenni's niece does not make good choices, yet Jenni continues to live with her because it's family and because it's all she can afford. She states that she does not have her entire freedom living with her, but she has a place to call home. Jenni's lack of self-esteem, fear, excuses, and her family are a constant challenge in the pursuit of a higher education.

Legal Status

Other challenges included a lack of legal status which created missed opportunities and not being able to drive. The girls all drive knowing that they can be

pulled over. This happened to Valeria, but she continues to drive to fulfill her everyday obligations of work and taking her children to school. Mario takes the bus everywhere but resents having to do so because it takes away valuable time from his day, every day.

I'm not a criminal and I want to further my education. On top of that, I'm being hindered by former Governor Jan Brewer because I can't get a driver's license.

-Mario

Jenni wanted to participate in an activist group, Puente more, but was afraid of driving in Arizona. She failed the exam in California the first time, but passed it the second time.

I was afraid of driving here in Arizona because of all that's happening. I wasn't going to get a car here. In January of this year, I went to CA to pick up my scholarship and I made an appointment to take my written exam for the driving. I plan to get back behind the wheel so I can drive securely with confidence. I'm getting my confidence up in the driving so I can get that license.

-Jenni

Their ability to prosper, even with a job, is obstructed due to a lack of a driver's license. Not having a driver's license makes one ponder: Why do DACAmented DREAMers continue to live in Arizona? For some, this is not economically feasible. For others, it's about staying close to family and friends and for others it would be a symbol of defeat. Arizona is their home and they are not going to let an oppressive governor force them to leave (Goldman, 2014).

Mario's legal status first became evident for him in middle school. There were field trips and the field trips starting becoming an issue with his parents.

You ask your parent: hey, can I go to this field trip? It's far, in North Scottsdale – no, no you can't go because you don't have papers and I would hear that and I'd think, what do you mean I don't have papers?! I didn't even know what that was. That's when I started seeing that difference. In middle school, me and my friends never really went out to anything. It was still very internalized not having papers. But, then you hit high school and you try to start playing sports and the team starts to travel, and there's activities and I wouldn't be able to go out with them just to grab pizza because I couldn't be out in the streets. Because if they get pulled over by the cops, I'd get questioned, and if I get in trouble with the cops, who's going to be able to come get me out of the precinct. I was really hindered from experiencing anything like that in high school.

-Mario

In school, Mario could have graduated from school a year earlier, but no one ever told him. Despite that, he graduated with 32 credits when he only needed 22 at the young age of 16 from high school.

In our graduating class, there were two people that graduated as juniors, but I was never informed of this. They also had legal status and I didn't. I don't know if that had anything to do with it or not, but if that would've happened, I could've had one year of college in my belt before my dad getting sick.

-Mario

Valeria was offered a scholarship to the University of Texas to play volleyball, but was not able to provide documentation to retain it.

The negative thing was that I wasn't able to provide the information they needed to take that scholarship. This scholarship was to the University of Texas. I had to hold back on that because of my legal situation.

-Valeria

Lack of Support and Mentoring

Research confirms that youth that are positively mentored have better school attendance, a higher possibility of going on to higher education and better attitudes toward school (Herrera, Dubois & Baldwin, 2013). The DREAMers in this study were all discouraged by someone at some point from pursuing a higher education. Mentoring for these DREAMers came in the form of advice, and encouragement/discouragement from friends, teachers, and family. From their interviews, it appears that Jenni and Mario had more mentoring and support than the other three DREAMers and that could have possibly made a difference throughout their high school years and beyond. Valeria, Yarely, and Lily's support from teachers varied throughout their elementary, middle school, and high school years. All five had friends or families that were not the best of choices to be around that hindered their progress at times. According to Patrikakou (2008), the educational support received from parents during childhood and adolescence is the single most important factor affecting academic goals and expectations. Yarely, Lily, Jenni, and Valeria did not have this strong educational support from their parents that Gandara talks about.

At times I was discouraged by my parents to pursue my career. I was always like undecided on what I really wanted to do and my dad would always tell me if I thought about not going to school or I wasn't going to make it in school to drop

out and get a job. He would tell me not to be wasting my time. He would tell me that. But I would tell him that I wanted to be in school. I would always question myself: what if I don't make it? What if I don't have good grades like my parents want me to? Should I just start working? Because I wanted it kinda like have them happy. I felt like they didn't want me to because of my status. They would tell me that I couldn't go to school because I was undocumented. They would question the fact of why even finish high school if I still can't go to school afterwards. It made me feel bad and even discouraged me and often I asked myself "why do I even want to try?" Why keep going to school? It was hard to hear that from your parents. There's a reason why they came here for a better life and for them to question why I am going to high school, assuming I'm not going to get anywhere anyways so it was hard. I just kept saying to myself, I can at least finish high school; I didn't go to school all these years just to end up in the 11th grade and drop out. At least I need to get through high school. I would tell myself, you have been in school eleven years, you just have one more year, just finish it. So, I graduated high school and still the last month my dad would ask 'Are you sure you're gonna finish?' I already went to prom, just let me just enjoy this last month I have.

-Yarely

Lily did attend school in Mexico, but only completed primaria (up until 6th grade). She feels like her parents had a closed mind thinking she would be like the other kids that were misbehaving in school. During this, her parents are separated. Her mom lives in Arizona while her dad is in Mexico.

My dad didn't allow me to go to school because his character blamed the bad kids. That was a challenge for me. I want to go, my dad didn't. My mom doesn't work, but my mom doesn't support it because she's old style. She finished like 3rd grade so she doesn't know nothing about the rest. She's having a family, get hardworking, that's it. That's what she know. She doesn't know about school, she's not pushing you, not helping you, not supporting you because she doesn't know. She love us, but she doesn't understand us.

-Lily

Other people that discouraged Lily in addition to her family included friends. They would remind her that she didn't have any papers and questioned how she was going to make it due to the cost. This left her feeling down.

Jenni has come to the realization that no matter what she does, her mom is not on her side. She feels a little grudge against her mother for always justifying her brother's actions. She feels like that prevented her from studying. She expressed this concern to her mom but her mom said Jenni was being dramatic. She explains her brother's insults as something that her family perceives as normal and nobody says anything.

I explained to my mom how I went days without eating. I didn't have a car, so my boyfriend would take me around, and other struggles that I had to see if it concerned her. Her response: "My kids are like the fingers on my hand. If you cut one off, it doesn't matter which one, it's going to hurt." I got into a big altercation with my brother. At that point, I felt like f*ck my mom. I didn't care at that point...whatever!

-Jenni

Her dad left to Mexico when she was 15 because of Arpaio. This infuriates her when family members demand that Jenni send money to her dad in Mexico. Jenni questions why she should have to support someone who abandoned her. In her mind, he should be supporting her.

He was suffering, so he said. I don't know if I'm being coldhearted, but I didn't leave. I'm here. I'm 15. He had me to take care of. I'm the 11th child. There are 15 of us, but four didn't make it. I'm the 15th, four died, so now I'm the 11th.

When I hear family members say that we should send him money, I pretend to not hear. I have bills and college tuition to pay for. That's one of the things my sister in CA would demand for me to do is send money to my dad.

-Jenni

Getting her family to attend school events was a big struggle.

I couldn't even get them to come to my high school graduation. I had to beg my brother to give me a ride. I almost didn't go because it was too far. I got there late because I couldn't get a ride. I couldn't get anybody to take me. I was expected to go home to take care of my brother's son. It didn't even really matter what I did.

-Jenni

In addition to her lack of family support in her educational journey, Jenni also struggled with the destructive opinions and comments of her Academic Decathlon teacher.

One thing my Academic Decathlon teacher would say is you don't have perfect grades, so you will never go anywhere. You also don't have papers. I don't know how you're going to do it, or where you're going to go, but you're

intelligent, but you don't have papers and Obama is not going to give you anything.

-Jenni

For Mario, his biggest challenge was his talking. He was always seen as a very social person and would often get punished.

That's the nice way of saying he talks too much and my teachers instead of really embracing this, because a lot of people are shy when it comes to talking, they would hinder me. I would get punished. They would always say I'm an accelerated student, but because I would finish my work and talk to other people, I was always the bad guy. Instead of being exalted and put in a position where I could use my talents, I was punished for it and that was probably the biggest challenge that I had. That was throughout all elementary, middle school, and high school.

-Mario

It was a self-realization where he started seeing people in his class in high school that could not articulate their feelings or their words properly and he could. He saw this more as an accomplishment rather than just a challenge to overcome.

That set me apart from these individuals and I saw that I had something that they didn't. To this day, I see it as a gift and that's why I'm a Communications major. I saw it as an accomplishment to finally be able to use something that held me back in high school, and be able to use it in the future with my job.

-Mario

Mario was also discouraged by an advisor from Glendale Community College.

I told him I wanted to be an acting major and he told me that acting jobs that were available were few and far for me. He told me to stick with something that was more practical, maybe get a certificate in a trade school and he said the same thing about scholarships. You have to be an overachieving student for there to be any scholarships.

-Mario

For Valeria, her dad's point of view is that she is a girl. She was going to get married and take care of the house. Things had to get done how he wanted them to get done. She states that after she got married, she started to have a good relationship with her dad because of his strong personality.

It has to a lot with family. If your family is there for you, you're going to achieve your goals. My father did not support my goals.

-Valeria

Despite the criticism from their own families, socioeconomic status, or level of parental education, these DREAMers graduated high school.

Language

Three female participants expressed concern with their language. Their native language is Spanish. Studies show that students who have a strong base in in Spanish can more easily transition into English. Having a strong foundation in a native language is seen as an asset when acquiring a second language. If their base in Spanish is weak, then students may lack the ability to use their first language as a means of acquiring English

(Jimenez-Silva, 2002). This is evident for Lily who did not have a strong base in Spanish.

The negative factor, I wasn't speaking English and I was kinda like what they saying, what they doing, and it was like blackout. This inspired me to learn what they say, especially how to write. 100%, I don't speak English. It's like 80% of my English so, 20% of my writings inspired me to get more. Right now I'm getting more. Now I get a little bit cause I don't understand nothing. I started little by little to understand more. I started to have conversations in English. My English was not great, so it was tough getting the good grades. When I barely started the high school, I get Ds and Cs – it was bad, so I get challenged to get an A. My most problems was in English. I finish with a B so I challenge myself to get more better grades so my biggest accomplishment was graduating with a 3.0.

-Lily

Jenni felt frustrated in her classes.

I started school here in the United States in 4th grade. Everyone spoke English except me. I remember the first day of school, I got put with some Spanish-speaking girls and they would translate for me. The only thing I knew was mathematics. It's the same in both languages. I remember them putting me in ESL classes. I would have to leave class and go to these classes to get extra help.

When I got my report card, I had all Ss, for Satisfactory – I thought I was dumb because I didn't know any English. I thought I would never excel. My biggest challenge in elementary was the language. In middle school, Read 180 and high school math.

-Jenni

Yarely had Spanish speaking teachers at first that helped her get through school. In middle school, things became harder for her as she only had English speaking teachers and felt lost and uncomfortable.

Since I was barely learning English, I had Spanish speaking teachers and they helped me a lot to get through school; in middle school, it kinda got harder because I was with only English speaking teachers so I didn't feel comfortable to me, it was harder to fit into the classrooms and be a part of the class. I was in the back of the room and they would say "Read out loud". It was hard. Maybe the teacher was trying to help me to keep moving, but I felt like she was picking on me or something. I would hold it against her. I would hate like to read out loud or go in front of the class or do anything because I was used to having help from my teachers that were Spanish speaking, and they would help me and I would talk to them in Spanish and all that.

-Yarely

It is emphasized that children can learn languages faster than adults. Although the research regarding the most favorable age for learning a second language is not certain, the responses shared indicated that the younger the learners were, the superior their English was.

Strategies Utilized by DREAMers to Overcome Challenges

The previous section focused on the findings in regards to the challenges faced by DREAMers in their pursuit of a higher education. In the section, the strategies DREAMers used to overcome those challenges will be explored. Different strategies were used, but several common themes emerged from the data: (a) resilience/ “ganas” or desire to succeed, (b) mentors, (c) DACA, and (d) jobs.

Table 2					
Strategies Implemented by DREAMers					
	Yarely	Lilly	Jenni	Valeria	Mario
Resilience/”Ganas”	●	●	●	●	●
Mentors	●	●	●	●	●
DACA	●	●	●	●	●
Jobs	●	●	●	●	●
Movies/Lang		●			
Tutoring/Lang		●	●		
Friends/Lang		●	●		
Telling Story			●		
Envisioning			●		
Running away			●		
Helping others			●		
Strategizing			●		
Perspective	●				●
Marijuana					●
Closing Down	●				
Clubs			●		
Sports				●	

Resilience

All DREAMers in this study stressed the importance of not giving up. They choose to work through their fears in the face of adversity. Their “ganas” shines through when they talk about their goals and advice to other DREAMers in their situation.

Resilience is worth mentioning because at a first glance, may be viewed as needs and deficits often depicting an inaccurate and skewed picture.

Yarely's main goal is to go back to school, get an education so that she can obtain a job that she likes and that is going to provide her time to be with her children. For her, giving up was not a choice.

I didn't have any other choice, but to overcome these challenges and just go to school. I had to get it done myself. I would wake up and think it's another day and I have to get it over with. I have to do it for myself. No one else is going to do it for me. That's just how it was every day. My advice to DREAMers is to never give up. Just keep trying and don't let anyone put you down. I had the experience of my own dad questioning why I was going to finish school if I was never going to go anywhere. Do it for yourself. You have to make yourself feel proud and feel happy, before you can make anyone else proud or happy. Make sure it's really what you want to do. Don't do it for anyone else, but yourself.

-Yarely

Lily plans to finish paying off the house she currently lives in in the next three years. Upon doing so, she intends to buy herself a nice car. She stresses the importance of not looking back because all goals are attainable if you desire them strongly enough. Even though she has never been to college, one of her goals is to attend and finish with a career.

In five years, I get my career for sure. In ten years, I will be a model for my babies. I will be able to tell them - You can do it! Go to school, never give up. If you fall, get up. It's just a moment when you think you can't do it. You have to

do it. I'm going to push them. DREAMers, if you say you're gonna do something, just do it. Don't look back! Don't look back!

-Lily

Jenni has plans of finishing her Bachelor's degree, going to law school, and traveling the world.

Like everything in life...I feel that if I had known what I know now my strategies for my education would have been different. At the same time, I would have not experienced what I have so far. It's like the show de How I Met Your Mother, everything has to pass in chronological order for me to realize and discover myself. I need to finish my Bachelor's degree, go to Law School, love myself completely for who I am, and continue the momentum of being happy. In five years, I hope to either begin or end my B.A. In ten years, I hope to either begin Law School or be traveling throughout the USA and if I get the permit and life, travel to Russia, Japan, India, Mexico – like a gypsy butterfly, throughout the world. My advice to DREAMers is to always try to get the best grades possible and if you need help, seek it

-Jenni

Jenni, despite being the youngest in her family mentors her siblings along with her nieces and nephews. She is a strong support system for her family.

This whole thing has taught me is to really envision things and be creative to make things happen. I wasn't expected to graduate and I did. I wasn't expected to get accepted into Berkley and I did. I got accepted to not one, but #1 and #2 best in public education system. I did this! It's so mind-blowing that I say things

and they happen. I'm doing my best. I help out my nieces with paperwork for their college admissions process. I have started strategizing about what I'm going to do. I want to go to UCLA and have started the paperwork process. I also started strategizing for stopping people's deportations. I ask who needs to know who you are. Because I'm going to get into UCLA, no doubt. How am I going to pay for it? One of the targets that came straight out was Janet Napolitano. She's running the UC system after being Arizona's governor. She needs to know who the hell I am if I'm going to attend UCLA. That's who I'm targeting. I'm going to setup a meeting. Little by little, I'm losing fear. I'm fighting for my life. I don't want to be those people that complain that DACA was taken away and then questioned as to what I did to stop it. I want to be those people that set an example.

-Jenni

Mario has high hopes of finishing his degree and making his parents proud. There is no doubt in his mind that he will accomplish all his goals. He would be the first college graduate on both sides of his family.

My ultimate goal is to be happy. That cookie cutter American image that's been implanted is to have a family, kids, house, a nice job and to be happy with it. The one main unaccomplished goal that I'm fighting for is to buy my mom and dad a house. I want to pay them back for all the years of sacrifice, the diligence that they had for me. In five years I see myself either working for my master's degree in Communication, maybe teaching in a high school while I'm working on that.

In ten years, I see myself with a family, and again, having my Bachelor's in Mathematics, my Master's in Communications in Spain somewhere for vacation.

-Mario

His advice to other DREAMers is keep fighting and be patient for what you want. He explains that if you really want something, and work hard for it, eventually it'll come around.

If you get desperate at the first drop of the dime, you're probably not gonna get what you want. Don't even think about quitting, you're not going to get anywhere. We have to prove to these people that put us down and have preconceived notions about us that they're wrong. To be honest, these stereotypes against us, it's just ignorance and that's what knowledge is, it combats ignorance. The only way to fight ignorance is through education and that's how we really have to stick it to people.

-Mario

Valeria's positive outlook on life has helped her overcome all challenges. She stated that this has helped her in school as well as work to be promoted to a better position.

In five years, I see myself starting school, supporting my daughters. In ten years, I will have my degree. My advice to current DREAMers is to not give up and keep going as much as you can. Once you finish high school, get support from groups so that you can continue to the university.

-Valeria

All five DREAMers wish to start or finish their degree in the next five years. While a degree is not often a predicament of success, all participants want to obtain a

higher degree and feel like they have an obligation to be a positive role model for somebody in their life. For Yarely, Lily, and Valeria, it's their daughters. For Jenni, it's her nieces, nephews, and other family members. For Mario, it's about making his parents proud.

Encouragement/Support System

DREAMers believed in their ability to be strengthened by life's challenges. Regardless of their challenges, they strived to be and do their best.

So I met a lot of teachers that helped me, my parents, were there for me all the time. My teachers encouraged me. One of my Spanish teachers would and my counselor, he would encourage me to try and achieve for what I wanted. No advice for teachers, most of my teachers did a good job.

-Yarely

Typically, undocumented students attribute their strong will to achieve their educational dreams to the sacrifices their parents have made to bring them to the United States (Cortes, 2008). With tears in her eyes, Lily explains and credits her success to her priest brother. She sees him as the father she never had because he did the job her father was supposed to do.

When I got to the United States my brother pushed me to go. "You have to go, you have to study, you have to be someone. You don't wanna be like me working" he would say. Studying gives you more.

-Lily

Most of her teachers were good. They encouraged her reminding her that she was intelligent and had a great smile, but there were times when she was disappointed and mad.

Sometimes I get mad with the teacher because she give me an F, and that wasn't fair because I try my best, but they said trying my best was not good. That was not fair

-Lily

Lily also wants teachers to keep up with the good work and keep pushing students to go for it. Jenni's support system includes an array of people. In high school, her biggest supporter was the community liaison. She really helped her and encouraged her.

The bus that I used to take in the mornings was also not available that year so I had to walk to school. I would take the city bus. The community liaison helped me get hooked up with a bus card. I love her and I miss her. She was always busy, but always had time to talk. She would listen to me when I most needed it and I felt like I just couldn't do it. I didn't know what to do. She came into my life and I remember she would help me out with things you don't even think about like toothbrushes, clothes, and glasses. She always made me feel like I was somebody. I had been needing glasses since 5th grade and I've known it. There was a bus that came and tested us in elementary school and it was confirmed that I needed glasses. When I told the liaison that I needed glasses, but didn't have the money for them, she personally took me to get a pair.

-Lily

Jenni has realized that there are people who will help her out: her friend that paid for driving school, her ex-boyfriend's family who provided her a place to stay while finishing her associates, her 4th grade ESL teachers, her 5th grade teacher who stayed after school with no pay, other teachers, Santa Ana College, and presently RAIZ (a community organization that she is currently working with). She feels like they were the first people whom she felt comfortable around and did not have to hide who she was from the start.

I do not have one specific person who I can credit my success but I do have one person who I owe my being here in the U.S. and that is my brother, Manuel. If it was not for him my mother would have never gotten the treatment she needed for her illness here in the USA. If it wasn't for him who convinced the rest of my brothers and sisters to pitch in for el coyote and pull me out of the canal when I almost drowned while crossing I don't think I wouldn't have lived to tell this wonderful experience of who I am.

-Jenni

Her advice to educators educating for the paycheck is to look for another profession because it is not fair that students suffer due to their incompetence. She believes teaching is a privilege and even though it is not easy, it is rewarding when your student finally understands to defend themselves in life. Valeria also had a good experience with teachers.

I had several teachers that were really close to me to help me overcome the challenges. If I had a problem, I would talk to them. They were like my second

parents. My advice to teachers is to keep supporting DREAMers and to not judge them by a paper.

-Valeria

One person in particular encouraged Mario to persevere. His professor right now, Marcelino Quinones, who also taught him English and Theatre in high school.

He influenced me a lot because he was born in Mexico and graduated from ASU. He has a lot of passion and energy for his job and it's something that I saw that would be easily attainable for me because we have the similar personalities, similar backgrounds and the fight that we have is just immense. He influenced me a lot.

-Mario

Not all support is constructive and beneficial. Mario had a difficult time coping with his dad's recuperation, working, and not being able to attend college. He worked while his mom stayed home and took care of dad and the house. She was the nurturer. The person he worked with was also a heavy pot user enabling Mario to use drugs and work to cope with his problems.

It was very difficult to handle all this as a 16 year old. Honestly, the only way I saw an escape from all of this was in high school, I had tried marijuana a couple of times, I liked the feeling so I became a very heavy pot smoker and that's how I would cope with it. For a year while I was working, I was smoking seven times a day.

I would even have a schedule set. I would wake up and smoke at six, smoke at 11, smoke at 1, smoke at 3, smoke at 5, smoke at 10, smoke before I went to bed and all this while I was still working in construction, later on plumbing.

-Mario

He declared that the connections he made hindered his success. These connections are mostly friends whom he has known since first grade and tend to mostly look out for themselves. Because he was often labeled as the talkative, “bad” kid, Mario recommends that educators focus and embrace differences, not label students, DREAMers or not, and find a place for them to succeed.

Don’t just see a kid that’s labeled as a trouble student and label them bad. If you tell somebody that they’re a bad student... If they can see that they can accomplish something with what they can naturally do, that’s when the student is going to realize their potential to do something in the world and that they aren’t a bad person. I can make a change and do something whether it’s big or small. Educators need to open their eyes. It’s very easy to say no, no, no, no. It’s been proven psychologically that for every negative thing that you say about yourself or someone, it takes seven positive things to counteract that one negative thing. If you tell a student that they’re bad twelve times, it will take approximately 84 times for you to reinforce that for them not to believe that. If we can stop that extra work at the beginning, it’s something beautiful.

-Mario

The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that, by 2020, almost one in four college-age adults will be Latino; however, because Latino students face unique obstacles in accessing and

completing their education, they require specific, intentional support to reach their academic goals (Camacho Liu, 2011).

DACA, School, and Employment

Another strategy the participants implemented to help them achieve their goals is to obtain DACA. They have been able to gain legal employment and better job opportunities. This has boosted their self-esteem and confidence. According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigrations Services, more than 25,000 Arizonans have applied with 22,000 applications approved. The report also demonstrates that more than 1,200 DREAMers already in the program have been approved for another two years.

The deferred action was like a miracle to me. I was able to get a job and start. Just by that you already achieved something. Now I think I'm happy I graduated high school because thanks to that I have my deferred action. If I would've listened to my dad "just quit school, go to work" I probably wouldn't even have deferred action. I graduated and it's good.

-Yarely

It was Lily's manager who encouraged her to apply for DACA. She applied for DACA a year after it was announced because she was not sure it was the right for her. At the time, she had a job, she had money, and didn't know what was going to happen. Now she feels comfortable with great confidence that she can get whatever job she desires. She is not scared of not having employment and enjoys having options.

I got a lecture by my manager telling me to go for it and saying it was better than not trying. I was thinking what if I try it, and I did. In October, it'll be my first year. DREAMers are positive because we support the economy. Before DACA,

we supported the economy but after DACA, even more. Before, I wasn't paying social security and now I have social security being taken out of my check. I got a different job once I received DACA. I got less money, but I wanted the experience and it was also close to my house. I started at \$7.90 and then my manager offered me \$12/hr.

-Lily

Jenni did not apply for DACA right away due to her incident at Fry's. She feared that she might not qualify. According to a recent survey of selected DACA beneficiaries performed by the Migration Policy Institute, 60% of respondents secured a new job since receiving deferred action (Gonzalez & Bautista-Chavez 2014). This is true for Jenni. Upon receiving DACA, she then acquired jobs in the education sector which she loves. She is currently employed as a Program Leader in an elementary school and RAIZ part time as well.

RAIZ had a collective meeting; they're funded by a grant. I'm going to split a project manager position with somebody else. I am going to get paid for what I'm already working with them, but for free. Why not do something I care about and get paid for it. I'm not quitting my Program Leader position at the school, because there is room for growth without a college degree.

-Jenni

As a DACA recipient, Mario has been able to enroll and receive in-state tuition as a full time student.

I work and I work until finally the opportunity presented itself and I can take full advantage of it and here I am – Second year, finally full time student.

-Mario

Valeria currently works for a Title Loan Department. She started as a Customer Service Representative, became an assistant and now a store manager.

I applied for DACA as soon as it came out and got a better job as a result.

-Valeria

Other strategies

Lily's not only faced the challenge of returning to school in the United States, she also mentioned that her biggest challenge was her English. It was all very different and new for her. Lily explains how she learned the English language.

I get the movies that I like in Spanish and play in English. I get some English from the movies and I start to like it. The memorize of the Spanish movies over there, you try to do it in English. I was doing it backwards. I was getting some things, but is not enough. I also hung out with “cool” friends that knew English so I could learn the language faster. They helped me learn the language,

-Lily

Valeria enjoyed spending time with her family and playing volleyball kept her motivated.

She stated that although she did not have many friends, she had a good life.

Once I started high school, I played volleyball. That helped me get through high school to better my grades and just keep going to get my high school diploma.

-Valeria

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

“Higher education has the potential to remedy social inequality.”

- Michael Crow, President of Arizona State University

The plight of undocumented college students has entered into the larger immigration debate and public discourse (Dwosh & Epstein, 2006). As part of the policy discussions on the merits of DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform, we must not forget about the undocumented students who have not excelled academically due to poor schooling experiences and other social and economic hardships. They are equally deserving of legalization and the opportunity to better provide for their families and contribute to the economic and civic vitality of the United States (Perez, 2014).

The DREAMers in this study have chosen to confront their obstacles and fears and take life one day at a time. The ladies in the study all expressed fear at some point in their lives. When speaking with Jenni, talking about her life, she kept scratching her body and was getting anxious. Her body was turning red and she would constantly have trouble breathing. Holding back tears, she would slow down so as to not get more anxious. Only Mario was very confident when asked about fear and achieving his goals. The narratives shared in this research ask: How long are we going to dehumanize responsible and decent young adults? When are we going to return to our basic principles of equality and social justice (Perez, 2012)?

Interpretation of the Findings

In general, the findings of this study are congruent with previous studies on DREAMers. The narratives prove that our immigration laws are broken. Not only are

the laws inconsistent, they are also contradictory. Rather than embrace our DREAMers, the media and others dehumanize, demonize, and instill fear in the public. They are humans. Why do we continue to criminalize and punish them? The conditions under which the DREAMers have lived and operated suggest that activists need to work for social justice in addressing the problems they have suffered from. With tears in her eyes, Yarely's advice to the government is to have a heart!

The system is definitely broken. If you qualify and met certain requirements, just like DREAMers, they should just give it to us if we qualify. If you want the American Dream for you and your family, it would be good. I would not consider moving back to Mexico. I have been here most of my life. I would be lost over there. Here I already know where everything is at. I'm used to just being here. I have my four kids now. My parents brought me here for a reason. I would recommend amnesty to the broken immigration system. As for the government (advice), there's so many things. I wouldn't finish in a little time period, but just to have a heart. At the same time, it's hard to be in their place. They can't have everything happen. They have different people to make happy. What makes one group happy makes another unhappy so their job is never done. I don't know what to say to that, it's a hard spot to be in for the government.

-Yarely

Lily's message to the government was short and simple.

Give us papers! We can do better.

-Lily

Jenni suggests that before we think of solutions to the broken immigration system, we must recognize it as a problem and address. In her opinion, this is what politicians fail to do.

Recognize it in the sense that all these years of oppression to foreign countries has not gone well. Address it would then be that they sit at the table and negotiate with the most affected and not with just whomever. They are right; amnesty did not function because the problem was only fixed temporarily. That would not be a solution, but maybe that is what they failed to do so. They failed to look for a long term solution. In addition, we have to unite more. They say that there are 11 million of us, but where are they? People have to lose the fear so that they will pay attention to us. What is the worst that can happen? Si nos echan nos regresamos! I know there is people here with families, but that is why they should do it...to better the quality of life of their families, communities, states, and country. - To the Government, "F*CK YOUR BORDERS!" ¡Aquí estamos y no nos vamos y si nos echan nos regresamos! Los Estado Unidos es mi hogar!

Arizona saw me grow and California saw me evolve into the human being I am today. I am not going to apologize for being the five year old daughter of a mujer who drowned the sorrows of a cheating husband and an undiagnosed terminating illness in alcohol. I am definitely not going to apologize for being the seven year old daughter of a mujer who sought out recovery for her alcoholism and a treatment for her illness by migrating illegally to the United States. We tried to get legalized in our mother country, but our visas were denied. In the end, for the betterment of the quality of our lives this same mujer abandoned me for a year

while she sought help. I was 8 years of age in the 4th grade when I found myself in what I remember to be a dark, cold, and exhausting night walking for five of the longest hours of my life as well as swimming and almost drowning with the goal of reuniting with my mother. It was not my choice to be in this country where I am unwanted, but it is my choice how I let society make me feel. With that being said I am happy to share that in these 22 years of oppression I have come to realize that not only do migrant lives matter, but we are also humans and we have rights! If you don't respect those I will not rest until you do so.

-Jenni

When asked about the broken immigration system, Marion did not know where to start or what to say.

In 1998, when we got caught, we were with the coyote, the guy that trafficked us over here and we literally crossed 5 checkpoints. He told the border guys some code words and the border patrol agents would let us go through. People always complain about putting more force out there, but it's all corruption. It really is! I really don't know what I would say to the broken immigration system.

-Mario

Like the other four DREAMers, Valeria would not consider moving back to Mexico. Even though they were born in Mexico, they all consider themselves Americans.

They should do something fast about the broken immigration system keep your personal opinions away, look at the bigger picture and see that it's going to help you instead of hurting you.

-Valeria

The message federal, state, and local government sends, and the media echo, is that these students and their families – among the most impoverished groups who are now locked in low-paying, dead-end jobs – are a threat to U.S.-born citizens. In contrast, legal incorporation of undocumented youths and their families is a question of dignity and fundamental human rights (Perez, 2012)

It is not possible to determine whether one challenge is more difficult than the other to overcome, based on this research alone. However, we can conclude from this study that the DREAMers from this study love the United States and want a better life for themselves despite their struggles. They are not asking for a handout nor do they want a pity party to be seen as victims. They are strong, valiant individuals with the desire to succeed.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered as additional research seems to be needed in the study of DREAMers and their lived experiences.

1. This study had only one male participant. It would be interesting to repeat this study with all male or more male participants.
2. Participants in this study were all from Mexico. It would be interesting to compare and contrast the challenges and strategies of other DREAMers from other countries to studies from Mexican DREAMers.
3. The DREAMers in this study all attended public schools in Phoenix, Arizona. It would be noteworthy to explore the challenges and successful strategies by DREAMers in rural schools.

While a single study cannot provide a sound basis for providing recommendations on how to better serve DREAMers, the results of this study suggest that DREAMers need qualified people who are informed and schools need to be better prepared to inform DREAMers of their options, resources, and contacts for college. One such program that does this is DREAMzone. DREAMzone is designed to establish a support system for DREAMers at Arizona State University. One can become a DREAM ally through a four hour certification class. A program like this would be truly beneficial at the high school level as well. According to their website, DREAMzone prepares participants to effectively respond to the presence and needs of undocumented students by:

1. Challenging participants to identify and deconstruct their preconceptions of undocumented student populations
2. Increasing participants' content knowledge regarding federal, state, and institutional policies directly affecting the undocumented college student experience
3. Providing participants the opportunity to engage in dialogue with a panel of undocumented students
4. Helping participants develop competencies and skills for working with undocumented students, and serving as allies

As of lately, I don't think any school has prepared DREAMers for success. I know that it's very limited information that is out there and the limited information that is out there, you pretty much have to go through hell and heaven and back down to try to figure out all the information that you need. A lot of

unauthorized students get out of high school and they're very unprepared for the real world. They don't really know what to do.

-Mario

Racial Transformers

DREAMers are Racial Transformers and you can be one too. A Racial Transformer, created by Terry Keleher and Hatty Lee is an action figure that can be immediately utilized in the service of racial justice. It does not entail rocket science or supernatural powers. In fact, all it takes is to be simply, but fully, human (Lee & Keleher, 2012).

All five DREAMers possess a strong backbone, an open mind, an open heart, and grounded feet. They have mustered the courage to take risks, go against the grain, and have made many mistakes that they have learned from to keep moving forward. They hold onto their aspirations despite all the challenges they have encountered. Yarely advises the government to have a heart. A Racial Transformer with a loving heart respects and uplifts the dignity and humanity of every person. As a member of RAIZ, Jenni has a vocal mouth, moving legs, outstretched arms, and a smart phone that is constantly informing others about herself, race issues and actions. She speaks up and speaks out about injustices and shows her support and solidarity at public actions, marches, and rallies. Criminalizing immigrants makes it evident that Former Governor Brewer and Joe Arpaio are not Racial Transformers. They lack an open mind and grounded feet. It is evident that they don't prioritize racial equity and inclusion when they are in support of anti-immigrant laws and hinder the advancement of colored people. They are colorblind and do not envision solutions that are equitable.

Small Changes to Make a Difference

I commit to making small changes at my school the following school year that will hopefully add up to big transformations. One way of initiating change is to create and sponsor a club on campus for DREAMers. In an email shared out to all staff at my school, The National Student Clearing House report dated 12/1/2014 stated that about 45% of our SMHS graduates enroll in some type of college within the first year of graduating from high school; this number has remained about the same for the past four years. Local community colleges and ASU make up the top 5 institutions that our students enrolled in last year. The number of students who are “no longer enrolled in college and who did not graduate” obviously has a negative effect on the actual numbers of degrees attained by our students in post-secondary education. According to the data, 18 SMHS students graduated from their 2 or 4 year institution in 2013-2014. That number is up from 5 students in 2012-2013.

Assistant Principal for Student Success stated that DREAMers at this school do not feel safe in sharing their status. At other schools where she has worked at, DREAMers are unafraid to express themselves and their status and have support networks within the school. Forming the DREAMers Club will hopefully provide that safe place to seek support, look for resources, have questions answered, or just make friends who are in the same situation. It will be open to everyone with an open mind and a loving heart, not just DREAMers.

There are only three teachers that are certified with ASU’s DREAMzone to be DREAMer allies at my current school. I will try my best to encourage and motivate at least three more teachers to become certified as a DREAM ally. In addition, I can

provide small mini sessions at school for interested educators or simply share out information via email or informal lunch gatherings that can help DREAMers successfully enroll in college or a university. This will support the school's college-going efforts and will encompass the "college-going culture" that we are striving for. Many factors go into college persistence; hopefully more DREAMer allies will form and engage the topic and assist more of our students to reach the finish line.

Educators can examine their daily routine at school and reflect and adjust on how they can become a part of some positive social change. Lee & Keheler (2012) suggest to not focus on who is racist for they know that the deepest racism lies not just in the hearts and minds of individuals, but in the roles and rules of big institutions like schools. Most of us have what we need, just as we are, to become a powerful force for racial justice.

Summary

"All of this is to say that if we cannot look at ourselves as a nation, both past and present, and the way in which our "American" values often have fallen in contradiction with our actions, we will never be able to advance frames and narratives that lead to racially just and humane understanding or functioning of our social systems."

-The Center for Racial Justice Innovation

This research was an analysis of the challenges faced by DREAMers in their pursuit of a higher education or a better life and the strategies implemented to overcome these challenges. Elaborate interviews were performed and themes were developed to compare and contrast how their experiences reflected distinctions and similarities in previous studies. They have great desires to succeed and high levels of resilience. The DREAMers have reached deep inside and have taken their experiences, good or bad, as lessons learned. It is transparent that these five DREAMers' success comes from being

persistent and hardworking. They are aware that they can be whatever they choose to be and that it's up to them to achieve these goals. They display a high level of enthusiasm and strength despite all their challenges.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

Interview I

1. In detail, describe your elementary, middle school and high school experiences. Explain the positive and negative factors that have inspired your career goals.
2. What was your biggest challenge in elementary? Middle School? High School?
3. How did you overcome these challenges?
4. When did you realize your ambitions and goals? In what ways did your personal and/or family life affect your career?
5. What influence did your family have on your education?
6. Were you encouraged by anyone to pursue your dream?
7. Were you discouraged by anyone to pursue your dream?
8. As a student, what are your major/minor accomplishments?
9. Explain your most fulfilling and disappointing experiences?
10. Based on your gender, have you ever had to reevaluate your dreams?

Interview II

11. Looking back at your goals and your status of DREAMer, what kind of satisfaction have you obtained?
12. Do you feel unauthorized students are a potential economic asset instead of a drain on the economy? Why or why not?
13. How do you think stereotypes affect unauthorized students?
14. What, in your opinion, makes someone “American”?
15. Do you think schools play a role in helping unauthorized students achieve success? How?
16. In William Perez’s book on page 91 Lucia says
“I wasn’t asked to be brought here. I didn’t choose to come here. I didn’t ask for my situation. I feel like it’s punishment. I did everything I as told to do. I stayed out of trouble. I stayed out of gangs. I didn’t get pregnant at sixteen. I’m a great member of society. I know more of civic duty than most naturalized U.S – born citizens. I know more about politics than most U.S. citizens. So why am I being punished?” How does this make you feel and what would you do in Lucia’s place?
17. If I ask others to explain why they think you are successful, what would they say?
18. Was there ever fear in fulfilling your goals? Explain
19. Are there, in your opinion, events that affected your educational advancement? How?
20. How did you handle those events to overcome them?
21. What three words would you use to describe yourself

Interview III

1. Would you ever consider moving back to Mexico (or place of origin)? Why? / Why not?
2. What solutions do you recommend to the broken immigration system?
3. Explain what role your personal goals play in outlining your success?
4. Tell me about unaccomplished goals. What are their effects on your assessment of success?
5. Who do you credit your success?
6. Would you have faced any challenges differently taking into account the experience you now have?
7. What goals do you have left to accomplish?
8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years? Ten years?
9. Looking back at the connections you have made with groups and individuals, have they enhanced or hindered your success?
10. What advice do you have for other DREAMers in their educational journey? Educators? Government?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM/INFORMATION LETTER

Date:

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Dr. Margarita Jimenez-Silva in the Mary Lou Fulton College of Education at Arizona State University. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

We invite you to take part in this research study because your stories are important; each individual carries a unique story that merits hearing. This research is being done because it may shed light on the many reasons they have opted to stay in a state that has rejected them despite progress in other states for DREAMers.

Taking part is voluntary:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can leave the research at any time; it will not be held against you.

What I will ask you to do:

We expect about five people will participate in this research study and individuals will spend 1.5 hours: three-thirty minute interviews, participating in the proposed activities. The interview will include questions about how you became a DREAMer, details of your experience as a DREAMer, and where you see yourself in the future. With your permission, I would also like to audio tape the interview in order to transcribe the interviews, analyze the data, and include the findings in my dissertation. In addition, I would also like to include photographs for the presentation or publishing of my research.

Your answers will be confidential.

The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you can also change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. Once the data is transcribed, I will store the word documents to my personal computer, to which I am the only one that has access to. The audio tapes will be erased upon completion of the study and work documents will be shredded. Your responses will remain confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be known. The tapes and word documents will be kept safe for about 6 months until the dissertation has been completed. You have the right not to answer my questions and to stop the interview at any time.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study [and medical] records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the University board that reviews research [WHEN RELEVANT] (and Federal Agencies) who want to make sure the researchers are doing their jobs correctly and protecting your information and rights.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits of their participation may inform and/or inspire other Dream Act students about their challenges and successful strategies used to overcome these obstacles. Other DREAMers may also find the information useful.

Questions:

If you have any questions, concern, or complaints concerning the research study, please contact the research team at aapalaci@asu.edu or Margarita.Jimenez-Silva@asu.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may talk to them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Signature Block for Capable Adult

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Signature of participant	<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Date
<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Printed name of participant	
<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Signature of person obtaining consent	<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Date
<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Printed name of person obtaining consent	<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/>

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Signature	<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Date
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 Participant Printed Name