RESILIENCE, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, CULTURAL VALUES, PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION AND THE UNIQUE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF DACA ELIGIBLE MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS

by

JENNIFER NICOLE MERRIFIELD

(Under the Direction of Edward A. Delgado-Romero)

ABSTRACT

Mexican immigrants continue to comprise a large portion of the minority population in the United States, yet they remain underrepresented across all sociopolitical domains, including behavioral healthcare and mental health research. This study documents the experiences of Mexican-origin immigrants who are eligible for, or currently enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Qualtrics was used to collect data via online questionnaires completed by 95 adults across the country. Direct and indirect relationships between resilience, perceived ethnic discrimination, civic engagement, and cultural values were examined. An additional aim of this study was to explore the psychological needs of participants and their communities. Therefore, respondents also completed a mental health needs assessment. Initial regression analyses revealed perceived ethnic discrimination and Mexican American cultural values served as significant predictors of resilience. Perceived discrimination was not significantly correlated with resilience; thus, no predictive relationships were found. *Familismo* accounted for most of the variance in the model among cultural values in predicting resilience. Civic engagement and *familismo* were the only significant predictors of resiliency in this sample.
In addition, two significant interaction effects were found. The first revealed that religious cultural values strengthened the predictive effects of civic engagement on resilience. The second interaction showed that as levels of perceived discrimination levels increased, the relationship between *familismo* and resilience became stronger. The highest endorsed mental health concerns were Fear of Deportation, Experiencing Discrimination/Racism, Problems regarding Career Choice, and Nervousness. Results of this study lend support for therapeutic efforts that foster *familismo* values and civic engagement behaviors. In addition, DACA eligible Mexican immigrants may benefit from discussing perceived discrimination with mental health providers.

INDEX WORDS: Latino/a, Resilience, *familismo*, perceived discrimination, civic engagement, mental health functioning, undocumented, Mexican, DACA
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DEDICATION

One of my favorite authors, Francisco Jiménez, said it best:

“I put my notes aside and went over the assignment for my philosophy class. We were to write a short essay on one of the works we read in the course and relate it to our lives. I chose the "Allegory of the Cave" in Plato's Republic. I compared my childhood of growing up in a family of migrant workers with the prisoners who were in a dark cave chained to the floor and facing a blank wall. I wrote that, like the captives, my family and other migrant workers were shackled to the fields day after day, seven days a week, week after week, being paid very little and living in tents or old garages that had dirt floors, no indoor plumbing, no electricity. I described how the daily struggle to simply put food on our tables kept us from breaking the shackles, from turning our lives around. I explained that faith and hope for a better life kept us going. I identified with the prisoner who managed to escape and with his sense of obligation to return to the cave and help others break free.”

His words instantly resonated with me. To my ancestors who sacrificed so that I could have the privilege of finishing this dissertation, thank you. I can think of no better way to honor mi familia than to dedicate my work to them. Thank you for having endless amounts of faith and hope and for instilling in me a sense of obligation to help others break free.

To my mom and dad, Rita and Mike Merrifield, thank you for the love and support that has inspired me, changed me and pushed me to always follow my heart and chase my dreams. Thank you for constantly believing in me and for instilling in me a love for humanity, equality
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The nationwide, public discourse regarding immigration appears to intensify daily. Undeniably, immigration to the United States has been fundamental in the country’s formation of culture and society. The intensity of the ongoing public debate on immigration encompasses cultural, legal, political, and social aspects that serve as a catalyst for both passionate dialogue as well as for the profound exclusion of immigrants. Historically, the United States has experienced the ebb and flow of immigration from numerous countries around the world. Throughout history as trends in immigration transform, so does the rhetoric regarding United States’ citizenship. In 2013, there were nearly 41.3 million immigrants residing in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2015). In response to the ebb and flow of recent immigration trends, political controversy and public discourse ensues.

Importantly, the discourse has begun to illuminate the often hidden reality of individuals who cross the border undocumented. The Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) estimated that there were 11.4 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States as of January 2012 (Passel & Cohn, 2012; Zong & Batalova, 2015). Mass political, social and legal efforts have attempted to criminalize undocumented immigrants and have further aimed to marginalize and alienate those who cross without documentation.

Discussions regarding border crossings reached the forefront of political rhetoric in the wake of the 2016 presidential election. A recent example is the mention of Mexican immigrants by Republican candidate, Donald Trump in his presidential announcement speech:
When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best; they're not sending you… They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists (Trump, 2015).

As evident from this quote, the contemporary debate regarding immigration to the United States is animated and emotional. Immigration has sparked public discourse among citizens calling each person to define what the boundaries of United States’ identity both is as well as what it should be. This debate has resulted in the formation of radical beliefs in social identity resembling the “us-versus-them” mentality (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) of categorizing and comparing immigrants to U.S. citizens.

Resultantly, a segment of the U.S. citizen population has adopted a prejudicial belief system that demarks undocumented immigrants as outcasts and criminals. Cervantes, Minero and Brito (2015) highlight numerous examples of the anti-immigration legislation and sentiments recently seen throughout United States’ politics. The political turmoil has left millions of undocumented individuals without the legal protection of labor laws, voting rights, pathways to amnesty, and in many states, there are laws that pose barriers to receiving higher education or safe transportation (Cervantes et al. 2015; Negrón-Gonzalez, 2013; Shine & Galinsky, 2009; Storlie & Jach, 2012).

Consequently, undocumented immigrants have been systemically oppressed in the U.S. Of recent concern is the status of individuals who enter the U.S. as children without documentation. The general assumption is that many parents brought their children with them when they entered the United States without documentation; therefore, their children are raised for the majority of their life in the U.S. The questions of who is at “fault” for the “illegality” of crossing and who should carry that burden, as well as the question of where do these children
(and many now adults) belong, is of much debate. On June 15, 2012, United States’ President Barrack Obama stated the following:

These are young people who study in our schools, they play in our neighborhoods, they’re friends with our kids, they pledge allegiance to our flag. They are Americans in their heart, in their minds, in every single way but one: on paper. They were brought to this country by their parents -- sometimes even as infants -- and often have no idea that they’re undocumented until they apply for a job or a driver’s license, or a college scholarship (Obama, 2012).

President Obama made these remarks about the millions of undocumented immigrants currently residing in the United States and popularly referred to as “DREAMers.” The name is derived from the legislative proposal of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) first introduced in 2001. The DREAM Act was originally presented as a legal pathway to citizenship for undocumented individuals who unlawfully entered the country as minors (Kim, 2013).

Although the DREAM Act has been introduced in the Senate numerous times since 2001, it has failed to pass into law. Subsequently, amidst a politically feuding congress in 2012, Obama announced the authorization of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. With Obama’s executive authorization of DACA, nearly 2.1 million individuals could choose to begin the process of being provided with the only protection against deportation for undocumented immigrants (Batalova, Hooker, Capps, & Bachmeier, 2014). In a two-year follow-up report on the DACA program published by The Migration Policy Institute, it was reiterated that the DACA program is still the only significant legal protection provided for
noncitizens that were brought to the United States as children (Balderas, Delgado-Romero, & Singh, 2016; Batalova et al., 2014).

Rationale & Statement of the Problem

There is a dearth of literature surrounding individuals directly impacted by the DACA program. Admittedly, DACA is a recently developed initiative yet it offers potentially significant changes in the welfare and daily lives of millions of individuals currently residing in the United States. Therefore, the lack of research regarding the lived experiences, community needs and impact of DACA amongst those eligible is disconcerting considering the substantial effects the program may have on the lives of undocumented immigrants. Given the status of undocumented immigrants in U.S. society, researchers should attempt to address gaps in the literature.

Of the estimated 41.3 million immigrants living in the U.S. in 2013, 11.6 million originated from Mexico, nearly 28% of all United States Immigrants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Researchers estimated that of the 11.6 million immigrants from Mexico living in the U.S. between 2008-2012, 6.72 million were undocumented, which accounted for 58% of all undocumented immigrants in the U.S. (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Given the sheer number of individuals affected by immigration policy in the U.S., counseling psychology as a field should position itself on the forefront of discovering novel ways to impact the well-being of this population.

Accordingly, this study will focus on Mexican-origin, undocumented individuals who are eligible for DACA. The core values and principles of counseling psychology call for the profession to acknowledge both social justices and injustices as well as emphasize the value of cultural diversity and advocate for the equal inclusion of all members of society (Packard, 2009).
Counseling psychologists are uniquely equipped with a skillset to investigate and work to improve the lives of underserved populations.

In fact, Arredondo (1992) justified social advocacy efforts not only as a moral obligation but a core and ethical principle in the professional identities of counseling psychologists. To assist in the concerted social justice efforts of counseling psychologists, this study aims to contribute to the empirical literature of behavioral, emotional, and sociopolitical factors of individuals directly impacted by DACA. Ascribing to Latina/o values has been found to impact psychological well-being and health seeking behaviors among Latinas/os (Alamilla, Kim & Lam, 2010; Aretakis, Ceballo, Suarez & Camacho, 2015; Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Piña-Watson, Ojeda, Castellon & Dornhecker, 2013). Similarly, this study will aim to identify potential risks and/or protective factors that impact the well-being of DACA eligible Mexicans. This is a vital first step for counseling psychologists to provide culturally appropriate counseling services and advocacy efforts to this population.

Regardless of political stance or personal beliefs, the professional competencies of counseling psychology compel psychologists to be self-aware, consider the worldview of clients, and use culturally appropriate interventions in practice (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). In fact, the APA Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Practice and Organizational Change (2003) defines the basic tenets of the field of psychology; which includes the support of culturally informed policy development, the importance of culturally centered research, and the application of culturally relevant interventions and assessments in practice.

Furthermore, in 2011 APA president, Melba Vasquez appointed a task force to develop an empirically informed report regarding immigration in the U.S. The intended use of the report was to raise awareness of the psychological effects of immigration in the U.S., to provide
evidence based recommendations for therapy services of immigrants, and to call psychologists to improve research, policy, and education of immigrants (APA, 2012). Resultantly, the task force produced the 2012 APA report titled, *Crossroads: The psychology of immigration in the New Century.*

In accordance with APA guidelines, task force recommendations, and the competencies of counseling psychology, the study intends to investigate and provide information on the lived experiences of the nearly 7 million people living in the U.S. who could potentially be eligible for the DACA program or future legal changes in immigration laws. As stated in *Crossroads*, it is essential for psychologists to empirically identify ways to advocate for and provide appropriate services to immigrants (APA, 2012).

It is well documented that social injustice and oppression have both direct and indirect detrimental effects on the mental health, physical health and emotional or overall wellbeing of individuals (Speight & Vera, 2008). Perceived racism and acts of discrimination negatively impact the psychological well-being of individuals (Brondolo, Gallo, & Myers, 2009; Deaux, 2006; Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007) including Latino/as (Alamilla et al., 2010; Lopez, Morin, & Taylor, 2010). Due to the substantial negative consequences of discrimination and racism, the American Psychological Association recognizes prejudice as a serious concern (APA, 2006; APA, 2012b). Identifying the psychological challenges and barriers, such as perceived discrimination and cultural values, and understanding the vital impact and potential opportunities DACA has fostered, is important to promote the welfare of a large portion of the U.S. population.
Purpose of the Study

Although literature involving DACA eligible individuals is increasing, (Cervantes et al., 2015; Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Gonzales, Terriquez, & Ruszczyk, 2014; Hinton, 2015; Martinez, 2014; Negrón-Gonzales, 2014 & 2015; Raymond-Flesch, Siemons, Pourat, Jacobs & Brindis, 2014) there is still a substantial and immediate need for informative data regarding their specific mental health needs. For example, in a content analysis of the Journal of Latina/o Psychology, Delgado-Romero and colleagues (2017) pointed out that there were only two studies addressing DACA eligible individuals in the first four volumes of the premier journal in Latino/a psychology (Delgado-Romero, Stanley, & Oh, 2017).

The implementation of DACA in the U.S. has the potential to momentarily change the status of nearly 7 million individuals. The fluctuation from undocumented status, to documented status with the potential of reversing back to undocumented status among these individuals is a unique yet real experience. Acknowledging the vulnerability of these individuals and appropriately remaining informed on how to increase the well-being and lives of DACA eligible immigrants is the professional, moral and ethical responsibility of counseling psychologists (APA, 2003; APA, 2012a; Arredondo, 1992; Packard, 2009; Sue et al., 1992).

Many researchers detail the negative impact on the psychological and physical health outcomes of individuals belonging to a minority group and experiencing racism and discrimination (Anderson, 1998; Brondolo et al., 2009; Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999; Freire, 1968; Guthrie, 2004; Johnson et al., 1995; Sue et al., 2007). Latinas/os living in the United States often experience psychosocial stressors related to minority status, acculturation, racial discrimination and barriers related to language (Alamilla et al., 2010; Cervantes et al.,

Undocumented immigrants have a heightened susceptibility to the negative impacts of belonging to a minority subgroup since they undergo unique challenges such as limited resources and ongoing negative media and political discourse about them. Blanco-Vega, Castro-Olivo, and Merrell (2008) argued that Latino immigrant adolescents have unique mental health needs such as primary or secondary trauma counseling, acculturative stress reduction, peer pressure of substance use and sexual promiscuity not previously experienced in their home country and language barriers in educational attainment.

Another challenge adding to the complexity of acculturative stress and psychological distress of Latinas/os in the U.S. is that of Xenophobia or the irrational fear/hatred of foreigners by the mainstream culture (Deaux, 2006; Lopez, Morin & Taylor, 2010; Ruiz et al., 2013; Taylor & Lopez-Feldman, 2010). Latina/o immigrants have been described as the main target group for recent sociopolitical hate. Research suggests that Latinas/os vulnerability to psychosocial stressors are heightened when their expectations of living in the United States differ from the reality of their experiences (Negy et al., 2009).

Mexican immigrants often cross the border without documentation to provide a better future for their family members or in search of a more fruitful life. Therefore, if their lived experiences in the United States are surrounded by hostility and hatred, their expectations of a better life may go unfulfilled, making them more susceptible to psychological distress. This potential psychological risk provides support for the need to increase research addressing mental health concerns of DACA eligible individuals.
Moreover, *Crossroads* called upon psychologists to reduce the gap in mental health care disparities for immigrants living within the United States (APA, 2012a). The report outlined the need for psychologists to become more culturally appropriate researchers and mental health providers for this particular underserved population. As emphasized in *Crossroads*, culturally and linguistically appropriate treatment and assessment options are necessary to help decrease the health disparity among immigrants. This first calls for an increase in culturally responsive education and training opportunities for mental health professionals (Ruiz et al., 2013). However, before training and/or application of culturally responsive modalities and assessments is the need for a foundational understanding of specific cultural and environmental factors that may help increase the well-being of undocumented individuals. It is only through an empirical identification of protective factors that psychologists can appropriately infer culturally responsive treatment for Mexican, DACA eligible immigrants.

Despite the vulnerability of undocumented immigrants to psychological distress and environmental hardships, the *Crossroads* task force repeatedly emphasized the resilience of the immigrants residing in the United States (APA, 2012a). Existing literature supports the that Latina/o immigrants are highly resilient, which may be a protective factor in psychological health (APA, 2012a; Blanco-Vega et al., 2008; Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Llamas & Consoli, 2012; Piña-Watson et al., 2013; Wagnild & Collins, 2009). Even so, few studies to date have empirically assessed the resiliency of DACA eligible, Mexican immigrants.

The intent of this study is to investigate how resiliency affects their psychological health. Psychological research regarding Latina/o issues often aggregates all subgroups (i.e. Mexican, Puerto Rican, Guatemalan) into one heterogeneous “Latina/o” label causing an overgeneralization of experiences (Diaz McConnell & Delgado-Romero, 2004; Ruiz et al.,
2013). To identify specific characteristics and eliminate extraneous variables that may impact research findings, only Mexican origin immigrant experiences will be examined in the current study.

In addition, Chan, Ou, and Reynolds (2014) found active civic engagement was positively related to higher life satisfaction, higher educational achievement and increased civic participation among adolescent minorities. This finding provides a promising factor for increasing the psychological well-being of minorities. Lastly, Suárez-Orozco, Hernández, & Casanova (2015) found that civic engagement efforts among Latina/os was highest among individuals who were undocumented. Consequently, evidence from prior researchers suggests civic engagement to be a potential protective factor of resilience among Latina/o immigrants. Accordingly, the study will assess the impact of civic engagement among DACA eligible, Mexican immigrants.

This study will specifically investigate (a) resilience, (b) Mexican cultural values, (c) perceived discrimination, and (d) civic engagement among Mexican origin immigrants eligible for DACA, while simultaneously assessing the (e) unique mental health needs of their community. Accordingly, the study aims are two-fold: (1) Explore the characteristics of Mexican, DACA eligible immigrants to identify any moderating effects produced by resilience levels, Mexican cultural values, perceived discrimination, and civic engagement in relation to psychological well-being; (2) Identify the mental health needs Mexican, DACA eligible immigrants observe in their community.

As previously outlined, the current research project represents an important, initial attempt to advance intervention and treatment options and increase multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills of psychologists and mental health professionals working with Mexican
origin, DACA eligible individuals. This study seeks to examine these factors, which are not currently addressed in psychological literature. The tripartite model of multicultural counseling competency has provided a framework for the development of the study (APA, 2003; Constantine & Sue, 2005).

The tripartite model empowers psychologists to become aware of their cultural heritage and personal biases and beliefs while also advancing their knowledge of other cultures, understanding the knowledge of the lived experiences and historical perspectives of all individuals that psychologists provide services to, and refining skills to reflect the empirical, up-to-date and culturally sensitive treatment and assessment options for clientele and the general public (APA, 2003; Constantine & Sue, 2005). The tripartite model will be used as a framework throughout the study to help strengthen psychologists’ knowledge, skills and awareness of this particular population.

**Research Questions**

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the unique mental health needs of DACA eligible Mexican immigrants as perceived by members from the specified community?

2. What is the relationship of perceived discrimination and observed community mental health needs among DACA eligible, Mexican immigrants?

3. What is the relationship between civic engagement, Mexican American cultural values, resilience and perceived discrimination among DACA eligible, Mexican immigrants?
4. Do Mexican American cultural values moderate the relationship between perceived discrimination and resilience among a sample of DACA eligible, Mexican immigrants?

**Hypotheses**

1. The relationship between civic engagement and resilience will be moderated by Mexican American cultural values.

2. The relationship between perceived discrimination and resilience will be moderated by Mexican American cultural values.

3. The most prevalent mental health concerns will be consistent with prior research indicating heightened levels of anxiety and symptoms related to acculturative stress.

Hypothesis 1:

![Graph](image1)

*Figure 1. First Hypothesized Moderation Model*

Hypothesis 2:

![Graph](image2)

*Figure 2. Second Hypothesized Moderation Model*
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA) has been a political and social issue. The research about people effected by DACA has been broad. Previous research has focused on: the process of immigration, undocumented status, as well as the psychological toll and health disparities associated with being undocumented; DACA eligibility and requirements, Latina/o values, systemic racism and perceived discrimination, civic engagement and political activism of undocumented immigrants, the resiliency of immigrants; and the unique mental health needs, or biopsychosocial concerns of immigrants.

Although these factors have been examined in research, they do not always focus on specific subgroups of immigrants. Resultantly, previous researchers tend to utilize a more heterogeneous examination of Latina/o immigrants. This leads to an overgeneralization of results and a less specified inquiry of immigrant experiences. This review of the literature will provide an overview of how the aforementioned factors affect the daily lived experiences of Mexican-origin DACA eligible immigrants. This review will be conducted in hopes of being able to inform and educate mental health clinicians on the lived experiences of Mexican DACA individuals as well as promote the positive aspects of their identity and increase efforts in bettering the psychological well-being of this population. In addition, this literature review is intended to guide and inspire others to create or tailor culturally specific interventions for DACA eligible immigrants of Mexican origin.
This chapter begins with an overview of Mexican immigration to the U.S., as well the explanation of undocumented status. Next, barriers and the psychological toll of being undocumented and living in the United States will be discussed. An explanation of DACA, the eligibility requirements of DACA and the observed effects of the implementation of DACA will be reviewed. This chapter will conclude with a review of literature on personal variables of Mexican DACA eligible immigrants such as Latina/o values, the effects of systemic racism and perceived discrimination, political activism within this population, their resiliency as well as their unique mental health needs.

**Mexican Immigration Trends**

The 1990’s experienced a surge of undocumented immigrants, which exceeded the number of documented immigrants entering the United States (Passel, 2011). By 2007, 12.5 million Mexican immigrants were residing in the United States and 55% of them were undocumented (Passel, 2011). U.S. Census data from 2010 indicated a slightly higher number, at 12.7 million individuals who identified as Mexican immigrants. Notably, rates of undocumented immigration have decreased in recent years for most countries but Mexican undocumented entry has remained steady. Nearly 60% of undocumented immigrants entering the U.S. are from Mexico, accounting for 6.7 million individuals (Massey, 2010; Passel, 2011).

A brief, historical look at the evolution of the Mexico and U.S. border is appropriate. In 1846, the Mexican-American War began then quickly ended in 1848 upon the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. According to records from the United General Accounting Office, for $15 million dollars, México ceded modern day Nevada, California, Utah, as well as most of Arizona and nearly half of New Mexico to the United States (Poling & Kasdan, 2001).
A majority of modern day Texas was also included in the treaty, while the other half had previously been seized by the U.S. in 1845. In 1853, U.S. bought the remaining portions of modern day Arizona and New Mexico, not previously obtained in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Poling & Kasdan, 2001). This became known as The Gadsden Purchase and completed transformation of then México territory to the modern day Southwest United States.

The changing landscape of what constitutes the United States serves as a reminder of the imaginary boundaries and social constructs of what a border truly is. A gentle yet powerful reminder that citizenship within the United States is simply granted according to what side of an imaginary construct where one’s physical birth occurred. Likewise, the brief historical account provided highlights the often-fleeting debate of what truly constructs U.S. citizenship. Is it the place in which you are born? Or is it the place in which you grow and pledge allegiance to? If national borders can change with the signing of a treaty, is it not plausible to consider immigrants who have resided in the U.S. most of their lives to obtain equal opportunities or a pathway to “citizenship?”

The debate continues but history will always remain true, which reminds us all that only 160 years ago, six of the U.S. states were Mexican territory, two of which are among the most populated states in the U.S. For quick estimation and brief demonstration, the U.S. 2014 Census data shows these six states (California, Texas, New Mexico, Utah and Nevada) account for 23% of the total U.S. population with 73,627,031 individuals. Hence, if the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Gadsden Purchase had not occurred, nearly 23% of the U.S. population would still be considered Mexican citizens living within México’s territory.

Also appropriate to mention is the historical yet still present practice of ostracizing individuals of Mexican descent. It is not uncommon for many people within the United States to
claim that individuals of Mexican descent should “go back to their country” or “return home” yet as already outlined, their ancestral roots may very well be embedded within modern day United States territories. In fact, it was not until 1924 with the passing of the Johnson-Reed Act that immigration limitations were upheld and the U.S. Border Patrol or Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was formed (Buff, 2008). The historical facts, public discourse and general narrative has led many Mexican citizens and immigration activists to develop and utilize the slogan, “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.” In *The Deportation Terror*, an in depth account of the 1920’s-1950’s heightened xenophobia and threats to foreign born immigrants living with the United States is discussed (Buff, 2008).

Buff illustrates how The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Johnson-Reed Act led to the Mexico-U.S. border becoming policed in a military-like fashion, which has resulted in the modern day unnecessary fear of undocumented immigrants entering the United States. Advancing that fear can also be attributed to the criminalization of undocumented immigrants (Buff, 2008). Complicating the overt xenophobia of Mexican immigrants is the current amount of media attention, public discourse and political rhetoric regarding immigration reform. This is again displayed by Donald Trump (2015) in his immigration plan titled, “Immigration reform that will make America great again” latent with overt xenophobic ideologies against one particular group of immigrants, those of Mexican descent. Without reference to empirically supported data, Trump’s plan has caught the attention of many voting U.S. citizens. Thus furthering discriminatory and oppressive beliefs about Mexican, undocumented immigrants.

Furthermore, Trump’s immigration plan (2015) outlines his radical promise to reverse the 14th Amendment enacted in 1868, which states, “all persons born or naturalized in the United States…are citizens of the United States and of the State in which they reside (U.S. Const.
amend. XIV, § 1).” His stated promise is to ratify the law in order to deport individuals of Mexican descent back to Mexico and claims that Mexico will “clean up the mess that it has made in America” referring to his belief that Mexico should be financially responsible in U.S. immigration reform and deportation efforts. Even though presidents do not have the power to veto an amendment, Trump’s promise has gained a lot of attention and political support. Further implemented by the 14th Amendment is, “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States (U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1).” Trump’s immigration plan thus threatens to do so and has fostered a similar sense of fear among Mexican immigrants, described as the deportation terror by Buff (2008).

Although it may seem that Trump’s, as well as other’s extreme proposed immigration reforms are not plausible, a look at history tells a different story. A recounted history of unconstitutional deportations of Mexican-descent individuals is provided in Balderrama & Rodriguez’s (2006) book, Decade of Betrayal. Following the recession of the 1920’s, efforts for the “repatriation” of individuals of Mexican descent occurred. This movement forced the unconstitutional deportation of 1,000,000 Mexicans living in the U.S. during the 1920’s and 1930’s.

“Repatriation” was a coercive movement by the U.S. to send Mexican immigrants and their American-born children back to México, claiming that all individuals of Mexican descent were patriots of México and in need of returning to their “home country” regardless of many being born in U.S. territory and possessing U.S. citizenship. These Mexican and Mexican-American individuals were subjected to inhumane treatment and were forced by the thousands onto crowded trains to be taken back to México. Balderrama and Rodriguez inform readers that the omission of “repatriation” in U.S. history and textbooks is of no surprise and highlights the
oblivion of U.S. citizens to the harsh and unjust treatment undergone by Mexicans and U.S. citizens less than 100 years ago. Balderrama and Rodriguez credit the “repatriation” movement to the hidden and rightfully fearful nature of the Mexican communities living in the United States.

Regardless of the fear and possible subjection of inhumane treatment, Mexican immigration continues to ensue. Trends in immigration throughout U.S. history have prompted researchers to investigate why people choose to migrate. As a result, many theories have evolved as to why individuals choose to migrate (Cornelius & Rosenblum, 2005; Massey et al., 1993; Massey et al., 1994). The overarching component of theories addressing Mexican migration encompasses costs versus benefits analysis (i.e. do the benefits of migration outweigh the costs).

However, significant differences in reasons for migration have been identified among those who migrate with documentation compared with those who choose to enter the United States as undocumented immigrants (Ryo, 2013). These reasons include both economic factors and beliefs such as: there is little danger in border crossing; obtaining a job in the United States is easier than obtaining one in Mexico; and undocumented migration is morally acceptable if the individual intends to search for opportunities to better their living and survival (Ryo, 2013).

Other reasons have been identified as motivating factors in the choice to migrate. These include evading political turmoil in host countries, escaping poverty or unfit living conditions, and improving current standard of living (Negy et al., 2009). Although many people are inclined to imagine standard of living as a monetary or economic status only, it may also include parents feeling compelled to migrate to the United States in search of better educational opportunities for their children. A recent study by the Pew Hispanic Center found that Mexican immigrants often
name job opportunities and family factors as their motivations for migrating to the United States (Gonzalez-Barrera, Lopez, Passel, & Taylor, 2012).

The Undocumented Experience

By 2009, 23.2% of all United States children were either foreign born immigrants or children of at least one immigrant parent. Passel (2011) notes that immigrant fertility rates are higher than native fertility rates and one-quarter of U.S. births were to foreign born mothers. Additionally, it is projected that one-third of all children will either be foreign born immigrants or have at least one parent who is a foreign-born immigrant. Immigrant children entering the U.S. (childhood arrivals) account for 20% of new U.S. immigrants. The median age for first generation children (born in the U.S. with at least one immigrant parent) is 12.5 years and the median age for second-generation (foreign born children brought to U.S. by parents) is 7.6 years. Additionally, the number of U.S. born children with undocumented immigrant parents has risen to 300,000-350,000 births a year accounting for 8% of all U.S. births. Due to a long history of Mexican immigrants in the United States, around 3 million U.S. born Mexican origin children have at least one undocumented parent.

Passel (2011) surveyed demographical trends of immigrant children throughout the United States. He noted that 30% of children residing within the United States identify as Hispanic, Asian, or mixed-race. However, it is projected that by 2050, 30% of United States children will be of Hispanic descent alone. Considering that 33% of children with at least one undocumented immigrant parent lives in poverty, Passel noted that the United States’ future racial and ethnic demographic change will inadvertently increase poverty levels especially amongst immigrant children (children of immigrant status as well as U.S. born children with one
or more immigrant parent). Additionally, immigrants and children of immigrants will essentially compose the vast majority of growth within the labor force over the next fifty years.

The current number of undocumented immigrants from Mexico and the projected demographical change in the United States over the next fifty years calls for further research into improving the lives of this population, as they will account for the future majority of the United States population growth. Accordingly, 40% of U.S. immigrant youth have undocumented parents who cannot vote, causing immigrant children to potentially have little political representation (Passel, 2011). Notably, 80% of immigrant children are ethnic minorities and less than a quarter of voters in 2008 identified as an ethnic minority (Passel, 2011). This number further illustrates the potential lack of political representation for immigrant children. Representation is of vital importance for the ongoing debate surrounding national immigration reform, which could critically impact the lives of immigrants.

Even though U.S. born children are eligible for educational scholarships, healthcare opportunities and government service programs, many undocumented immigrant parents are disinclined to enroll their children due to avoiding the risk of others discovering their own documentation status (Passel, 2011). The lack of resources utilized among these children who are U.S. citizens, highlights a social injustice. This produces another unnecessary and unfair struggle to children of immigrants as well as immigrant children.

Undocumented immigrants in the United States make up roughly 5.4% of the labor force often working low-skilled jobs with minimal pay (Passel & Cohn, 2012b). The Southern Poverty Law Center (2009) released a report that disclosed undocumented immigrant workers are often subjected to exploitation or abuse. Moreover, most undocumented women workers reported experiencing sexual abuse (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2009). In addition to harsh working
environments, Mexican immigrants undergo personal challenges that exacerbate their daily living. These challenges include adjusting to a new environment, leaving family and friends behind, adjusting to technology, facing language barriers and experiencing oppression and discrimination (Hardina, 2014; Hovey, 2000; Ruiz et al., 2013). Researchers have coined the term *acculturative stress* to refer to the psychological impact and stress often experienced by immigrants adjusting (acculturating) into their new host country (Berry, 1990).

The experiencing of intense lifestyle adaptations and new cultural encounters faced during migration can often result in a negative psychological impact on personal well-being. Additional factors that influence the mental health outcomes of immigrants are educational opportunities and expectations, laws and public policies, safety and neighborhood environment, and attitudes towards immigrants from others in their new local region (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). As undocumented individuals enter the United States, many of the aforementioned factors by Blanco-Vega and colleagues are compounded. As migration journeys tend to be harsher, immigrants often undergo unsafe living conditions, and experience a strong fear or paranoia of being deported (Sullivan & Rehm, 2005).

However, the fear of deportation is not unrealistic. The Obama administration has strictly increased border control and immigration enforcement resulting in the highest number of deportations among previous administrations (Barsky, 2014). In fact, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) reported 291,060 total removals during 2007 with a substantial increase of deportations in 2008 during the start of the Obama administration reported at 369,221 total removals. ICE reported the highest number of total removals at 396,906 in 2011, a significant increase from 2007.
Of further concern is the lack of resources available to undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Documentation status limits the financial earning opportunities and effects eligibility for many governmental assistant programs or health insurance coverage (Capps, Castaneda, Chaudry & Santos, 2007; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). Even when undocumented immigrants may qualify for health care, education or other benefits, many report not utilizing services in fear of being deported. Children of undocumented immigrants face substantial difficulties such as parental limited English proficiency, low educational attainment levels, and household incomes far below poverty levels (Capps et al., 2007). Hypervigilance and paranoia from fear of deportation often result in undocumented immigrants becoming easily susceptible to exploitation and abuse and are often left feeling as they cannot report their experiences or crimes to government officials (Hacker et al., 2011; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). Finch and Vega (2003) coined the term “legal status stress” to refer to the fear of deportation and the consequences that would follow being caught by authorities.

Legal status stress is not limited to undocumented individuals, but it also extends to family members of mixed-status families. The stress of potential deportation for adult immigrants (regardless of documentation), is linked with physical health problems, acculturative and psychological stress (Arbona et al., 2010; Cavazoz-Rehg, Zayas, & Spitznagel, 2007; Hacker et al., 2011). Children born within the United States to undocumented parents often worry about the possibility of their parents facing deportation (APA, 2012a; Henderson & Baily, 2013). The American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Immigration (2012) and Human Impact Partners (2013) note that increased fear, heightened anxiety, and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder are often reported by children of undocumented parents.
Furthermore, severe short-term and long-term psychological distress is observed in children who experience the sudden deportation of a family member (Capps et al., 2007). Following a parents’ arrest, children often experience symptoms of abandonment, separation anxiety, suicidal thoughts, fear and isolation (Capps et al., 2007). Long term impacts of losing a family member include the monetary toll that forces families to undergo economic hardship, financial instability possibly resulting in unstable housing or food insecurity (Capps et al., 2007).

Apart from family deportation stressors are the psychological impact of discovering one’s own undocumented status (Gonzales, 2011), discussed in depth later in this chapter. It is clear there are numerous risks and psychological stressors faced by individuals without documentation living in the United States. However, most studies utilize an adult population of undocumented immigrants from which most results of experiences regarding acculturative stress are reported. While the literature is growing, there is still a substantial need for research examining the psychological toll that undocumented immigration has on children who migrate before the age of 18.

The need for research examining the specific psychological stressors amongst adolescent undocumented immigrants is a pressing and compelling issue with the recent implementation of DACA. Identifying what barriers to academic achievement and psychological stressor that may impact educational attainment will be vital in helping qualified individuals enter higher education and succeed. Increasing Mexican immigrants’ opportunities for educational attainment will potentially increase access to higher paying jobs. This could possibly engender a new generation of immigrants equipped with higher education, resulting in marginalized individuals having the opportunity to become further informed, educated advocates for societal and systemic change. If the adage, “knowledge is power” is true, then counseling psychologists who are called
to be advocates for underserved and oppressed people within society are compelled to join hands to support and promote the educational rights of immigrants.

The Supreme Court ruling in *Plyer v. Doe* (1982) solidified the notion that all children living within the United States, regardless of documentation status, have the legal right to Kindergarten through 12th grade public education. This ruling alone has transformed the lives of millions of undocumented children and adolescents. Public schools have become the main catalyst for acculturation, cultural norm learning, social skills building and language acquisition for undocumented children (Gonzales, 2011).

However, until Obama’s implementation of DACA in 2012, there was no formal protection for undocumented children post high school graduation. Lack of documentation and no legal protection past high school resulted in undocumented youth experiencing a unique developmental dilemma. As many citizens and documented individuals develop into adulthood, accomplishing certain milestones demarks the transition from childhood into adulthood. These “coming of age” activities include learning to drive, registering to vote, applying for jobs, or submitting college applications. Due to necessary documentation of lawful presents and legal status required for these various activities, undocumented youth report experiencing a stage of limbo where growth feels stunted and the realities of being undocumented come into focus (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales, 2011).

The Educators for Fair Consideration (2012) released a report detailing an overview of undocumented students about to enroll in colleges. This highlighted characteristic of the undocumented population anticipating entry into college, which revealed that most of them arrived in the United States under the age of 5-years-old, they identify as being proficient in
English, and have attended U.S. Elementary schools and graduated from U.S. High schools (Educators for Fair Consideration, 2012).

Recently, researchers have begun to examine the methods and ages at which parents reveal to their children their documentation status (Balderas, Delgado-Romero & Singh, 2016). Many parents opt to discuss documentation status to their children once they enter or graduate high school. Resultantly, upon being told of their own undocumented status, many individuals reported feeling lied to, confused, stigmatized and angry (Gonzales, 2011).

Gonzales interviewed 150 undocumented, Mexican-origin immigrants; only 19% reported knowing of their undocumented status as children while the other 81% found out while applying for jobs, trying to obtain a driver’s license, participating in a school activity, or applying for college or financial aid. After finding out their undocumented status, many disclosed a period of abandonment and withdrawal from caregivers or friends and reported undergoing a stage of reevaluation of life which caused them to question themselves, effect their interaction with others and face the new fear of deportation (Gonzales, 2011).

Blanco-Vega et al. (2008) maintain that immigrants from Mexico tend to have poorer educational attainment than Latino immigrants from South America or the Caribbean. They believe this discrepancy is due to previous educational attainment and noted that Mexican immigrants often have little to no previous educational achievement (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). Upon starting school in the United States, recent immigrant children appear to try hard, have good physical and psychological health that slowly deteriorates after prolonged periods of poor schooling and exposure to overt and covert discrimination (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). For example, many immigrant children are overtly discriminated against and placed into “special education” classes despite intelligence and achievement levels. This is often a result of school
administration considering immigrant children to be less academically capable or able when compared to their peers (Tatto et al., 2000).

**Psychological Research & Public Policy**

Several United States laws and public policies have impacted the educational attainment of minorities, immigrants and refugees. Psychological research has been a primary influence in numerous courts establishing the right to education of all individuals in the United States. The following section will briefly review main laws and public policies impacted by psychological research while also highlighting the importance psychologists and advocates have played in their implementation.

This historical analysis of United States’ educational laws and public policy affected by psychological research will begin with a review of the 1896 case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The United States Supreme Court established the well-known doctrine of “*separate but equal*” educational opportunities for children of color. The Supreme Court’s decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* sanctioned the lawful segregation of white and colored children in public educational institutions. The main notion of the law was that separation would serve as a protective factor to students of color (Jackson, 2004).

However, the Supreme Court’s decision was not based on psychological or social scientific research (Benjamin & Crouse, 2002). In fact, the first successful psychological research cited in a Supreme Court decision was in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling (Benjamin & Crouse, 2002). Psychological research was used to overturn the 1896 “*separate but equal*” ruling in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, and marked a triumphant moment in history for psychologists as it was the first court validation of psychology as a science and established the importance of psychological research in court deliberations (Benjamin & Crouse, 2002). The
Brown v. Board ruling is one of the most influential court decisions throughout United States’ history and has shaped the influence of psychological science.

Oliver Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka reached the Supreme Court in December of 1952 and challenged the earlier court ruling on the constitutionality of segregated public schools (Benjamin & Crouse, 2002). In total, seven social science publications signed by 32 well established social scientists were used in the Brown v. Board Supreme Court case (Benjamin & Crouse, 2002). Psychological researchers cited in the Brown v. Board case stated that public educational environments for children of color were far from equal to those of white children (Benjamin & Crouse, 2002).

They noted a profound psychological toll of inferiority and a lower motivation to learn that many African American students felt in segregated schools (Benjamin & Crouse, 2002). The ruling of Brown v. Board overturned Plessy v. Ferguson and began a new era of public education in the United States, which upheld the 14th Amendment of the Constitution (Jackson, 2004). The 1954 ruling confirmed racial segregation was a violation of the 14th Amendment Equal Protection Clause, which states:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws (U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1).

More recently, the 1982 U.S. Supreme Court Case of Plyler v. Doe prohibited states from denying undocumented children a public kindergarten through twelfth grade education (Cortes,
Again, psychological grounds helped with the supreme court’s decision, stating that denying education to undocumented children would force them into a “lifetime of hardship” and cause them to be a “permanent underclass” in United States society (Educators for Fair Consideration, 2012). However, the Supreme Court ruling did not implement fractions on postsecondary educational opportunities for undocumented individuals (Cortes, 2013; Pérez, Cortés, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010).

*Plyler v. Doe* has substantial effects on the educational attainment levels of undocumented immigrant children. Approximately 65,000 to 80,000 undocumented students graduate from high schools throughout the United States each year (Passel, 2006). Over 30% of U.S. school children are first and second generation immigrant children and are the fastest growing U.S. child population (Capps, Fix, Ost, Anderson, & Passel, 2004). As previously noted, public schools have become the critical context in which immigrant children develop their identity within American society (Suárez-Orozco, C., Suárez-Orozco, M. & Todorova, 2008).

Another important public policy is the 1974 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which ensures the safety of immigrant children by preventing schools from releasing student’s records or information to governmental immigration authorities (Gonzales, 2011). Therefore, with the implementation of FERPA and *Plyler v. Doe*, immigrant children are guaranteed by law the right to K-12 public education without the threat of immigration discovering their documentation status. Due to *Plyler v. Doe*, not addressing the right of undocumented immigrants to postsecondary education, many young adults graduating from high school cannot work legally, cannot receive financial aid for postsecondary educational attainment, and still face possible deportation (Gonzales, 2011; Huerta-Macías, González, & Holman, 2000).
Several states have passed laws that affect the postsecondary educational attainment of undocumented immigrants. For example, in 2001 California’s Assembly Bill 540 was enacted, which allowed undocumented students the ability to pay in-state tuition fees for students who attended high school in California and received a high school diploma or its equivalent (Educators for Fair Consideration, 2012; Pérez et al., 2010). States with similar laws that permit the enrollment of undocumented students in their postsecondary institutions and allow them to pay in-state tuition rates include California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, and Washington (Cervantes et al., 2015; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014).

Further efforts in public policy include California’s Assembly Bill 130 and 131 known as the California Dream Act (Cervantes et al., 2015). The California Dream Act allowed AB540 students to apply for scholarships and state-based financial aid opportunities (Educators for Fair Consideration, 2012). In addition to the California Dream Act, Senate Bill 1210 was implemented in 2014, which is also referred to as the California DREAM loan program (Cervantes et al., 2015). The California DREAM loan allowed undocumented students to apply for a new loan program exclusively for undocumented students seeking higher education.

Alternatively, other states have implemented laws and policies that have hampered or even disqualified undocumented students from obtaining postsecondary education. For example, Georgia has enacted the Georgia Senate Bill 458 (SB 458) that prohibits undocumented students from attending Georgia’s top five universities by requiring students to provide proof of legal residency upon admissions (S. 458, 2012; Owens, 2012). Similar laws that inhibit the enrollment of undocumented students in higher education institutions have been enacted in
Arizona, Indiana, South Carolina and Alabama (Cervantes et al., 2015; Educators for Fair Consideration, 2012).

The California DREAM laws have inspired grassroots and advocacy efforts throughout the United States to fight for similar laws to be enacted at the federal level. However, with many states prohibiting undocumented immigrants’ rights to higher education coupled with active political opposition to federal regulations allowing those without documented citizenship to obtain postsecondary education, similar federal DREAM acts have failed to pass into law. Nevertheless, the federal version of the California DREAM act was introduced in 2001 by Republican Senator Orrin Hatch from Utah, Democratic Senator Richard Durbin from Illinois, Democratic Representative Howard Berman from California and Republican Representative Chris Cannon from Utah (The American Immigration Council, 2010).

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) would provide a pathway to legal status for undocumented high school graduates or GED recipients, granting lawful permanent resident status (LPR) if they migrated to the U.S. before their sixteenth birthday and had physically resided in the U.S. for at least five years (The American Immigration Council, 2010). The DREAM Act would grant these individuals conditional LPR status for six years allowing them to work, go to school, or join the military (The American Immigration Council, 2010). Their status would change from conditional LPR to fully lawful permanent residents after six years once the individual has completed two years of higher education or served two years in the military (The American Immigration Council, 2010). Although these students would not be permitted to be given federal grants, they would be eligible for federal work study or student loans (The American Immigration Council, 2010).
In 2010, the Migration Policy Institute issued an analysis of the potential beneficiaries of the DREAM Act (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). An estimated 2.1 million undocumented individuals living in the United States were suspected to be eligible for conditional LPR from the DREAM Act (Batalova & McHugh, 2010; The American Immigration Council, 2010). Since the introduction of the DREAM Act in 2001, it has generally maintained bipartisan support yet it has not been able to pass into law by the Senate (The American Immigration Council, 2010). On December 8, 2010, the DREAM Act was passed in the House by a vote of 216-198 (H.R. 5281, 2010) but on December 18, 2010 it reached Senate and the Motion was rejected by a margin of 5 votes falling short at 55-41 (S. 278, 2010).

**Current State of the Right to Higher Education**

House Minority Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi of California spoke out against those objecting President Obama’s Executive order issued June of 2012 stating, “Does the public know the Emancipation Proclamation was an Executive Order? People have to understand how presidents have made change in our country.” The executive order announced by Obama (2012) was the authorization of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The DACA program provides undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. before their sixteenth birthday and who have continuously resided in the U.S. since January 1, 2010 three years of protection from deportation as long as they are: in school or have graduated, have obtained a GED or an honorable discharge from armed services; have not been convicted of a felony, or a significant misdemeanor; or not convicted of three or more other misdemeanors and do not otherwise present a threat to U.S. national security or public safety (Bray, 2015).

The Migration Policy Institute released a report analyzing DACA after its implementation for two years (Batalova et al., 2014). The authors report that as of July 2014
over 587,000 individual applications for the DACA program have been approved (Batalova, et al., 2014). However, they also note that only 41% of projected eligible individuals have applied. The Migration Policy Institute estimated that 2.1 million undocumented individuals could be eligible for the DACA program and 80,000 to 90,000 undocumented youth will become eligible each year through 2015 (Batalova et al., 2014).

The American Immigration Council issued a special report addressing the two-year impact of DACA (Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014). The report featured the results of a survey which analyzed the various ways in which the DACA program had changed the lives of 2,381 individuals. Of these respondents, 21% obtained health care, 45% increased their job earnings, 49% opened their first bank account, 57% obtained a Driver’s License, and 59% obtained a new job (Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014). Despite the executive order of the DACA program implementation, DACA benefits do vary by state (Bray, 2015). For example, some states allow DACA beneficiaries to apply for driver’s licenses while others do not and in-state tuition regulations are still determined at the state level (Bray, 2015).

Although DACA has allowed for many changes for the ability of undocumented students to obtain postsecondary education, there are still many barriers that students must overcome. For instance, the implementation of DACA is dependent upon the administration’s views and many 2016 presidential candidates have vowed to rescind the deferred action policy if elected (Arco, 2014). Also, the Department of Homeland Security states assures DACA beneficiaries that their information will remain safe and not shared with immigration enforcement agencies, however future administrations may also change this safeguard within the policy and use this information for federal deportation proceedings (Arco, 2014).
In addition to political difficulties there are many personal barriers to obtaining higher education for undocumented students. As previously mentioned, numerous studies have demonstrated that immigrant children’s households face substantially significant poverty levels. Also, their parents tend to have lower English proficiency. Immigrant children frequently live in substandard housing, are often victims of trauma, live in constant fear of deportation, and undergo higher levels of psychological distress.

**Resilience**

In 2011, an APA presidential task force on immigration was commissioned by Melba Vasquez, which resulted in the APA report *Crossroads: The Psychology of Immigration in the New Century.* *Crossroads* was guided on a framework observing the resilient nature of immigrants living in the United States. Additionally, the APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration (2012a) stressed the importance of considering resilience in understanding the lived experiences of immigrants. The Task Force demonstrated the repeatedly observed phenomenon in which immigrants fare better on many measures compared to second, third and fourth generation immigrants as well as individuals in their home country (APA, 2012a). Despite the barriers to success and acculturation into U.S. society, immigrants have repeatedly overcome and adapted to life in their new country. Research addressing the resiliency of immigrants is growing. The construct of resilience has been classified in several different ways (Leipold & Greve, 2009; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Owens & Lynch, 2012; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Werner, 1995).

For this study, resilience is defined as the ability and process of an individual to adapt positively and rebound when faced with stressful life events, adversity or traumatic experiences (Luthar et al., 2000; Walsh, 2003). In addition, resiliency includes the ability to maintain hope
and optimism despite facing adversity (Polusny et al., 2011). The highlighted importance of immigrant resilience in the Crossroads report promoted research investigating resilience of immigrants has increased drastically (Buckingham & Brodsky, 2015; Casanova, 2012; Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Gray, Mendelsohn, & Omoto, 2015; Ernst Kossek & Buxbaum Burke, 2014; Llamas & Consoli, 2012; Marsiglia, Kulis, Garcia Perez, & Bermudez-Parsai, 2011; Owens & Lynch, 2012; Raffaelli, Tran, Wiley, Galarza-Heras, & Lazarevic, 2012; Raffaelli & Wiley, 2012; Rivera, 2014; Theron et al., 2011; Xu & Brabeck, 2012).

A review of the available research on Latina/o resilience by Blanco-Vega and colleagues (2008) found four prevalent factors repeatedly identified as protective sources of resiliency for Latino immigrant adolescents’ adjustment to success in the United States, which include biculturalism, family involvement, community support, and positive self-concept (Carvajal, Hanson, Romero & Coyle, 2002; Clauss-Ehlers, 2004; Fulgni, 1997; Martinez, Degarmo & Eddy, 2004).

However, the vast majority of literature addressing resilience of immigrants to date is not quantitative but has been overwhelmingly commentary (i.e. author’s experience working with immigrants), case studies, book chapters (i.e. cultural characteristics of immigrants), or studies in which resilience is measured qualitatively (Buckingham & Brodsky, 2015; Casanova, 2012; Gray et al., 2015; Jensen, 2007; Raffaelli et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2010; Xu & Brabeck, 2012; Yeh, Kim, Pituc & Atkins, 2008). Addressing the need for quantitative, empirical data on resilience among immigrants may provide more uniform information to help guide cultural characteristics and considerations for working with this population.

Qualitative research findings have provided a strong foundation of the importance of resilience as a protective factor for immigrant populations. Singh et al. (2010) found five
subthemes of resilience among South Asian immigrant women who were survivors of sexual abuse. The five subthemes of resilience include 1.) sense of hope 2.) use of silence 3.) South Asian social support 4.) Social Advocacy and 5.) intentional self-care.

These subthemes from Singh and colleagues provide rationale for examining resilience in Mexican immigrants to determine if resilience is hindered or improved when dealing with perceived discrimination and being undocumented. There are many cultural similarities that emerge between the five subthemes and Mexican cultural values. For example, participants reported how a sense of hope from someone they respect helped them cope with their abuse, thus fostering more resilience (Singh et al., 2010). This is parallel to the Mexican American cultural values of respeto and familismo.

Undocumented Mexican immigrant youth rely on mentoring relationships from bicultural individuals within the school system to foster a sense of possibility and hope towards acculturation and assimilation into their new country (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). These mentoring relationships serve as a protective factor for instilling hope in building relationships after undergoing the trauma of severed family ties from deportation or migration to the United States (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Pérez et al. (2010) found a similar sense of hope attributed to higher resilience in undocumented college students in California who said institutional agents (i.e. faculty and student affairs professionals) as well as peer influence and support instilled hope within them that they too could overcome academic barriers and succeed.

Also, the subtheme of the use of silence to foster resilience (Singh et al., 2010) was observed in undocumented youth discovering their undocumented status (Gonzales, 2011). Like the South Asian women stating they remained silent about aspects of their lives, especially surrounding sexual abuse, undocumented youth report not disclosing their documentation status
to those close to them. In addition, undocumented youth reported undergoing a process of withdrawal from family and friends to take time to understand and process the restrictions of undocumented life (Gonzales, 2011). Like the South Asian women reporting that their silence was not a positive feeling, undocumented youth reported feeling paralyzed, shocked, angry and confused (Gonzales, 2011).

Comparable to the subtheme of “South Asian Social Support” that emerged, (Singh et al., 2010) undocumented college students also reported relying on their parents for love, guidance and support as well as leaning on other Latina/o peers and campus support programs (Pérez et al., 2010). Lastly, in the same fashion that South Asian women named social advocacy efforts as a positive contributor to their resiliency (Singh et al., 2010) undocumented college students reported being involved in civic engagement as a means of being contributing members of society and utilizing civic engagement and volunteerism as a healthy alternative to political frustration thus using social advocacy to bolster resilience (Pérez et al., 2010). Singh et al.’s (2010) qualitative study provides many parallels to strategies identified by undocumented Mexican immigrants in fostering resilience, which therefore provides information about the resilience of immigrants and may give insight of how to build resiliency to combat the unique mental health needs of undocumented individuals.

Furthermore, a qualitative study by Parra-Cardona, Bullock, Imig, Villarruel and Gold (2006) revealed Mexican-origin migrant families’ resilience was strengthened by specific cultural values. Specifically, familismo (Falicov, 1998) was identified by parents stating that their family’s well-being and children’s needs were put before their own personal needs and withstanding adversity or hardships (i.e. working long hours, harsh working conditions) were considered more tolerable if their children benefited (Parra-Cardona et al., 2006). Also,
collectivismo (Falicov, 1998) exemplified through the commitment to hard work and concern for others within the community helped foster a sense of connection and lead to increased resilience of Mexican-origin migrant families (Parra-Cardona et al., 2006).

Additionally, Bender and Castro (2000) utilized a qualitative study to identify perceived resiliency factors associated with the “Mexican birth weight paradox.” The Mexican birth weight paradox is a phenomenon observed in which rates of low birth weight are lower in newborn babies born to recently immigrated Mexican woman than U.S. born Mexican American babies despite lack of prenatal care. Five protective themes against the birth weight paradox were identified by the recently migrated Mexican mothers (Bender & Castro, 2000). The five themes include access to health care, strong family relationships, expectations of a better life in the U.S., better educational opportunities for their children in the U.S., and having dreams to return home to Mexico (Bender & Castro, 2000). This study lends information on what factors recent Mexican immigrants attribute to strengthening their resilience.

Similar to the aforementioned themes that emerged in the qualitative studies by Gonzales (2011), Parra-Cardona et al. (2006), and Pérez et al. (2010), the participants in Bender and Castro’s (2000) study identified aspects of cultural values (i.e. strong family ties, educational opportunities for their children, better quality of life for family) and hope (i.e. aspiration of a better life in U.S. and Dreams of returning to Mexico) that they attribute as components that strengthen their resilience.

In a study utilizing quantitative measurements of Latina/o resilience during college adjustment, higher levels of social support were positively related to higher levels of resilience and thriving (Llamas & Consoli, 2012). Interestingly, among this aggregated group of Latina/o college students, family support was only found significant in overcoming adversity but not
significant in assisting with the transitions of college adjustment. The same authors conducted a mixed-methods approach to investigate resilience among Mexican-origin participants. Higher levels of cultural values were associated with higher levels of resilience (Consoli & Llamas, 2013). Specifically, family as a support system or familismo, endurance to work hard or aguantar, and ethnic identity and pride or orgullo, were considered significant predictors of resilience among the Mexican American college students in this study (Consoli & Llamas, 2013).

As previously noted, there is a substantial growing body of literature on resilience among immigrant populations in America. However, the research on DACA eligible Mexican immigrants is underexplored. Moreover, qualitative measures are overwhelmingly representative among resilience research and there is a considerable shortage of studies utilizing quantitative measures of resilience among Mexican immigrants. Thus, identifying the resilience levels as well as understanding other protective factors in overcoming adversity in DACA eligible Mexican immigrants is critical for helping professionals to advance the well-being and psychological adjustment of this specific population.

**Civic & Political Engagement**

Despite systemic and political attempts to placate the importance of immigrants within the societal makeup of the United States, Mexicans have utilized avenues of civic engagement to counteract the experienced negative effects of discrimination and systemic racism (Barreto & Muñoz, 2003; Getrich, 2008; Chong, 2014; Gomberg-Muñoz, 2012). Among United States citizens, factors of socioeconomic status (SES) such as occupation, household income and education level have been repeatedly found to be the most significant predictors to political participation (Verba & Nie, 1972; Wolfinger & Rosenstone, 1980).
SES factors are also significant predictors of political participation among United States Latinas/os (García, 1997). Regarding electoral participation, SES and documentation status accounted for most of the Latina/o participation (Bedolla, 2000). However, political participation of Latinas/os requires a shift in thinking about what “political participation” entails (Barreto & Muñoz, 2003). Due to the millions of undocumented Mexican immigrants living in the United States who do not have the right to vote, it is misrepresentative to limit political participation to voting behaviors (Barreto & Muñoz, 2003). For example, Mexican immigrants in Central Texas define civic engagement as being model citizens by abiding the law, following rules, working hard, and volunteering (Muñoz, 2012).

Accordingly, Barreto and Muñoz (2003) characterized political participation by attending a political meeting or rally, volunteering for an election campaign or donating money to a political cause. Recent Mexican immigrants were equally likely to participate in one of these three activities when compared to native-born (both second and third generation) Mexican Americans (Barreto & Muñoz, 2003). In fact, having an immediate family member living in Mexico was found to be a motivator of political participation (García, 1997). Barreto & Muñoz (2003) additionally found that participants with high levels of English proficiency were 13.5% more likely to engage in one of the three political activities. Interestingly, social inclusion was not related to political participation among participants (Barreto & Muñoz, 2003).

Dissimilarly, in a sample of Latina/o high school students (83% Mexican-origin), feeling separated from the majority (i.e. social isolation/exclusion) was identified as contributing to a disinterest in politics (García Bedolla, 2009). Students in this qualitative study described experiencing an “us versus them” mentality when referring to politics in the United States (García Bedolla, 2009). This outlook was also observed by Getrich (2008) in which Mexican
youth reported feeling like outsiders in politics despite being born in the United States. Garcia Bedolla (2009) found students from a high school with a lower SES average had higher levels of community engagement (i.e. volunteering, unifying community members) compared to students in a high school with a higher average SES level. Generally, Latina/o high school youth expressed feeling ineffective and pessimistic about voting and participating in politics (Garcia Bedolla, 2009).

Moreover, Getrich (2008) interviewed second-generation Mexican adolescents who participated in Immigrant Rights Protests following the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 4437 (The Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005). The participants in this study referred to individuals as “having papers” or “not having papers” and spoke out against the use of labeling individuals as “illegal” or “criminal” (Getrich, 2008). By speaking out and participating in protests, participants became passionate about defending family and friends; they expressed their comfort and felt duty to represent undocumented individuals living in the shadows of U.S. society (Getrich, 2008).

As a result, participants became knowledgeable about laws and public policies while also developing a sense of pride and self-esteem that allowed them to overcome their previous shame of having immigrant roots (Getrich, 2008). Ultimately, political and social justice activism appeared to foster resilience among this group of Mexican youths. Likewise, engaging in social justice advocacy built resilience to negative school experiences and is found to be a protective factor in educational success (Gutierrez, 2014).

**Cultural Values**

Human thoughts, attitudes and behaviors are often the result of an individual’s upheld values (Pappas & Pappas, 2015). Values help guide and shape what we believe and aid in the
developmental core of who we are as people (Knight et al., 2010). Values directly influence our moral attitudes and are observed at both the individual and cultural levels (Vauclair et al., 2015). In fact, research findings suggest that an individual’s attitude regarding moral dilemmas are mainly influenced by cultural values and collective beliefs (Vauclair & Fischer, 2011; Vauclair et al., 2015). Most importantly, values have a significant role in maintaining cohesiveness among in-group members and passing along culture (Roosa et al., 2002). Cultural values can therefore be considered a guiding principal in the worldviews and behaviors of individuals as well as an entire homogeneous community.

In 2009, Liang and colleagues reviewed seven popular academic journals amongst counseling psychologists to evaluate published articles between 1970 and 2005 that focused on Latinas/os. Only 2% of articles focused on Latinas/os and upon the review of the common themes they observed in Latina/o research, cultural values were not mentioned as a popular topic (Liang et al., 2009). Since Liang and colleagues’ research review in 2009, an abundance of articles have addressed Latina/o values, instruments have been developed to assess Latina/o values and most recently, identifying values specific to subcultures within the Latina/o community and developing assessments of subcultural values have flourished (Aretakis et al., 2015; Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Cruz et al., 2011; Castillo, Conoley & Brossart, 2004; Chavez-Korell, Benson-Flórez, Rendón & Fariás, 2014; Haack, Gerdes, & Lawton, 2014; Kim et al., 2009; Knight, Jacobson, Gonzales, Roosa & Saenz 2010; Mezzich, Ruiz & Muñoz, 1999; Ortega, Wang, Slaney, Hayes & Morales, 2014; Piña-Watson et al., 2013; Ramos-Sánchez & Atkinson, 2009; Rinderle & Montoya, 2008; Wells, Cagle & Bradley, 2006; White, Zeiders, Gonzales, Tein & Roosa 2013).
In recognition of the belief that although there are many similarities, the Latina/o immigrant community is not a fluid, homogeneous group (Alegria et al., 2007; Altarriba & Bauer, 1998), a focused review of the research specific to Mexican and Mexican American cultural values will be discussed. The main cultural values identified by researchers as Mexican Cultural Values are that of familismo (familism), respeto (repect), religiosidad (religiosity), the traditional gender roles of machismo/caballerismo (machoism/chivalric cowboy), and marianismo (virgin-like Marianism) (Castillo et al., 2004; Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Cruz et al., 2011; Knight et al., 2010; Piña-Watson et al., 2013; Ramos-Sánchez & Atkinson, 2009; Wells et al., 2006; White et al., 2013).

Familismo derives from the collectivistic viewpoint that relationships with family members (including relatives and close friends) are important, and the needs of the family take priority over an individual’s needs (Castillo & Cano, 2008; John, Resendiz & De Vargas, 1997; Triandis & Trafimow, 2001; Wells et al., 2006). Respeto refers to the belief that younger individuals should respect their elders and authority, and above all maintaining a strong deference towards parents through respectfully seeking their guidance and upholding their insight and sentiments (Knight et al., 2010). Religiosidad is the importance of having faith in a higher power and upholding spiritual beliefs (Knight et al., 2010).

Traditional gender roles are considered paramount of Mexican Cultural Values because they are influenced by the other three values: familismo, respeto and religiosidad (Castillo et al., 2010). Moreover, Mexican gender roles are characterized by women and men preserving different responsibilities and expectations (Knight et al., 2010).

Machismo refers to the man’s responsibility to lead the family while caballerismo is the chivalrous nature and responsibility for males to remain loyal to the family unit and protect
family members (Arciniega et al., 2008). *Marianismo* refers to the women’s adherence to remaining virtuous, pure, virgin-like, and sacrificing her individuality for the good of the family or to remain submissive to males (Castillo & Cano, 2007). Aspects of *marianismo* and *machismo/caballerismo* reflect the value of *respeto* when males and females partake in their respective roles (i.e. women being submissive to husband and males being the financial breadwinner) (Castillo et al., 2010). *Marianismo* and *machismo/caballerismo* often encompass the cultural value of *familismo* in addition to traditional gender role beliefs.

Even though examining Mexican specific cultural values in research is a modern trend, many important findings have emerged. For example, strong adherence to *familismo* among a Mexican American sample served as a strong predictor of resilience and overcoming adversity (Consoli & Llamas, 2013). In addition, *familismo, respeto, and religiosidad* predicted higher levels of academic engagement among Mexican adolescents (Germán et al., 2009). Similarly, the three Mexican cultural values of *familismo, respeto, and religiosidad* along with adherence to traditional Mexican gender roles predicted resiliency among Mexican American college students (Consoli & Llama, 2013).

Additionally, traditional Mexican cultural values served as a protective factor against externalizing problems for Mexican immigrant youth who endorsed higher levels of Mexican cultural orientation (Gonzales et al., 2008). Belief in traditional cultural values also increased academic engagement among Mexican immigrant youth (Gonzales et al., 2008). Also, researchers found that Mexican immigrant youth who had strong *familismo* values served as a protective factor against externalizing problems as observed by school teachers (Germán et al., 2009).
Similarly, family conflict and burden were found to be significantly related to mood disorders among Latinas/os living in the U.S. (Alegría et al., 2007). This finding highlights the importance of the traditional Mexican cultural value of *familismo*, which emphasizes the importance in fostering healthy familial ties. Hovey & Magana (2002) found family social support to be a protective factor for Latinas/os experiencing stressful events while acculturating in the U.S. Dissimilarly, Marianismo beliefs were identified to be a positive predictor of women falling victim to intimate partner violence (Moreno, 2007).
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Methods

This chapter will focus on the research methodology employed in the current study. Specifically, research design, intended sample description, power analysis, method of data collection, instrumentation and data analysis procedures will be discussed. Few researchers have examined the lived experiences of DACA eligible Mexican adults. At present, the vast majority of studies investigating similar variables among Mexican or Mexican American populations have utilized qualitative methodology. Given that few studies have previously examined resilience, perceived discrimination, civic engagement, traditional Mexican cultural values and unique mental health needs of this community, the current study was an exploratory, quantitative examination of the relationships between these variables.

An *a priori* power analysis was conducted to calculate the needed sample size for multiple regression. Results of the power analysis (danielsoper.com) for a priori sample size calculation for multiple regression revealed that between 76 and 103 participants are needed in order to obtain statistical power of 0.80, with three predictors at alpha level of .05 and to detect effect sizes consistent with previous research findings from a small ($f^2=0.11$; Consoli & Llamas, 2004) to medium effect size ($f^2=0.15$; Erdfelder, & Franz, 1996). However, Hoerger (2010) examined the effects of participant dropout among internet survey based research and noted on average, 10% of participants dropped out or did not complete the study; while an additional 2% per 100 survey items additionally drop out or do not complete the study (Hoerger, 2010).
Additionally, the current study aims to investigate a sensitive topic, which may yield higher dropout rates. Given this information, the researcher sought out to recruit on a more conservative basis and aimed for at least 117 study participants. In total, 120 participants were recruited.

The eligibility criteria for the current study was:

(a) Must be 18 years of age  
(b) Must identify as Mexican, Mexican American, Chicana/o,  
(c) Must be eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, which means:  
   • Must be of Mexican Origin and migrated to the United States before the age of 16  
   • Must have entered the United States before January 1, 2010  
   • Must have lived continuously in the United States since January 1, 2010 (excluding any brief, casual, and innocent departures from the U.S.)  
   • Must have been undocumented in the U.S. on November 20, 2014  
   • Must be either in school now, have graduated or earned a certificate of completion from an accredited 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 U.S. and  
   • Must not have been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, or three or more misdemeanors and do not otherwise present a threat to the U.S. national security or public safety (i.e. cannot be a member of a gang).

Based upon previous research examining the experiences of undocumented DACA eligible young adults, the decision was made to exclude individuals from the study who could not read or understand English at a 6th grade reading level. Previous qualitative and quantitative research indicates that when given a language option of Spanish or English, most DACA eligible individuals and/or Mexican American students choose to complete their questionnaires or interviews in English (Cervantes et al., 2015; Muñoz, 2012; Orozco & López, 2015; Piña-
Watson et al., 2013). Similarly, some researchers choose to provide only surveys in English among Mexican and Mexican American college aged samples (Castillo et al., 2004; Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Ortega et al., 2014). Given the nature of the DACA eligibility requiring high school level matriculation or GED completion or armed services, in which all three require English proficiency, the decision was made to exclude individuals without 6th grade English proficiency.

**Recruitment**

Convenience sampling was utilized throughout this study. Participants were recruited through various means. Namely, recruitment efforts began with advertising through email and online listservs such as through the National Latina/o Psychological Association (NLPA) Listserv and social media outlets (i.e., Facebook, Reddit). Participants were also recruited by contacting community agencies and churches who serve Latina/o populations. Additionally, university groups throughout the United States such as Undocumented Student Alliances, Latina/o or Chicana/o studies departments, and Undocumented Student Service Centers were contacted and asked to disseminate study information.

Public policy organizations and grassroots organizations such as Educators for Fair Consideration and American DREAMers were also contacted and asked to disseminate study information. In addition, Immigration Lawyers and past researchers examining undocumented student experiences were contacted to circulate information about the current study. Snowball sampling was used if participants or community members offered contact information for Latino/a serving organizations or individuals.

Accordingly, general information about the study, how to access the study, a study invitation, and the link to the online survey were provided to all willing parties. Compensation
was used in the study in the form of an incentive drawing. Participants had the opportunity to enter a drawing to receive one of four $50 Visa Gift cards. The research procedure was approved on March 30, 2016 by the University of Georgia’s Institutional Review Board (Study #00003220).

Data Collection

The method of data collection was via completion of an online questionnaire through the survey software, Qualtrics, provided by the University of Georgia. The measures in the study included a brief demographics survey, The Resilience Scale (RS), Traditional Subscales from the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (MACVS), The Brief Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire-Community Version (PEDQ-CV), a Revised Needs Assessment Questionnaire (NAQ-R), and an abbreviated version of the Index of Civic and Political Engagement (I-CPE). All questionnaires were available online in Qualtrics through anonymous submission and were designed to be completed in various settings where participants had access to a computer or media device (e.g. cell phone) with internet service.

The use of web based data collection for psychological research has been well documented, with noted advantages being ease of access for participants, reduced expenses, improved sample heterogeneity, and ease of data entry for analyses (Hoerger, 2010). These advantages are particularly important for the targeted sample because they are marginalized, often not wanting to disclose their undocumented status, thus making them less readily available and hard to reach. Some disadvantages to this data collection procedure are the inability to build prior rapport with the targeted population, since they may be fearful of disclosing their legal status. Also, there is no guarantee that individuals who participated in the study truly meet
inclusion and exclusion criteria. As with any self-reported data collection, there is the disadvantage of potential negative impression management or malingering.

Before beginning the questionnaires, participants affirmed inclusion criteria and the implied informed consent was collected. Electronic consent was obtained by requesting participants to select the “Accept-I have read and understood the above consent letter, and desire of my own free will to participate in this study” button, which indicated their understanding the terms of the study and their voluntary participation into the study. If the option chosen was “Decline-I do not wish to participate in this study”, participants were directed to the debriefing page. No identifying information was collected from participants.

Upon completion or early exit of the study, participants’ web browsers were directed to a debriefing letter with researcher’s contact information, PI information and they were given the option to participate in the incentives drawing. If participants chose the opportunity to enroll in the drawing, they were redirected to a separate survey via www.SurveyMonkey.com, which requested their email address. The incentive drawing was conducted on December 1, 2016 and the four winners were contacted via their listed email. Upon confirming their email, winners were electronically sent their $50 Visa gift cards. All incentive drawing email addresses will be deleted in March 2017.

There were minimal anticipated risks for participants involved in the current study, yet some of the study questions may have been viewed as personal and may have caused mild discomfort from self-disclosure of perceived sensitive information (i.e., documentation status, mental health needs of community). Upon completion of the questionnaires, a debriefing statement appeared on the screen of the web browser and resource information such as researchers’ contact information, national resources for DACA, immigration lawyers, and
support hotlines available free of charge were provided if a participant experienced distress or needed immigration information or help.

If the participant dropped out of the study at any time, the debriefing statement page with the mentioned resources appeared. The confidentiality of the participants was strictly maintained. Research participants were protected by not collecting any identifying information from the respondents. Names and contact information were not collected or identified on any part of the questionnaires. Only the researcher and faculty supervisor were granted access to collected data, which is maintained on a password protected computer, and the files will be deleted in accordance with IRB policy after 3 years.

**Instrumentation**

*Demographics:* All participants completed a self-report, brief demographics questionnaire, which assessed for participants’ gender, age range, religion, language preferences, citizenship status, DACA enrollment, zip code, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and generational status in the U.S.

*Resilience:* Levels of resilience was measured using The Resilience Scale (RS; Wagnild & Young, 1993). The RS is a theoretically grounded measure based from published resilience literature at the time of scale formation as well as based from a qualitative research study of women who underwent a major life event (Wagnild & Young, 1990). The conceptual foundation of the scale identifies five characteristics of resilience, which are perseverance, equanimity, meaningfulness, and existential aloneness (Wagnild, 2009). Wagnild and Collins (2009) define perseverance as the ability and willingness to continue despite having faced an adverse event. Equanimity is being able to maintain a sense of equilibrium and stable reactions regardless of facing adverse events (Wagnild & Collins, 2009). Meaningfulness is the ability to acknowledge
that everyone has something to live for, a purpose or a drive (Wagnild & Collins, 2009).

Existential aloneness is characterized as an individual’s ability to understand that although some experiences are shared, many must be endured alone which could potentially lead to a sense of self-confidence (Wagnild & Collins, 2009). The scale provides two subscales of Personal Competence and Acceptance of Self and Life (Wagnild & Young, 1993).

The RS is a 25-item measure utilizing a 7-point Likert Scale from 1 (disagree) to 7 (Agree). Therefore, scores range from 25-175 where a score of 145 or higher indicates moderately high to high levels of resilience. A score between 125-145 indicate a moderately low to moderate level of resilience, and a score of 120 and below indicate low levels of resilience (Wagnild & Young, 1993). The total resilience score has demonstrated consistent internal reliability scores ranging from $\alpha = .73$ to $\alpha = .91$, providing evidence of acceptable to moderately high rates of internal consistency across numerous studies (Wagnild & Collins, 2009).

Specifically, the RS has been used with a wide array of samples and has demonstrated moderately high resilience. For example, among military wives ($\alpha = .86$) (Schachman, Lee & Lederman 2004), resilience among mothers with preschool children ($\alpha = .85$) (Monteith & Ford-Gilboe, 2002), resilience of sheltered, battered women, ($\alpha = 0.94$) (Humphreys, 2003) and resilience among Mexican American college students ($\alpha = .86$) (Consoli & Llamas, 2013).

Furthermore, the RS has been used with individuals ages 16-103 years old and with various demographic populations including African Americans, Latinas/os, Native Americans, as well as individuals of Asian descent (Wagnild & Collins, 2009).

**Mexican American Cultural Values:** Participants’ cultural values was assessed using the Brief Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (MACVS; Knight et al., 2010). The MACVS is a 50-item scale used for both adolescent and adult populations (Knight et al., 2010). The full scale
provides nine subscales with six themes reflecting traditional Mexican and Mexican American cultural values while the remaining three reflect contemporary mainstream American values (Knight et al., 2010). In the current study, only traditional Mexican and Mexican American cultural values subscales were used.

These subscales include measures of Mexican traditional beliefs and behaviors such as familismo support, familismo obligations, familismo referents, respect, religion, and traditional gender roles. These factors of familismo were found as common themes among a focus group used in the formation of the MACVS (Knight et al., 2010). Familismo support refers to individuals fostering tight-knit relationships with family members and close friends (Knight et al., 2010). Familismo obligations is defined as the strong emphasis placed upon caring for other family members and providing for those close to you (Knight, et al., 2010). Familismo referents is an individual’s act of being an integral and unique part of a communal or collectivistic family, thus relying on other members in decision making and in giving respect (Knight et al., 2010).

Respect is defined as the act of considering elders’ and parents’ opinions, wishes, and demands as important and valued (Knight et al., 2010). Religion refers to spiritual acts and faith based beliefs (Knight et al., 2010). Lastly, traditional gender roles refer to the affirmation of female and male behavioral expectations often observed in Mexican culture such as males being the independent breadwinner and females maintaining the home, child rearing and directing or protecting the family in a spiritual and emotional sense (Knight et al., 2010).

The subscales were comprised of 36 self-report statements that asked respondents to rate how strongly they believed each statement based on a 5-point Likert-Type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely). The Mexican American Cultural Values scale has previously used with a variety of Mexican and/or Mexican American identifying participants. According to the
authors of the scale, the measure was administered to adolescents of Mexican descent ($\alpha=.89$) as well as with Mothers ($\alpha=.87$) and Fathers ($\alpha=.84$) of Mexican descent (Knight et al., 2010).

More recently, researchers have used the abbreviated version of the scale. As previously stated, the abbreviated version is used to assess solely traditional Mexican and Mexican American values. The abbreviated version was administered to Mexican and Mexican American self-identified college students (Consoli & Llamas, 2013). Acceptable internal consistency was established for familism support ($\alpha=.82$), familism obligation ($\alpha=.78$), familism referent ($\alpha=.78$), respect ($\alpha=.86$), religion ($\alpha=.97$) and traditional gender roles ($\alpha=.77$) (Consoli & Llamas, 2013).

**Perceived Ethnic Discrimination:** Participants’ perceived discrimination will be measured using the brief Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire-Community Version (PEDQ-CV; Brondolo et al., 2005). The PEDQ-CV was developed to assess the ethnic or racial discrimination experiences of individuals living within a community (Brondolo et al., 2005). During the development of the PEDQ-CV, roughly 48% of the initial participants in the testing sample were of immigrant status (Brondolo et al, 2005).

The PEDQ-CV consists of nine subscales that determine the amount of experienced ethnic based discrimination throughout a respondent’s lifetime as well as within the past week. The measure instructs respondents to indicate how often racial or ethnic acts of discrimination have occurred to them because of their ethnicity (Brondolo et al., 2005). However, the brief PEDQ-CV contains 16 items with the highest factor loadings from the PEDQ-CV and one additional item that assess the exposure of discriminatory acts from police officers (Brondolo et al., 2005). The brief PEDQ-CV consists of four subscales: Exclusion/rejection, Stigmatization,
Discrimination at work/school, Threat/Aggression as well as a Lifetime Exposure score (Brondolo et al., 2005).

The instructions on the brief PEDQ-CV remain the same, asking respondents to think of their race and indicate the frequency of each negative event occurring throughout their life because of their race. Responses are indicated on a 5-point Likert-Type scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Therefore, total scores range from 17 to 85, with higher scores indicating a higher lifetime exposure to negative race-related discriminatory acts. The PEDQ-CV has proven to be reliable among Latino samples (\( \alpha = .88 \); Brondolo et al., 2005). Further, Howarter and Bennett (2013) found high internal consistency (\( \alpha = .92 \)) of Lifetime exposure scores while utilizing the brief PEDQ-CV with a Hispanic American population.

**Unique Mental Health Needs:** Participants will be given a revised version of the Needs Assessment Questionnaire (Henggeler, Sallis & Cooper, 1980). The original Needs Assessment Questionnaire was developed to assess the prevalence of 24 different mental-health problems among university students and their families (Henggeler et al., 1980). The questionnaire was given to 457 undergraduate students and 30 treating mental health professionals. Adequate levels of test-retest reliability (.71) were achieved when re-administered 2 days later to 25 of the student participants.

In the current study, the 24 original items from the Needs Assessment Questionnaire (Henggeler et al., 1980) will be used to determine the unique mental health needs of DACA eligible Mexican immigrants as perceived by the participants in the study. In addition, three additional items will be added to include traumatic experience, discrimination/racism, and fear of deportation. The questionnaire instructs participants to rate the seriousness of mental-health problems among the community of DACA eligible immigrants and their families. Respondents
rated each item on a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*insignificant*) to 5 (*very serious problem*).  

*Civic Engagement:* Participants will be given the subscales from the Index of Civic and Political Engagement (Andolina et al., 2003). The creation of the index was funded by the Pew Charitable Trust for and created by the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. The measurement was created as an attempt to assess different forms of political activism and participation among individuals over the age of 15.

The developers of the index kept in mind the different avenues and types of political engagement among subgroups such as youth, immigrant populations and college populations as many individuals from these subgroups may not vote in elections due to limiting factors such as age or documentation status (Andolina et al., 2003). It was originally administered in 2002 as a national telephone survey given to 3,246 individuals residing in the United States above the age of 15. The authors note that it can be administered as a whole with all 19 items or it can also be used as separate subscales depending upon the purpose of the intended study (Andolina et al., 2003).

This study utilized a revised version of the survey, adapted into an online questionnaire format. The index measures civic engagement of three main dimensions: civic behaviors, electoral behaviors and expressions of political voice (Andolina et al., 2003) using 11 condensed questions. Electoral behaviors will not be measured, as the participants are not eligible to vote and the subscale items measure voting behaviors. All other subscales will be used.

The first items of the index measure civic activities, which include volunteer service, community problem solving and helping others. The next is electoral activities, which include voting or contributing to campaign agendas (this measure will not be used in the current study, as
many participants may not be eligible to vote.) Then, political voice is assessed, which measures
different activities that people may engage in to express their political concerns and social
activists’ viewpoints (Andolina et al., 2003). The last dimension consists of items that measure
an individual’s cognitive engagement, which assess the level of attention they pay to current
events in the media.

The authors noted that although the activities outlined in each dimension are statistically
distinct, they are also empirically found to be strongly predictive of activities within the same
dimension (Andolina et al., 2003). For example, Andolina et al. (2003) stated that individuals
who engage in one aspect of civic dimensions are more likely to engage in other aspects of civic
engagement. This measurement therefore provides information on which efforts or arenas of
political engagement certain groups are more apt to participate in.

The I-CPE was adapted into an online survey format that contains only three of the
subscales: Civic Engagement, Political Voice, and Attentiveness while eliminating the measures
of Electoral Behaviors. Creators of the I-CPE note that adapting the scale to fit the population
and the means of data collection will be expected, yet caution that differences may emerge in
measurements (Andolina et al., 2003). The I-CPE has been used among various Latina/o
populations such as youth who are south Florida immigrants (Stepick et al., 2008), as well as

However, the authors of the measurement did not publish the internal consistency of
items in their guide to using the index. Although no reported Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients were
reported, the authors of the I-CPE state in a footnote, “the indexes have relatively low inter-item
correlations and coefficient alpha is modest. Still the indexes display good construct validity,
correlating appropriately with variables such as education, political interest, and the like
(Andolina et al., 2003, p. 4).” Nonetheless, in a Child Trends report presented at the Child Trends Conference on Indicators of Positive Development in 2003, the authors of the measurement reported acceptable reliability using all 19 items for respondents 15-19 years old ($\alpha=.69$) as well as for respondents over the age of 20 ($\alpha=.76$) (Keeter et al., 2002).
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was multifaceted. First, the primary purpose was to collect community-based information regarding the mental health needs of undocumented Mexican immigrants living within the United States. Next, the study examined the relationship between civic engagement, perceived discrimination and cultural values in U.S. dwelling, undocumented Mexican individuals. This chapter will describe the data analysis utilized and the associated results. Sample demographics and participant characteristics will be presented at the beginning of the chapter. Then, descriptive statistics and variable correlations related to the research questions will be described. All data analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS v24.

Participant Demographics

In total, 120 participants were recruited in this study. However, individuals who did not complete all portions of the questionnaires or who did not meet the inclusion criteria were not included in data analyses. The total of eligible participants that submitted usable data was 97. However, two outliers were identified when cleaning the dataset, thus only 95 participants were used in the data analyses. Participants accessed the study online in the Qualtrics platform. This allowed for a diverse recruitment of participants across the United States. Each participant had the opportunity to provider their zip code for demographic purposes (see figure 3 below.)
Figure 3. Map of participants’ location by percentage.

An overwhelming majority of participants (98.7%) are currently approved for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. The remaining 1.3% have applied and are awaiting their enrollment notifications. Their ages ranged from 18-34 ($M = 24.91$ years, $SD = 4.27$ years) and 66% identified as female ($n = 63$; male $n = 32$). The length of time respondents lived in the United States ranged from 8 years to 31 years ($M = 18.85$ years, $SD = 5.55$ years). The two most endorsed religious views were Roman Catholic (47.4%) and non-religious but spiritual (22.1%). Regarding education level, all participants had obtained a GED or high school diploma.

Moreover, 74.2% of participants had obtained higher education in the form of an Associates or Technical Degree (15.5%), Some College (32%), Bachelor’s Degree (20.6%), Master’s Degree (5.2%) or Professional Degree (1%). For household income, 71.1% of
participants reported earning less than $35,000 annually. Overall, 93.7% of participants endorsed speaking Spanish fluently, and 56.7% agreed they frequently speak both English and Spanish an equal amount of time. Further, only 7.2% of participants said they speak Spanish most often and the remaining 36.1% speak English most often. In terms of sexuality, 83.2% identified as heterosexual 6.3% identified as bisexual and the remaining 10.5% of participants identified as homosexual.

**Descriptive Analysis**

Bivariate correlations for all study variables are provided before data analysis in Table 3.

**Resilience.** Resilience was measured with The Resilience Scale (RS; Wagnild & Young, 1993). Participants responded to 25 questions ($\alpha = .89$) regarding adaptation and individual perseverance on a Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Disagree) to 7 (Agree). Cronbach’s Alpha for the RS indicated robust internal consistency. The sum of item responses provided a total resilience score. Total resilience scores could range from 25-175. Using the RS authors’ preliminary cutoff scores, the range of scores from 147-175 demonstrate high levels of resilience (Wagnild & Young, 1993). The mean total score on the RS was 153.07 ($SD = 14.85$), which represented high levels of resiliency within this sample.

**Mexican American Cultural Values.** Participants completed the abbreviated version of the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (MACVS; Knight et al., 2010) used in a recent study by Consoli and Llamas (2013). The subscales that measured the traditional Mexican American Values (Religion, Traditional Gender Roles, Respect, Familism Referent, Familism Obligations and Familism Support) were used. Participants rated 36 statements that determined how strongly they agreed with traditional cultural values associated with Mexican American beliefs and traditions. Each statement was rated from (1) not at all to (5) completely ($\alpha = .91$).
The obtained range of scores was 1.41-4.5 ($M = 3.32, SD = 0.47$). Participants’ scores represented moderate beliefs in traditional Mexican and Mexican American values. Knight et al. (2010) noted that the three Familism subscales can be combined to make a composite score of familismo. Thus, the sixteen items from familism referent, familism obligation and familism support were combined to make familismo ($\alpha = .84; M = 3.72, SD = .44$). See Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations of the MACYS Subscales (N = 95)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Family Obligation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.78**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Family Referent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.82**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Familismo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Respect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.30**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Gender Roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>M</em></td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>SD</em></td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability ($\alpha$)</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p < .05.  ** *p < .01.

**Perceived Ethnic Discrimination.** Participants completed the brief PEDQ-CV which contains 17 items including one that assessed the exposure of discriminatory acts from police officers (Brondolo et al., 2005). The brief PEDQ-CV measured four types of perceived ethnic discrimination: Exclusion/Rejection, Stigmatization, Discrimination at Work/School, and Threat/Aggression. *Exclusion/Rejection* assessed how often respondents are excluded, ignored or felt isolated due to their Mexican heritage. *Stigmatization* measured the level participants’ felt they have been viewed negatively due to their ethnicity. *Threat/Aggression* assessed how often individuals have been physically/verbally threatened as well as how often they actually have been physically or verbally harmed due to their race. This subscale included questions regarding threats or acts of property damage.
Participants rated all 17 questions on a 5-point scale from 1 (never happened) to 5 (happened very often). A total score called the Lifetime Exposure score was also derived to provide an estimate of overall discrimination across all four subtypes (Brondolo et al., 2005). The Lifetime Exposure (overall perceived discrimination) scores ranged from 1.12-4.29 \((M = 2.58, SD = 0.73)\). The obtained lifetime exposure mean sample score indicated high levels of perceived ethnic discrimination experienced by the sample. Subscale score details are presented below in Table 2.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Exclusion/Rejection</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.74**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stigmatization/Devaluation</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Discrimination Work/School</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.82**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Threat/Aggression</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.72**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lifetime Exposure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(M\) 3.27 2.18 2.91 1.96 43.83

SD .95 .67 1.04 1.19 12.37

Reliability (\(\alpha\)) .75 .61 .80 .91 .88

*\(p < .05\)  **\(p < .01\)

**Political/Civic Engagement.** Participants answered a brief questionnaire derived from select items used in the Index of Civic and Political Engagement (Andolina et al., 2003). The index was modified as suggested by the authors, since the original questions were used in a telephone survey with adolescents. Participants responded to 11 questions that measured their involvement in civic behaviors often used to express political views. Examples of questions were, “Do you follow what's going on in government and public affairs?”; “Have you ever NOT bought something from a certain company because you disagree with the social or political values of the company that produces it?”; “How often do you talk about politics or government with your family and friends?” and “Are you involved in a group or organization that takes stands on or discuss public issues, or tries to influence governmental actions?
Each participant ranked their level of involvement from 0 (*Rarely/Never*) to 2 (*Most of the time/Very Often*). Scores were added together to obtain a total civic engagement score. The scale reliability was sufficient ($\alpha = .71$; $M = 12.06$, $SD = 4.04$). Total scores obtained in the current sample ranged from 3-22. Due to the scale being a modified version of the original index, no descriptors have been created. However, the authors of the subscale suggested one question may be the best indicator of civic engagement levels, which asks, “Have you ever worked together informally with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live?” Overall, 32% of the sample responded with 2 (*Very Often/Within the last 12 months*) and 37% responded (*Sometimes, but not within the last 12 months*) and the remaining 32% responded with 0 (*rarely/never*). Accordingly, approximately 68% of the sample are civically/politically active when using this test item.

Table 3
*Bivariate Correlations Between All Study Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Resilience</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.21*</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. FamSupport</td>
<td></td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.22*</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. FamOblig</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.78**</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. FamReferent</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.82**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.39**</td>
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<td>-.03</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.22*</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Familismo</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.47**</td>
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<td>-.12</td>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Religion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. TradGenderRoles</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Respeto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Exclu/Reject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>.55**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.74**</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Stigma/Devalu</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.46**</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. DiscrimWrkSahl</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.82**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.72**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
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<td>13. LifetimePD</td>
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<td>14. CivicEngagement</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.  **p < .01*
Data Analysis

To assess for outliers, Mahalanobis distances, Cook’s distance and Leverage measures were used. For a case to be considered an outlier, it had to have exceeded the cut-off points for two or more of the outlier tests. Consequently, the original two cases (of the 97 total participants) were not included in the data analysis for regression models ($N = 95$). Bivariate correlations of all study variables were analyzed to examine associations among study variables (See Tables 3 & 4). Multicollinearity was checked by examining the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values for all study variables. A VIF higher than 10 and tolerance values less than .10 were considered indicative of multicollinearity issues (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003). The assumption of multicollinearity was not violated. Once outliers were removed, preliminary analyses revealed no violations of assumptions for normality distribution, homoscedasticity or linearity.

Table 4
Bivariate Correlations of Regression Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Resilience</td>
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<td>-0.02</td>
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<td>.48**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lifetime Discrimination</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<td>3. Civic Engagement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Familismo</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>153.23</td>
<td>43.83</td>
<td>12.06</td>
<td>59.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>14.64</td>
<td>12.37</td>
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<td>Reliability ($\alpha$)</td>
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<td>.88</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.84</td>
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</table>

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

For the primary analyses, the relationships and predictive nature of the independent variables on resilience were examined. A multiple regression was conducted to determine if Mexican American Cultural Values predict resilience. To preserve the degrees of freedom to estimate the parameter’s variability, the composite familismo was used in place of the three separate subscales. The model summary results are displayed in Table 5. The overall model was
significant, \( F (4, 90) = 6.91, \ p < .001, \ R^2 = .24 \). Accordingly, the weighted combination of the predictor variables (Mexican American Cultural Values) explained 23.5\% of the variance of resilience.

Table 5

**Multiple Regression Predicting Resilience with MACVS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( b )</th>
<th>( SE )</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
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<td>.08</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
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<td>.93</td>
</tr>
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<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familismo</td>
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<td>.22</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The part and partial correlations were examined to determine what percentage of variance each predictor uniquely explained resilience. Familismo exclusively accounted for 14.75\% of the variance in resilience given the other variables in the model. Overall, familismo was the only significant predictor of resilience from all the Mexican American Cultural Values.

**Hypothesis Testing**

The first two hypotheses require the establishment of civic engagement and perceived discrimination as significant predictors of resilience. Therefore, the first hypothesis was tested by first running a regression analysis. The regression analysis revealed that the model significantly predicted resilience, \( F (1, 93) = 5.19, \ p = .03, \ R^2 = .05 \). See Table 6 below.

Table 6

**Regression Analysis Results (N = 95)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>( R )</th>
<th>( R^2 )</th>
<th>( SE )</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
<th>( t )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>14.32</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, to test the hypothesis that the relationship between civic engagement and resilience is moderated by Mexican American cultural values, an interaction term was introduced into the regression model. The results are displayed below.
Table 7
Regression Model Predicting Resilience with Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>153.23</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>111.07</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACVS</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACVS*CivicEng</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the interaction was not statistically significant, the alpha level for the interaction was $p = .10$, which is a marginal trend toward significance. This piqued curiosity to consider which specific aspects measured by the MACVS may possibly moderate the predictive value of civic engagement on resilience. As a result, hypothesis 1 was rejected. Due to the trend toward a significant model, an alternative was considered. Upon close examination and comparison of the items on the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale, Resilience Scale and the Civic Engagement scale, a plausible similarity was found among the Religion MACVS subscale, acts of civic engagement and resilience.

For example, an item on the Religion subscale posits, “If everything is taken away, one still has their faith in God.” This statement contains an undertone of recovering from adversity, or resilience. Similarly, items on the Civic Engagement scale asks, “Have you ever worked together either informally with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live?” and “Have you ever spent time participating in any community service or volunteer activities?”

These items reflect common activities that occur when one is an active member within a church. A separate question asks about prior personal involvement in a protest, walk, run or bike event for a charitable cause, which also mirrors activities frequently hosted by religious
organizations. Hence, an alternative model (see Figure 4) was tested to examine if religious values would strengthen or weaken the effect of civic engagement on resilience.

![Conceptual Diagram depicting moderation including covariates](image)

**Figure 4.** Conceptual Diagram depicting moderation including covariates.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted where religious values was tested as a moderator of the relationship between civic engagement and resilience. All other Mexican American Cultural Values were included in the model as covariates. The overall model significantly predicted resilience $F(8, 86) = 7.99, p < .001, R^2 = .30$. Next, the interaction effect of religion was tested. Of interest in moderation is the regression coefficient for the product of Religion and Civic Engagement, which was positive and statistically significant $b = .079, t(88) = 2.01, p = .047$. The interaction accounted for 3.22% of the variance in resilience. Thus, the effects of civic engagement on resilience depends on their endorsed levels of religious values. In other words, religious values strengthened the predictive effects of civic engagement on resilience $F(1, 86) = 4.05, p = .04, \Delta R^2 = .03$ (See Table 8).
As depicted in Table 8, the regression coefficient for the product of Religion and Civic Engagement is positive and statistically significant $b = .079$, $t (88) = 2.01$, $p = .047$, and accounts for about 3.22% of the variance in resilience. Thus, the effects of civic engagement on resilience depends on endorsed levels of religious values. To determine where within the moderator’s distribution is significantly related to resilience, a Simple Slope Analysis and the Johnson-Neyman Technique was employed.

![Simple slope analysis depicting moderation (Civic Engagement X Religious Values).](image.png)

Simple slopes are indicated,

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Figure 5. Simple slope analysis depicting moderation (Civic Engagement X Religious Values).
The Johnson-Neyman technique was used to better understand the conditional effects of the moderation. The points of transition identify regions of significance in the predictor’s effect. When religious values are endorsed at levels between 1.00-2.80, religious values do not affect the relationship between civic engagement and resilience. But when endorsing religious values at levels of at least 2.89, the relationship between civic engagement and resilience is significantly strengthened $t (86) =1.99, p = .05, b = .77$. Furthermore, as religious values continue to increase, the relationship between civic engagement and resilience is even stronger. At the highest religious values level (5.00), the relationship between civic engagement and resilience increases by 1.95 units on the resilience scale, $p < .01$.

The second hypothesis suggested a predictive relationship between perceived discrimination and resilience. The relationship was hypothesized to be moderated by familismo. Next, the association between familismo and perceived discrimination in predicting resilience was assessed. The Pearson correlation analysis found a weak association between lifetime exposure to perceived discrimination and resilience, which was not statistically significant. There was no relationship between perceived discrimination and resilience, therefore, a moderation could not be tested since familismo cannot strengthen or weaken a non-existent relationship. As a result, hypothesis 2 was rejected. Since familismo was predictive of resilience, a post-hoc test was conducted using an alternative moderation model (see Figure 6).

![Figure 6. Alternative Post-hoc Moderation Model Diagram.](image)
Perceived discrimination affected the strength of the relationship between familismo and resilience. Familismo was used as a predictor variable of resilience and perceived discrimination was tested for moderation effects. The overall model was significant, $F (3, 91) = 15.03, p < .001$, $R^2 = .25$. A significant interaction effect was found, $b = .37, t(91) = 2.02, p = .05$. The predictor variables accounted for 24.8% of the variance in resilience (See Table 9).

Table 9
Conditional Interaction Effects of Familismo & Perceived Discrimination Predicting Resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>lower</th>
<th>upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>153.26</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>114.73</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>150.60</td>
<td>155.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Discrimination</td>
<td>-.61</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>-.36</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>-3.97</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familismo</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction (fam X PD)</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Bold font indicates a significant interaction  *p < .05  **p < .01

The Simple Slope Analysis and Johnson-Neyman inferential tests were again used to establish a substantive interpretation of the significant interaction term. Figure 7 displays the mean estimates of significant interaction for the effect of perceived discrimination on the relationship between familismo and resilience levels.
Figure 7. Simple slope analysis depicting moderation (Familismo X Perceived Discrimination).

The Johnson-Neyman technique identified zones of significances. At perceived discrimination levels between 1.12-1.46, perceived discrimination does not affect the relationship between familismo and resilience. When perceived discrimination is endorsed at levels of at least 1.55, the relationship between familismo and resiliency is significantly strengthened, $t(91) = 1.99$, $p = .05$, $b = .56$. Furthermore, as perceived discrimination levels continue to increase, the relationship between familismo and resilience is even stronger. At the highest perceived discrimination level endorsed (4.29), the relationship between familismo and resilience increases by 1.60 units, $p < .001$.

Mental Health Needs Assessment. Each participant was asked to examine a list of 27 mental health needs and then rate the seriousness of the mental-health problems they believe occur among their community of DACA eligible Mexican immigrants and their families. Each
mental health concern was rated on a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (insignificant) to 5 (very serious problem) to obtain a rudimentary understanding of mental health needs. The means of each mental health concern are reported in the tables below. The third hypothesis was not rejected, since the highest rated mental health concerns consisted of anxiety symptoms and acculturative issues such as academic difficulties, trauma, experiencing discrimination and fear of deportation.

Table 10
*Mental Health Needs Assessment Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health Need</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mental Health Need</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Abuse</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>Problems with Parents</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Abuse</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>Sexual Difficulties</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Difficulties</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>Child Rearing Problems</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>Lack of Assertion</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervousness</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>Problems Making Friends</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping with Stress</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>Problems at Work</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traumatic Experiences</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>Coping with Physical Handicaps</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Choice</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>Sleep Disturbances</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Problems</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>Dating Problems</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of Aggression</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>Shyness</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight Control</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>Experiencing Discrimination/Racism</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Public Speaking</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>Fear of Deportation</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Abuse</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The top 10 endorsed mental health needs in terms of seriousness rated 1-5.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Summary

Prior research has established the importance of cultural values as protective factors amongst Latina/o populations. More recently, researchers have focused their efforts on determining what cultural values serve as protective factors among specific subgroups of Latina/o populations. The increased attention paid to examining subgroups within Latina/o populations instead of one homogenous group served as a motivation for the current study.

The current study sought to develop a better understanding of the factors that predict resiliency outcomes for DACA eligible, Mexican immigrants. A better understanding of the factors that predict resilience is necessary to promote psychological well-being, strengthen therapeutic outcomes and address mental health disparities. This is a crucial first step to guide culturally tailored treatment practices with undocumented Mexican immigrants. Thus, the current study examined the association between Mexican American cultural values, perceived discrimination, civic engagement and resilience levels among DACA eligible Mexican immigrants. Additionally, a needs assessment was conducted to determine what specific mental health concerns are most prevalent within undocumented Mexican immigrant communities.

For this study, online questionnaire results were collected using Qualtrics. No identifying information was collected. Participants included undocumented Mexican immigrants over the age of 18 who qualify for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. All participants were first
presented with an informed consent letter. By opting into the study, participants gave their electronic consent.

Participants completed a brief demographics survey, the *Resilience Scale* (RS; Wagnild & Young, 1993), the traditional subscales from the *Mexican American Cultural Values Scale* (MACVS; Knight et al., 2010), the *Brief Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire-Community Version* (PEDQ-CV; Brondolo et al., 2005), selected questions from the *Index of Civic and Political Engagement* (Andolina et al., 2003), and a revised version of the Needs Assessment Questionnaire (Henggeler, Sallis & Cooper, 1980). All participants had the option to enroll in an incentive drawing to win one of four $50 Visa Giftcards.

The sample consisted of 95 participants ages 18-34 ($M = 24.91$ years, $SD = 4.27$) and 66% identified as female ($n = 63$; male $n = 32$). The sample was not regionally limited and consisted of a nationwide sample with participants from 17 states. Since each participant had to be eligible for or enrolled in DACA, the sample represents individuals who began residing in the U.S. prior to the age of 16. Participants resided in the United States on average for 19 years.

The current findings build upon existing resilience research regarding immigrants. That is, the sample was highly resilient despite having an increased risk for multiple negative psychological factors (i.e. acculturative stress, minority stress, discrimination, lack of resources, fear of deportation, and negative sociopolitical attitudes towards immigrants). This highly resilient nature observed among immigrants has been noted across many disciplines (APA, 2012a).

Unexpectedly, the hysteria surrounding immigration was at an all-time high during data collection. The 2016 presidential election was underway and immigration reform was overly emphasized while Mexican immigrants were predominantly dehumanized and criminalized.
Despite ongoing sociopolitical tension, xenophobic commentary, and increased harassment of undocumented immigrants (Ayón & Becerra, 2013), resilience levels were consistent with previous findings.

The Overall Mexican American values were moderately endorsed by the sample. In comparison with the scale author’s original two studies, the current sample scored lower than Mexican individuals born in the United States and those born in Mexico (see Knight et al., 2010). This held true across all cultural values. However, the scores are more similar to scores from a study of Mexican American college students (Consoli & Llamas, 2013). Interestingly, in the two studies the authors originally conducted to validate the measure, the MACVS was administered via in-home interviews by trained interviewers who read each item aloud in either English or Spanish (Knight et al., 2010). Whereas, the study of Mexican American college students and this study both utilized online questionnaires for data collection.

The reliabilities across each subscale were higher in this study and the other study that utilized online data collection, compared to the studies that collected data via in-home interviews. Also, participants from the original scale studies were 5th graders and 7th graders and their parents. The current study and Knight and colleagues (2010) had similar aged participants, all over the age of 18. This study lends support for reliable administration of the MACVS with undocumented Mexican immigrants, particularly with adults, through online data collection.

Participants endorsed moderate levels of Mexican American values. Familism support (maintaining close emotional relationships with family) and familism obligation (looking after/caring for family) were the two highest endorsed values. The least endorsed value was traditional gender role beliefs, followed by religion. This study provides additional support for
the importance of cultural values in predicting resilience. For example, the overall multiple regression model indicated that Mexican American values successfully predict resilience.

Aspects of Mexican American values, such as familismo and religion were found to have a positive influence on resilience. It is likely within the process of cultural/ethnic identity development that individuals develop a stronger connection to their heritage and customs. Maintaining cultural heritage is linked to better psychological adjustment in Mexican Americans (Berkel et al., 2010; Delgado et al., 2011). Berry (2006) suggested that maintaining aspects of heritage and traditional cultural beliefs may provide advantages in psychological functioning. The traditional value of familismo emphasizes the strength of familial relationships as social support as well as the obligation to represent the family in a positive manner. Familismo may impact one’s drive to succeed despite substantial obstacles because of the obligation to preserve family dignity. This would help explain the significant predictive value of familismo on resiliency levels, and is a potential area of future research.

Upholding familismo and religious values conceivably encompass inherent protective aspects such as building close family relationships, caring for others and deriving strength from a higher being. Perhaps people who experience societal oppression or discrimination cling more closely to their community or immediate family and thereby endorse Mexican American cultural values more strongly. Especially in the era of Trump, clinging close to family and using religion as a coping skill is plausible.

As supported by previous literature, familismo was a strong predictor of resilience (Bender & Castro, 2000; Blanco-Vega et al., 2008; Consoli and Llamas, 2010; Delgado-Romero, Nevels, Capielo, Galván, & Torres, 2013; M. Consoli, Llamas, & A. Consoli, 2016; Parra-Cardona et al., 2006; Pérez et al., 2010). In fact, familismo was the only cultural value
significantly predictive of resilience. Respect was related to resilience but did not serve as a uniquely significant predictor. Traditional gender role values did not correlate with resilience. Consequently, gender roles were not found to be a predictor of resilience.

The familismo composite was used in regression model analyses to conserve degrees of freedom and to acknowledge the multidimensionality of familismo, instead of selecting aspects of the construct. However, it is important to note that familism support was not significantly correlated to, and had strikingly weak associations with, the other dimensions of familism (obligation and referent). It appears that familism obligation and referent may disproportionately strengthen the predictive effects of the familismo composite on resilience; hence, familism support may not be essential to overcoming adversity. As a result, psychologists should emphasize the importance of familism obligation and referent values to foster resilience among undocumented Mexican immigrants.

There is substantial literature that depicts the negative outcomes of perceived discrimination on psychological wellbeing among minorities (Alamilla et al., 2010; Brondolo, Gallo, & Myers, 2009; Deaux, 2006; Lopez, Morin & Taylor, 2010; Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007). However, the results of this study suggest that experiencing perceived discrimination does not necessarily result in negative mental health outcomes. There are some studies with similar findings among Mexican American adolescents (Berkl et al., 2010; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012). Several differences exist among studies with conflicting findings to the present study, such as including a homogeneous Latino sample.

Perhaps the most plausible difference among contrary findings is the use of heterogeneous samples consisting of various Latinos from different countries of origin. Most research examining discrimination and racism among individuals of Mexican descent utilize
samples consisting of adolescents, Mexican mothers, college samples, or geographically limited samples such as individuals living in the West of the U.S.

Experiencing discrimination was associated with higher Mexican American cultural values, which was found to enhance resilience levels. It is not surprising that experiencing perceived discrimination was associated with a stronger endorsement of Mexican American values. Studies have shown that experience with discrimination prompts individuals to explore their cultural heritage and gain an understanding of what it means to be a member of an ethnic group (Greene et al., 2006).

As hypothesized, civic engagement predicted resilience. This was expected due to the sociopolitical context in the lives of DACA eligible Mexican immigrants. The generational shift from past undocumented immigrants “living in the shadows,” to the new generation identifying as “DREAMers who are undocumented and unafraid,” highlights the underlying construct of civic engagement. Furthermore, the civic engagement and resilience was moderated by religious values. That is, at different levels of endorsed religious values, the relationship between civic engagement and resilience is significantly strengthened.

This is an important finding for therapists to consider when providing multiculturally competent therapy with undocumented Mexican immigrants. Conventional therapies have long disregarded client spirituality and often pathologize many ethnic minority values and behaviors (Sue, Zane, Nagayama-Hall & Berger, 2009). This study adds to the growing body of literature suggesting that cultural modifications to evidence-based treatments are beneficial. Overall, the findings provide compelling evidence for the incorporation of cultural modifications and systemic examination, such as including social justice education into evidence-based treatments.
Specific to the field of counseling psychology, the current study offers multiple implications regarding our commitment to diversity, social justice and the practice of advocating for marginalized populations (APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2011; Delgado-Romero, Lau, & Shullman, 2012; Packard, 2009). The empirical findings offer a solid base for counseling psychologists to further investigate the role of *familismo* values among undocumented Mexican immigrants to increase resiliency.

In clinical practice with undocumented Mexican immigrants, counseling psychologists should adapt recommendations and treatment plans to include aspects of family obligation and referent while being cautious not to disaffirm the importance of familial ties. Given the current sociopolitical climate, unwavering racialized rhetoric in politics, and current study findings, psychologists and other mental health professionals should explore discrimination and systemic oppression with undocumented Mexican clients. Becoming aware of systemic issues and processing prejudicial acts of discrimination prove beneficial in building resilience and strengthening cultural values.

The results of the needs assessment provided several substantial mental health factors highly relevant within undocumented Mexican communities. The top ten mental health needs were determined by using the cutoff mean score of 3.5 or higher, even though a close examination of scores between 2.5 and 3.5 should be considered since the potential scores range from 1-5. The top ten identified mental health needs in terms of perceived severity within the community are fear of deportation, experiencing discrimination or racism, difficulty with career choice, nervousness, depression, coping with stress, traumatic experiences, academic difficulties, fear of public speaking, and problems with parents. In addition, sleep disturbance had a mean score of 3.47.
A content analysis of the Journal of Latina/o Psychology concluded that only two articles (Balderas, Delgado-Romero, & Singh, 2016; Cervantes, Minero, & Brito, 2015) from the journal’s inception until 2016 were published that investigated undocumented status (Delgado-Romero, Stanley & Oh, 2017). Thus, the results of this study uniquely contribute to the literature as there is a considerable absence of published studies investigating protective factors of psychological well-being with an exclusive focus on undocumented Mexican immigrants.

Furthermore, both studies that were identified in the content analysis utilized qualitative methods of investigation. Thus, this study supplements previous literature by employing quantitative methodology with larger sample sizes. This study is highly relevant, timely and much needed. M.Consoli, Llamas & A. Consoli (2016) recently identified a need for a sample of first-generation Mexican, Spanish speakers to test for the predictive values of familismo on positive psychosocial factors such as resiliency.

The current findings also complement previous literature because it contains a sample of first-generation Mexican immigrants in which 94% of participants endorsed speaking Spanish fluently and the remaining reported conversational levels of Spanish. The participants in this study had unique demographic factors that make this particular sample critically important. First, it is one of the first studies that collected data from undocumented Mexican immigrants across the United States. Second, all participants were enrolled or awaiting approval of DACA.

These results have several implications for mental health clinicians, educators, public policy and employers. This empirical data suggests there is a strong role mental health professionals could play among this population and within their communities. Specifically, difficulties with career choice was ranked as the third highest mental health concern following deportation fears and discrimination. Given the specialized training Counseling Psychologists
have within vocational counseling and career development, our expertise could be of substantial use to undocumented Mexican immigrants.

These findings lend support for counseling psychologists to promote the exploration of vocational and career discussions within the therapeutic setting, but should also seek to publicize the help we are able to provide. It is probable that undocumented individuals have difficulty with career choice because of the multiple obstacles they face when applying for jobs, such as limited access to higher education opportunities and training, lack of work visas, and discrimination. This is consistent with previous literature regarding undocumented immigrants declining to apply for jobs, scholarships or advancement opportunities due to fear of deportation (Passel, 2011).

One of the top mental health concerns identified was coping with traumatic experiences. Unfortunately, this is supported by prior findings that undocumented immigrants are at heightened risk to exploitation, physical or emotional abuse and sexual harm (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2009), especially after the results of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. It is conceivable that the fear of deportation alone could be considered traumatic enough to lead to heightened anxiety, stress and depression, which were all identified as top mental health concerns.

Scholars have repeatedly identified fear of deportation as a significant stressor and risk factor for psychological well-being among immigrant populations (Gonzales, 2011; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). Finch and Vega (2003) coined the term “legal status stress” to encompass the experience of paranoia, depression, and anxiety surrounding the fear of deportation. The current study findings are consistent with the experience of legal status stress (Finch and Vega, 2003).
Limitations and Future Directions

The data collection for the current study was conducted during a particularly hostile election year (2016). Mainly, the Republican party candidate ran their election campaign largely fixated on issues of immigration and refugees with a predominate focus on the notion that Mexican immigrants are innately dangerous and hurt the United States’ economy. Thus, they promoted that extreme actions should be taken to reverse the executive order of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. The xenophobic rhetoric had an astounding impact throughout the election. The stark, sobering reality was that offensive racial remarks became common place and were often dismissed as acceptable discourse along the election trail, with Mexican immigrants being blamed for a host of societal ills. Despite having won the election through the electoral college, the winning candidate continued to blame Mexican immigrant undocumented people for his losing the popular vote.

Data collection proved difficult and remained stagnant while the nation watched a main party candidate demoralize, stigmatize and criminalize Mexican immigrants. The commonly accepted notion of “us versus them” became more profound during this time as social, economic and legal justifications for separation were acknowledged and encouraged by Donald Trump. Shortly after the election results were announced that Donald Trump would emerge as the 45th president of the United States, mass protests around the world began. At this particular time, data collection surged.

Although the election may or may not have influenced study participation, it is plausible to believe so. Data collection was completed ten days following the election, yet numerous organized protests have occurred since that time. Plausibly, the movement that has since
emerged encouraging individuals to speak out, march against and become politically active may produce different outcomes, as many people have become politically engaged for the first time.

This study was extremely time-sensitive. Throughout the course of writing this dissertation, undocumented Mexican immigrants eligible for DACA were granted temporary federal protection against deportation and were given 2-3year work permits and are now anxiously awaiting the fate of DACA as President Trump has repeatedly promised to repeal the program. According to the most recent data published on September 30, 2016 by the United States Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) 2,868,784 undocumented immigrants have received the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, with 1,044,967 originally from Mexico (USCIS, 2016). In relation to the current study, the time frame and current political atmosphere may have impacted findings. Due to the time-sensitive nature of DACA, research involving DACA recipients that addresses risk and protective factors is immensely significant and needed.

Another potential limitation of the current study is the method of data collection and participant recruitment. Although the online collection of survey data helped to reach individuals across the nation and allowed the completion of the study in private locations, it may have also hindered participation willingness due to the uncertainty of maintaining anonymity, especially regarding the need for individuals in the study to reveal their legal status. It may be helpful to foster personal relationships with individuals to build trust among participants. Given the importance of familismo found among this sample, future researchers emphasizing social interactions may generate greater willingness for individuals to participate in research. Moreover, this approach would be more aligned with a culturally sensitive approach to data collection.
Future studies that aim to include measures of cultural values should cautiously consider the modest (George & Mallery, 2005) internal consistency found in this study on the traditional gender roles subscale ($\alpha = .66$). This may be due to the subscale not accurately measuring the construct of traditional gender roles among this sample. Future studies examining gender roles among similar samples may benefit from supplementing other measures such as the Marianismo Beliefs Scale (Castillo, Perez, Castillo & Ghosheh, 2010) and the Machismo and Caballerismo Scale (Arciniega, Tovar-Blank, Tracey, & Anderson, 2008). Additionally, researchers would benefit from conducting a factor analysis to determine the dimensionality of the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale among DACA eligible Mexican immigrants. However, this would require a large sample size with a highly specified, unique population.

Although the measure used to assess civic engagement produced adequate reliability in this study, the measure was normed on adolescents and has been adapted to many forms. Due to the complexity of experiences of undocumented Mexican immigrants compounded with the fluctuation in legal status produced by sociopolitical forces and the implementation of DACA, there is a definite need for the development of an assessment that measures and is normed on this sample. Researchers may benefit from conducting qualitative analyses to bring awareness to the various ways undocumented Mexican immigrants engage in sociopolitical affairs.

As counseling psychologists, we are called to advocate for the biopsychosocial well-being of all individuals, but particularly of marginalized groups within society. It seems that now more than ever, it is our duty to live out our values and engage in advocacy efforts for minority groups. We must become strong influencers in public policy, involve ourselves in educating others about cultural competency and vehemently conduct research to address factors of mental well-being and develop culturally tailored treatment options for marginalized groups. More
importantly, we must become involved in community outreach to promote the use of mental health treatment and to build trusts between providers and individuals and their families.

In conclusion, this study highlighted the importance of *familismo* among DACA eligible Mexican immigrants. Most importantly, the current findings lend support for acknowledging perceived discrimination in therapy and using these crucial conversations to foster *familismo* values and build resilience among DACA eligible Mexican immigrants. Results from the mental health needs assessment revealed fear of deportation, discrimination, difficulty with career choice, trauma and symptoms of depression and anxiety as the most relevant mental health concerns among undocumented Mexican immigrant communities. This indicates an area of future research with this population could include ways to address these concerns, identification of risk or protective factors against these mental health concerns or culturally tailored treatments pertinent to undocumented Mexican immigrants that address these specific concerns.
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U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1, enacted in 1865.


APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Potential Study Participant:

Please read this letter in its entirety before beginning the study. I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Edward Delgado-Romero in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled, “Resilience, Civic Engagement, Cultural Values, Perceived Discrimination and the Unique Mental Health Needs of DACA Eligible Mexican Immigrants.” The purpose of this study is to identify psychological risks and protective factors for DACA eligible Mexican Immigrants while also gathering participants’ beliefs about the community mental health needs of other DACA eligible Mexican immigrants to better prepare mental health professionals to serve this population.

In order to agree to participation in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age, DACA eligible (or are currently enrolled in DACA), and must be originally from Mexico. You must also be able to read and understand English at a 6th grade level. Individuals who do not meet these criteria will be excluded from participating in this study.

Your participation will involve answering a series of questions online regarding your demographics, cultural values, political engagement, experiences with discrimination and factors of resilience. Completing the survey should only take about 25 minutes to complete. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to stop or withdrawal from the study, any information collected from you will be discarded and not kept as part of the study. At the conclusion of the study, you will also have the opportunity to formally submit your responses for inclusion in the study or discard such information.

Completion and submission of the survey implies that you agree to participate and your data may be used in this research.

While the information that you provide in the study will be handled confidentially, there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to internet technology itself. Prior to being downloaded, IP addresses and any other identifiable information will be stripped from the data. Once downloaded, recovered surveys will be stored on a secure password protected drive and the researchers will be the only individuals with access to such drive. The results of the research study may be published, but no identifying information will be used since none will be collected.

The findings from this project may provide information that will further inform the development of culturally tailored treatment options for DACA eligible Mexican Immigrants. This study will add to the positive literature about immigration and will help to increase the multicultural competency of mental health care professionals.
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research, aside from minimal discomfort in answering questions about your experience with discrimination or mental health needs. Following your exit of the survey, you will have the opportunity to enter into a drawing to receive one of four $50 Visa Gift Cards. Please note that if you choose to be included in the drawing for the gift cards, you will be directed to a separate page that will ask you to provide an email address to be contacted in the event that you win. Your email address will be kept separate from your survey answers and will not be linked to the survey in any way to help protect your privacy and keep answers confidential and anonymous. To participate in the drawing, you must be eighteen (18) years of age or older. The drawing is open to all individuals; entry is not contingent on participation in the research study titled, “Resilience, Civic Engagement, Cultural Values, Perceived Discrimination and The Unique Mental Health Needs of DACA Eligible Mexican Immigrants.” Moreover, a person remains eligible for the drawing even if they withdraw from the study or do not complete every question. Lastly, as this drawing is a separate Qualtrics survey, there is no way to link information collected via this drawing to information obtained within the research survey titled, “Resilience, Civic Engagement, Cultural Values, Perceived Discrimination and The Unique Mental Health Needs of DACA Eligible Mexican Immigrants.” The drawing for the four $50 Visa gift cards will be performed by Jennifer Merrifield, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia on December 1, 2016. Immediately following the drawing, winners will be notified by email and their US mail addresses will be requested. The winners will also be provided with information on when to expect the prizes to arrive. If you wish to participate in the drawing and not the study, please CLICK HERE. Everyone else wishing to participate in the study will be given the link again at the end of their participation.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to send me an email at jmerrif1@uga.edu or to Dr. Edward Delgado-Romero at edelgado@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,
Jennifer N. Merrifield, M.S.
Doctoral Candidate, Counseling Psychology
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
The University of Georgia