

2017

Identity and Belonging: Documentation Status and Mexican-origin children: A Systematic Review

Alicia Bauers

University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, arbauers@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.stthomas.edu/ssw_mstrp



Part of the [Clinical and Medical Social Work Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bauers, Alicia, "Identity and Belonging: Documentation Status and Mexican-origin children: A Systematic Review" (2017). *Social Work Master's Clinical Research Papers*. 818.

https://ir.stthomas.edu/ssw_mstrp/818

This Clinical research paper is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Social Work at UST Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Social Work Master's Clinical Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UST Research Online. For more information, please contact libroadmin@stthomas.edu.

Identity and Belonging: Documentation Status and Mexican-origin children: A Systematic Review

By

Alicia R. Bauers, B.A.

MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the School of Social Work St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas St. Paul, Minnesota in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Social Work

Committee Members

Jessica Toft Ph.D., MSW, LISW (Chair)

Maria Regan Gonzalez, Richfield City Council

Sister Stephanie Spandl, MSW, LICSW

The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University - University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the support of so many insightful, wonderful and generous humans in my life.

To Jessica Toft, my chair and mentor whose guidance and support was invaluable to this process. Thank you for your patience with the e-mails and the feels.

To my committee members Maria Regan Gonzalez and Stephanie Spandl. Thank you for your collaboration and inspiration throughout this entire journey and for being my *comadres* in our fight for social justice.

Thank you to the faculty of the School of Social Work at UST/SCU who showed up for me and held me gently through this four-year journey. Many thanks to Dr. Renee Hepperlen for introducing me to Jane Addams; Shelly Rottenberg for modeling the beautiful in goodbye; and Dr. Robin Whitebird for giving me a name for my blue sky.

So much more gratitude than I can ever express is owed to my parents, Geno and JoAnn Bauers, my biggest champions in life and the ones who loved me enough to give me my first library card.

To Grandma Fran, who always knew I could. *Tęsknię za Tobą.*

To the ones who share my roots and keep me grounded: Ricardito, KSnack, Aria, Gabrielle, Sam and the Hero/Nourai/Ouski crew.

To the people in my life whose love helped me believe in what I never thought possible: GrettaBean; Maria and Miguelito (Roomies!); my dear Suzie Q; (BA)Linnie; Amelia y Alemalejandro; Peter; Leslie; Fintan and the Scott family; Sandy Panda; Ducky; Rebecca; Olivia and Cornelius. Your generosity and the countless hours and energy spent processing, sharing and learning along side of me mean more than you know.

To my accomplice, Jim Scott, for lifting me up and calming me down.

Para mis clientes: Les doy muchísimas gracias por todo lo que me han compartido y por la confianza que me han dado a través de los años. Realmente es un honor para servirles. Gracias por enseñarme como salir adelante.

And to my first love, México Lindo.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Methods	12
Findings	17
Discussion.....	37
Implications for Social Work.....	42
References	47

Abstract

There is a growing body of literature on the ways in which legal status affects the lives of undocumented Mexican immigrants, yet very little is known about how their status impacts the well-being of their children. This systematic review was conducted to answer the research question, “According to the literature, how do the children of undocumented Mexican immigrants describe the impact of parental documentation status on their identity and sense of belonging?” Studies utilizing qualitative methods were emphasized to gain insight directly from the voices of the children themselves. Results from the review included perspectives from the 1.5 generation, second-generation and migrant youth from 18 articles representing 13 unique population groups. Youth participants demonstrated that while the status of their parents’ being undocumented did have negative effects on their self-perception, familial identity and ability to experience full belonging as bicultural youths, they also shared stories of amazing strength and resilience in the face of the multiple layers of oppression their community faces. Important themes discussed by the youth included the impact of fear; importance of family; citizenship; experiences with discrimination; education, political activism and resistance to illegality.

There is a growing body of literature that suggests that the lack of legal status of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. negatively impacts the well-being of the individual and their children in almost every arena of their lives (Perez & Fortuna, 2005; Ayón, 2013). Exact estimates are difficult to obtain, but approximately 58% of all unauthorized immigrants in the United States are from México and nearly 70% of undocumented Mexican immigrant parents have children who are U.S. citizens (Landale, et. al, 2015). Mixed-status families, in which some members are citizens and some are not, are important to consider, as Zayas and Gulbas (2013) estimate that 1.1 million children of undocumented Mexican immigrants in the United States lack documentation status themselves. Recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program account for about 800,000 of those unauthorized Mexican immigrant children (Pew Research, 2017).

Undocumented Mexican immigrants make up a unique sub-group of Latinx¹ immigrants in the United States. Due to factors such as educational achievement gaps, ongoing racial tensions and poverty (Oropesa, Landale & Hillemeir, 2011; Holleran & Waller, 2013), undocumented Mexican immigrants are the population widely believed to experience the greatest disparities in areas such as access to mental and physical health care (Perez & Fortuna, 2005); safe housing conditions (Hall & Greenman, 2013; Luna, 2004) and discrimination (Holleran & Waller, 2013) among all Latinx immigrant groups, including documented Mexican immigrants (Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). Researchers have found that undocumented Mexican immigrants also experience a disproportionate number of deportations. In 2010, the number of undocumented Mexican immigrants removed from the country was 73% even though they comprised about 58% of the total undocumented Latinx immigrant population (Dreby, 2012; Zuniga, 2004).

¹ The term “Latinx” is a gender-neutral term used as a non-binary alternative to Latino or Latina. It denotes a person of Latin American origin.

Research suggests that the status of being undocumented, like poverty, is considered a fundamental disadvantage, compounding stress and impeding functioning for children and families across systems (Oropesa, Landale & Hillemeier, 2015; Phelan, Link & Tehranifar, 2010).

Parental legal status is believed to have a profound impact on the formation of the sense of identity and belonging of children who live in mixed-status households. As Moreno (2008) notes, most children of undocumented Mexican parents have some understanding of their family's vulnerability as early as infancy. Children in the 1.5 generation begin their own "transition to illegally" in high school when they begin to encounter more instances of exclusion in mezzo- level systems. Research has also suggested that children begin to identify with and internalize messages of their family's supposed illegality and illegitimacy around adolescence. Children's ability to process and cope with the social and legal ramifications of their parents' status evolves over time and with experience (Moreno, 2008; Getrich, 2013).

Deportation is a major source of fear of children of undocumented Mexican immigrants. Fear of exposure will often contribute to a child's sense of identity and belonging as they mature and learn to limit or control their contact with others outside of the home environment. Martinez and Slack (2013) reported that citizen-children of undocumented Mexican immigrants felt alienated from the rest of society, both physically and emotionally, as they are forced into hiding because of the legal consequences of exposure.

Unfortunately, the body of literature available regarding the impact of parental documentation status on the children of undocumented Mexican immigrants, particularly qualitative research, is not only limited but difficult to obtain (Ayón, 2013; Luna, 2004; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). When asked to share personal or demographic information about themselves or

their families, especially by social service professionals, children of undocumented immigrant parents will not normally disclose any information (Perez & Fortuna, 2005). Doing so holds the possibility of serious psychological, social and legal consequences, including the very real possibility of the deportation of one or both parents as well as any other undocumented members of the family (Ayón, 2013; Perez & Fortuna, 2005).

Previous Research

The body of research available regarding this topic is very limited, and this researcher found no systematic reviews during the search process. Previous research on this topic has primarily been from the perspective of researchers or parents, rather than from the perspective of the children themselves. A systematic literature review would be helpful to clarify what information is available from the perspective of the children of undocumented Mexican immigrants.

Collectivity

One of the first concepts imperative for professionals working with children of undocumented Mexican immigrants to understand is that traditional Mexican culture is collectivist. There is often a high degree of interdependence and very little distinction between the individual members of a family or community. The family serves as the culture's organizing structure, providing a network of support and guidance to children during development (Perez & Fortuna, 2005; Ayón, 2016). Children may struggle to understand the hierarchies of legal and social distinction between themselves and their undocumented family members, impacting their sense of stability and connectedness within the home, as the family is divided into categories of who has papers and who does not (Landale et al., 2015; Dreby, 2012). Second-generation youth often feel so interconnected with their family that they are unable to consider themselves full

citizens if their parents are not. Tovar and Feliciano's (2009) study found that citizen-children participants reported that many mental health providers they have encountered downplayed the importance of the child's commitment and connection to their family or disregarded the collectivist practices in Mexican culture.

Navigation

Researchers believe that undocumented Mexican parents' fear of interacting with systems that could expose their legal status, coupled with the language barrier, often puts children in the position of serving as the cultural and linguistic navigator for the family (Oropesa, Landale & Hillemeier, 2015; Ayón, 2013). Citizen-children are presumed to be more educated, speak English more fluently and assimilate and acculturate at a rate much faster than their parents, even though developmentally, they are often not prepared to serve as the voice of the family. The change in roles and responsibilities between child and parent may disorient children's developing sense of identity and belonging, as power dynamics and control of the household are flipped upside down. In one study by Bacallao and Smokowski (2007), children described their parents asking for assistance with reading mail, paying rent, interpreting for school meetings and helping with child care; these responsibilities may exceed children's emotional or cognitive developmental levels (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). However, second-generation youth in one study by Tovar and Feliciano (2009), described feeling empowered in their role as a cultural broker because they were able to apply context and filter racist or discriminatory messages intended for their parents.

Conflicting Messages

The messages about identity and belonging that children receive inside and outside of the home environment are often confusing and contradictory. Undocumented Mexican immigrant

parents stress the importance of engagement in American civil and social society while maintaining a strong connection to the history and beliefs of their Mexican culture. Traditional Mexican cultural norms and expectations are often contradicted by the rhetoric of the dominant White American narrative, which stresses independence and prioritizing the desires of the individual over the needs of others (Shief, Ullman & Nunez Mchiri, 2004). Children of undocumented Mexican immigrants report feeling like they do not belong fully in either environment, as they are not “Mexican enough” or “American enough” to satisfy both spheres. As youth receive support from professionals, they will need help examining and reconciling the dissonance between the competing messages of family-of-origin and culture-of-birth over time.

Criminalization and Legitimacy

Since 9/11, much of the popular debate on immigration in the United States has centered around questions of legitimacy, belonging and contributing. Undocumented Mexican immigrants and their children are reminded that they are not welcome in the United States and the children are constantly reminded of their parents’ “deportability” (Dreby, 2012, p. 830). Since the 1990s, legislative policies and political rhetoric have specifically targeted undocumented Mexican immigrant communities to the point where they have become the “pariahs” among other Latinx undocumented immigrant groups (Sullivan & Rehm, 2005, p. 829). The immigration bill H.R. 4437 was introduced to the Senate in 2013, and although it did not pass, it was important because it introduced the allocation of funds to build a wall along the U.S. - México border and sought to re-introduce a merit-based system of immigration which would prioritize applicants who were “young, educated, experienced, skilled and fluent in English” (p. 9). On January 25, 2017, Executive Order 13767 was issued and focused solely on securing the Southern border and

eliminating illegal immigration's "clear and present danger to the interests of the United States" (p. 1).

This stigma and focus on the criminality of their communities has a profound effect on the way children construct and process their sense of identity and belonging in America. Ayón (2016) describes the conversations undocumented Mexican parents must have with their citizen-children to prepare them for encounters with the anti-immigrant sentiments, bias, threat of deportation and complications related to language they will inevitably experience throughout their lifetime. Researchers in studies by Ayón (2016) and Kiang, Yip, Gonzales-Backen, et. al, (2006) note that children of undocumented Mexican immigrant parents have reported that they often censor interactions when they interpret for their parents, rather than accurately interpret messages of racism and xenophobia that are unfortunately common in their interactions with English-speakers.

Deportation

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, social workers need to understand how children live with and process the fear associated with parental deportation. Parental deportation is not an insignificant or imagined threat; in 2013 alone, an estimated 72,000 parents with citizen-children were deported to México (Gulbas, Zayas, Yoon, et. al, 2015). As Martinez and Slack (2013) discuss, there has been a notable shift in the government's response to the unauthorized entry of undocumented immigrants. Deportation used to be treated as a civil matter, but as the "criminalization of immigration law" (Martin & Slack, 2013, p. 3) continues to influence policies and laws, more undocumented Mexican immigrants are likely to face criminal prosecution.

Understanding the firsthand perspective of the 1.5, migrant and second-generation youth becomes critical when discussing deportation, since researchers and parents have

overwhelmingly reported that fear of deportation produces profound, long-term and irrevocable negative psychological effects for the children of Mexican-origin immigrant parents (Ayón & Evera, 2010; Vollmer Hanna & Ortega, 2014; Dreby, 2012). For children in mixed-status families, the constant fear of parental deportation can result in children absconding from school or isolating in the home, fearing the day that their parent may not be there when they return home. In Dreby's (2012) study, children of undocumented Mexican parents reported worrying about the incarceration or detention of other family members, even if the family members were birthright citizens without a criminal record. Internalizing the dominant narrative of society with its messages of illegality and illegitimacy of self and family is believed to have a profound and short- and long-term impact on the lives of 1.5-, second-generation and migrant youth.

Gaps in Literature and Research Question

Gaps in the literature are considerable, as the perspectives and voices of the children of undocumented Mexican immigrants are not often represented in literature, particularly in qualitative research (Landale, et al, 2015; Holleran & Waller, 2003; Portes & Rivas, 2011). The way that Mexican-origin youth form their ideas about who they are and where they belong have not been on the forefront of research, and most of the current literature available focuses on the experience and opinions of professionals and parents involved in the children's lives, rather than highlighting the voices of the youth themselves.

The purpose of this systematic literature review is to generate more information to answer the research question, "According to the literature, how do children of undocumented Mexican immigrants describe the impact of parental documentation status on their identity and sense of belonging?" Unless researchers consider the voices and viewpoints of second-generation youth, therapeutic interventions offered for these youths will be inappropriate and ineffective.

Researchers and practitioners must hear from the voices of the youth themselves to guide their course of care and future research.

Methods

This systematic review was conducted to address the research question, “According to the literature, how do children of undocumented Mexican immigrants describe the impact of parental documentation status on their identity and sense of belonging?” Current research relating the first-hand experiences of these youth is minimal, as most of information currently available is formed by the opinions of social workers, parents and researchers. Unfortunately, even in social work, youth voices are often silenced or ignored in the various personal and political realms in which they operate. As such, this systematic review is intentionally focused on qualitative research, in order to elevate the voices of the children of undocumented Mexican immigrants and synthesize research obtained through direct input from the youth.

Definition of Key Terms

The term “undocumented immigrant” refers to foreign-born individuals who lack legal authorization to reside in the United States. Whereas other non-citizens, such as refugees or asylees, may receive some rights or access to the state with its protections and benefits, undocumented immigrants do not. The terms “illegal immigrant” and “illegal alien” are often used interchangeably to describe this population, but both imply that the immigrants themselves are illegal, rather than their actions. “Unauthorized immigrant” was a term used while researching this topic, however, “undocumented immigrant” is generally the preferred term when speaking from a strengths-based perspective (Holleran & Waller, 2003).

“Mixed-status families” refers to family structures that contain at least one member who is undocumented while others in the same family have legal status. Although this review is

focused specifically on the impact of the documentation status of parents, youth in several articles used in this study described the impact of having even one family member in their household who is undocumented.

The literature refers to Mexican immigrant children without legal status as the “1.5 generation.” Children from the 1.5 generation were most often brought to the United States illegally by their parents while they were still minors. Undocumented children of Mexican-origin may be eligible to receive protection from deportation through DACA, but currently, no new applications are being accepted. There is still no pathway to obtain legal citizenship for undocumented Mexican immigrant children. “Second-generation” or “citizen-children” are interchangeable terms and refer to youth born in the United States to immigrant parents.

The terms “documentation status” and “legal status” were used interchangeably in this review; however, within the Mexican community, the phrase “having papers,” is most often used while discussing documentation status and signifies the presence or absence of legal permission to reside in the United States, usually referring to those who have green cards or birthright citizenship.

Research highlighting the experiences of both undocumented- and citizen-children of undocumented Mexican immigrants was considered for the review, understanding that the day-to-day experiences of the 1.5 generation or migrant youth may more closely mirror the legal and cultural experiences of their undocumented parents than citizen-children living in the home. No exclusion criteria regarding the legal status of children was applied; this review included the experiences of second-generation, 1.5 generation and migrant youth whose primary residence was in the United States.

The definitions of “identity” and “belonging” offered by Zayas and Gulbas (2017) were used throughout the review. They define belonging as a, “transformative, meaningful experience through with people derive both their identity and an emotional connectedness to their social and physical world” (Zayas & Gulbas, 2017, p. 2463). In their definition, belonging signifies the following: attachment to family and community; connection to social or political systems and, more abstractly, understanding of one’s context, time and space. Furthermore, a sense of belonging naturally produces feelings of safety from an external source, whereas identity is constructed from within and may not always signify belonging (Zayas & Gulbas, 2017).

The constructivist perspective of Saleebé (1994) can also be helpful in clarifying the definition of identity and belonging. Saleebé (1994) discusses how culture is constructed by assigning meaning to stories, symbols and experiences, which in turn provides context for an individual to “build themselves into the world by creating meaning” (p. 351). Humans create stories and meaning as they interact and experience the world, creating a foundation for the formation of more formalized beliefs. A sense of identity and belonging that children of undocumented Mexican immigrants embrace will be grounded in truth created by the dominant narratives present within their homes, communities and greater society. Those beliefs will then guide their understanding of and connection to “illegal” or “illegitimate” communities.

Review criteria

The researcher utilized the databases SocINDEX, PsychINFO, Family Studies Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts and Academic Search Premiere to locate articles for the review; only peer-reviewed full-text journal articles were considered. As the researcher is bilingual, initial review protocol allowed articles in either Spanish and English, but after other inclusion and

exclusion criteria were applied, only English articles were relevant. All searches were conducted in October and November of 2017.

Search terms

Considering the complexity of the subject, the limited amount of research on youth voices in undocumented Mexican immigrant families and the multiple ways to identify and describe this population, the number of search terms used turned out to be considerable. Searches may be completed in any of the databases listed above using keywords, subject, author supplied keywords and abstracts to locate the articles within this review. Search terms used include the following: *identity, belonging, sense of belonging, well-being, self-esteem, self-perception, undocumented, deportation, illegal, alien, children, youth, adolescent, teenager, children of immigrants, Mexican, Mexican-American, immigrants, citizen-children, 1.5 generation, second generation, Dreamers, DACA, citizenship, impact, influence, effect, Americanization, acculturation* and *biculturalism*. Author searches were completed based on references contained within articles meeting criteria for the review; those searches were completed in each database to assure continuity. No date ranges were used in the search; perhaps due to the current political climate and shifting social and legal views on illegal immigration, most of the articles included have been written within the past ten years.

Inclusion and exclusion

It was necessary that researchers utilized qualitative methods in their studies to derive information from the youth directly, rather than through the lens of an intermediary. Qualitative methods could include interviews, focus groups, field research, formal and informal conversations, observations or direct participation in applicable events. Youth participants could

include children who were documented or undocumented. Articles included had a sample population which included children who had at least one parent or primary caregiver in the home who was self- or otherwise-identified as having been an undocumented Mexican immigrant at some point while living in the United States, even if they had obtained citizenship at the time of the study.

After searches were completed and articles were excluded by title and abstract, the researcher had a total of 65 possible articles which appeared to meet criteria. After reading through Methods and Findings sections, 28 articles were excluded because the researchers used only a questionnaire or standardized measure to garner information from the youth and did not include a qualitative component. Of the remaining 37 articles, 13 were excluded because the sample population included other Latinx participants, but the authors did not clearly identify the Mexican participants. Four were excluded because some participants had parents who were both born in the United States but were not used as a comparison group. Two of the articles were excluded because the authors explicitly stated that for safety reasons, the researchers did not ask for documentation status of parents. The remaining 18 articles that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria will be utilized for this systematic review.

Framework

Before disseminating the Findings of this review, it is important to remember that as consumers of knowledge, we must examine evidence-based practices and additions to the body of literature critically; the perspectives and inherent biases of the researchers and the limitations of working across cultures must also be considered. The articles included in this review utilized conceptual frameworks such as critical race theory (Muñoz, 2016; Getrich, 2013); social constructivism (Maciel & Knudson-Martin, 2014); and empowerment theory (Solis, 2003) to

report their findings; these perspectives undoubtedly reinforced my own beliefs and influenced the process of this systematic review. Several of the authors also noted how their own identities and connection to the undocumented Mexican community influenced their research. For example, Rivas (2008); self-identified as Mexican; Dreby (2012) identified herself as non-Latinx and described her personal and professional connections to the community; and Corrunker (2012) reported being personally lacking documentation status.

I have been serving the undocumented Mexican community for the past seven years, providing bilingual, in-home therapeutic services for children and families. As a White woman who also identifies as Queer and Disabled, it is important to acknowledge how my self-identification, intersectionality, biases, experience and ability influenced the approach, process and outcomes of this systematic review.

Findings

The purpose of this systematic review was to understand more about the ways in which the children of undocumented Mexican immigrants describe the impact of their parent's legal status on their identity and sense of belonging. It was necessary that in each of the 18 studies included in the review use qualitative methods so that data synthesized would come directly from the voices of the children themselves. Qualitative methods employed by the researchers included in-depth and semi-structured formal and informal interviews, focus groups, breakout sessions, direct observation and conversations shared while doing fieldwork. Youth participants were most often recruited through snowball or convenience sampling. Studies included offered the participants the option of being interviewed in Spanish or English.

Author/Year	Sample/Location	Data collection	Themes
Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007	12 adolescents and 14 parents from 10 families in North Carolina	In-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews. Convenience sampling	Family; connection to culture; 1.5 generation; fear; cultural brokering
Bacallao & Smokowski, 2009	Same sample group as above	Same as above	Assimilation; biculturalism; language; family; fear
Bacallao & Smokowski, 2013	Same sample group as above	Same as above	Americanization; language; fear; racism; discrimination
Bloemraad & Trost, 2006	14-18-year-olds in San Francisco Bay area, CA	79 multigenerational in-depth interviews. Snowball sampling	participation; civic engagement; fear; citizenship; activism
Bloemraad, Sarabia & Fillingim, 2016	Same sample group as above	Same as above	Biculturalism; “good” citizens; fear; civic engagement; participation
Corrunker, 2012	Group of undocumented youth activists in Ann Arbor, Michigan.	Interviews, breakout sessions, small groups. Convenience sampling	DREAM Act; civic engagement; fear; “undocumented and afraid”
Dreby, 2012	91 parents and 110 children in 80 households in Ohio.	In-depth interviews. Snowball sampling	Fear; deportation; citizenship discrimination
Getrich, 2008	Second-generation Mexican-origin youth activists	Interviews; focus groups, informal communications	Citizenship; activism; belonging; discrimination; fear; participation
Getrich, 2013	54 second-generation teenagers living on the border in San Diego	Fieldwork, focus groups, interviews, Photovoice. Convenience sampling.	Resistance to illegality; fear; citizenship surveillance;
Gonzales & Ruis, 2014	1.5 Generation high school and university students in rural Washington	Qualitative interviews by both authors. Snowball sampling.	Intersectionality; location; belonging; fear; police/ICE; participation

Gulbas, Zayas, Yoon, Szlyk, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Natera (2015)	48 citizen-children, ages 8-15 with undocumented Mexican parents	Part of a qualitative study for larger mixed-methods study	Mental health; deportation; fear; family dynamics; discrimination
Maciel, J. & Knudson-Martin (2014)	14-18-year-old youth living in Southern California	Youth and parent interviews; focus groups	Sacrifice; fear; discrimination; mental health; 1.5 generation;
Moreno, 2008	Second-generation youth in California	Ethnographic histories, interviews and fieldwork participation;	Belonging; surveillance; cultural and legal citizenship; fear
Munoz, 2016	7 Undocumented Mexican college students and graduates from around the U.S.	90-minute In-depth interviews conducted via Skype; Snowball sampling.	Empowerment; status disclosure; fear; activism; school; racism
Rivas, 2008	Author's account	Personal comment by the author on his experience growing up with undocumented Mexican parents	Family dynamics; education; parental expectations; pride in culture
Solis, 2003	16 youth activists living in New York City	Ethnographic fieldwork, observation, direct participation	Illegality; citizenship surveillance; family; discrimination; fear
Zayas & Gulbas, 2017	48 citizen-children, ages 8-15 with undocumented Mexican parents	Part of a qualitative study for larger mixed-methods study	exclusion; identity development; belonging; legal citizenship; fear
Zayas & Gulbas, 2017	Same as above	Same as above	Fear; resiliency; "living in the shadows"; deportation

Participants' ages ranged from 5-29 years old. All youth included in the studies were children of undocumented Mexican immigrants unless otherwise specified. For example, Bloemraad and Trost (2006) indicated that one sample group in their study contained four parents who were birthright citizens, but they included those citizen-parents as a control group to compare levels of civic engagement during the immigrant rights protests in 2006. Some studies

included interviews with the children's parents, however, the researchers noted that children and parents were interviewed separately to assure privacy and confidentiality. Children included in the research represented the 1.5 generation, second-generation and transnational migrant youth whose primary residence was the United States.

Four articles featured authors who participated in field work and grassroots organizing with multinational youth activists during the immigrant rights protests of 2006 (Getrich, 2008; Bloemraad & Trost, 2006), DREAM Act activism 2010 (Corruner, 2012) and the "undocumented and afraid" movement (Muñoz, 2016). Articles by Corruner (2012) and Getrich (2008) contained input from youth who self-identified as undocumented and/or Mexican. Both authors indicated which youth included in the study had at least one caregiver who was undocumented and of Mexican-origin. Because no quantitative data was being extracted from those studies and first-hand perspectives of youth is the focus of the review, both articles were included, and information from the Mexican-origin children was utilized.

Since research focused specifically on the children of undocumented Mexican immigrants is limited, several articles included in this review were authored by the same researcher or group of researchers. Three of the articles were authored by Bacallao and Smokowski (2007; 2009; 2013) and included analysis from the same sample group of 12 adolescents and 14 parents from 10 undocumented Mexican families in North Carolina. Two articles were authored by Zayas and Gulbas (2017; 2017) who also co-authored another article with Yoon, et. al., (2015) using the same sample group of 48 citizen-children, ages 8-15 with undocumented Mexican parents. This was also the case for the articles by Bloemraad and Trost (2006) and Bloemraad, Sarabia and Fillingim (2016). Their sample group consisted of members of 40 Mexican-origin families in the San Francisco Bay area. Getrich (2008, 2013) authored two

articles included in this review, but utilized a different group of youth participants for each article. Of the 18 articles that met inclusion and exclusion criteria, 13 unique sample groups were represented. The perspectives of the children represented in the studies chosen for this systematic review revealed salient themes highlighting the ways in which parental documentation status impacts their identity and sense of belonging.

Fear

By far, the most prominent theme revealed by the literature were the ways in which fear associated with parental deportation status impacted the lives of children participants. All but one article included in this review (Rivas, 2008) included children who discussed the impact of fear on their individual and collective identities at length. Throughout the research, youth stressed that the impact of fear on their well-being could not be overstated; fear was as a defining characteristic of the family, dictating every decision they make in their everyday lives (Gulbas & Zayas, 2017; Bloemraad, Sarabia & Fillingim, 2016; Getrich, 2013).

Arrest and deportation. Youth across studies identified the possibility of parental deportation as the main source of their fear. Children in Dreby's (2012) study shared how even the thought of parental deportation disrupted their overall sense of security. Constant preoccupation of their parents' whereabouts was reported by many youth participants; several youths told stories about the sudden arrest and deportation of one or both of their undocumented parents. For example, one youth participant described how her worst fear came true after her father was arrested without warning while she was at school. She stated, "I came back and he was not there. It really hit me" (Gulbas, Zayas, Yoon, et. al, 2015, p. 226). In another study, one young woman's mother was arrested and detained by police after a traffic stop. She expressed the disbelief she felt after receiving a call from her uncle, saying, "My head almost exploded, cuz

that's like, my mom" (Dreby, 2012, p. 82). Children described feelings of frustration and powerlessness because they were unable to offer protection to their parents in the face of deportation (Gulbas, Zayas, Yoon, et. al, 2015).

Citizen-children reported that they would have to make difficult choices if one or both parents were deported. Some youth stated they would rather move to México to keep their family intact, rather than continuing to live in the United States without one parent. Others reported fears of being placed into foster care (Zayas & Gulbas, 2017). Since they lack documentation status themselves, 1.5 generation, migrant youth and DACA recipients communicated intense fears about their own deportation (Gulbas, Zayas, Yoon, et. al, 2015; Dreby, 2012).

La policía y la migra. The research demonstrated that fear of deportation caused children to become hyperaware of police and immigration officials, regardless of their own documentation status (Moreno, 2008; Getrich, 2013). Youth participants from the 1.5 generation who remembered crossing the border seemed to be especially prone to hypervigilance (Dreby, 2012). One youth participant who was a birthright citizen stated that her fear of law enforcement could not be articulated but rather was, "just ingrained in me" (p. 475).

Interestingly, many youths represented in the studies did not or could not differentiate between local or state police and ICE officials (Corruner, 2012; Dreby, 2012). One of the children in Dreby's (2012) study referred to the "police-ICE," eliminating any distinction at all between the two. Children throughout the studies reported that they had an overwhelming sense that police-ICE were constantly patrolling neighborhoods looking for anyone who might not have papers.

Culture of silence. Throughout the interviews, youth referenced a “culture of silence” within their homes. Although each member of the family processed experiences with deportation differently, youth reported that there is often an expectation of silence around the topic, and parents discouraged their children from openly discussing documentation status of any of their family members, even in private. For example, one participant interviewed by Muñoz (2016) stated, “It [documentation status] was something you weren’t supposed to talk about because my parents were afraid. So, I knew more than anything it was like a fear-type thing.” (p. 729). Zayas and Gulbas (2017) found that the culture of silence was so strong within undocumented Mexican immigrant families that not a single person interviewed reported discussing a safety or emergency plan of any kind with their children in the event their parents were deported.

Physical and mental health. Confirming previous research conducted, youth reported that the long-term sustained fear they experienced had lasting effects on their physical and emotional well-being. Bacallao and Smokowski (2009) found that children affected directly by parental deportation were prone to experiencing more mental health issues and behavioral problems than those whose families had not been personally affected by deportation.

In addition to a baseline level of fear, children also endorsed experiencing many somatic symptoms, such as headaches, stomach-aches and panic attacks when they thought of the possibility of their parents being deported (Zayas & Gulbas, 2017). Felicita, a 10-year-old youth with an undocumented father, reported having reoccurring nightmares about immigration officials and the deportation of her father and friends. “I heard people say, ‘show me your papers!’” (Zayas & Gulbas, 2017, p. 2469). Another youth participant detailed the decline in her mental health after her dad’s deportation. Eventually, the despair and hopelessness she felt about her father’s absence led to severe depression and a suicide attempt. Risk-taking behaviors of

children were also connected with parental deportation. (Gulbas, Zayas, and Yoon, et al p.1025; Solis, 2003)

Process of Discovery

Mexican-origin youth in mixed-status families reported that they had a sense of their parents' legal status for as long as they could remember. Half of the participants in Zayas and Gulbas' (2017) study said that they had "always known" their parents did not have papers, even if they were never explicitly told. One youth explained, "I just kind of remember knowing. Always known that we were illegal...that they were illegal." (Zayas & Gulbas, 2017, p. 61). As such, children did not endorse a specific moment of discovery, but rather a gradual understanding and acceptance of the implications of legality as they matured.

Participants in studies by Corruncker (2012), Zayas and Gulbas (2017) and Muñoz (2016) demonstrated that youth begin to understand the extent of the limitations and exclusions that come along with the status of being undocumented when they enter high school and encounter systematic barriers related to legal status. Citizen-children began to recognize the legal divide between themselves and their undocumented family members. Migrant and 1.5 generation youth began their "journey to illegality" (Dreby, 2012) as they realized the limitations of their future.

After youth became aware of the implications of their family's status, they reported becoming extremely discriminating as to who they revealed their status to (Dreby, 2012). Many youths felt like they could only communicate with other undocumented Mexican youth, since they were able to openly share the growing burden of secrecy (Gulbas & Zayas, 2017) and the emotional and psychological effects of living "illegally" (Gulbas, Zayas, Yoon, et. al, 2015).

One unexpected finding was that some youth reported harboring feelings of distrust of their parents because they were either dishonest or silent about their family's documentation status as they were growing up (Zayas & Gulbas, 2017). Anthony, a second-generation youth, expressed the frustration he felt with his parents, stating, "They're lying and all that. Like they knew they didn't have papers, but they didn't tell me" (Zayas & Gulbas, 2017, p. 60).

La Familia

A second major theme in the literature was the impact of parental documentation status on the identity, structure and connectivity of the family unit. Researchers in several studies found that children made very little distinction between the documentation status of their parents and their own, assuming the responsibility of illegality even if they were birthright citizens. (Bloemraad, Sarabia & Fillingim, 2016; Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007;) One of the youth referenced the inherent collective identity of the family and stated simply, "My parents are affected by it [documentation status], which means that I am affected by it" (p. 60).

Family structure. Children included in the review described several ways in which parental documentation status affects the structure of their families. Legal status limits the ability to find high-paying jobs; many undocumented Mexican parents are forced to work longer hours or find second jobs to cover their family's expenses and end up spending a significant amount of time away from the home and their children (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2009; Gulbas, Zayas, Yoon, et. al, 2015). Youth participants reported that the disruption of the family unit and loss of connection to their parents produced feelings of disorientation and confusion (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, 2009). One youth participant noted the feelings of isolation and disconnection she felt after her mother and sister started working, "My mother and sister are gone, so here is where I pass the time. Alone. Always alone" (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, p 60).

Deportation also causes a significant shift in family dynamics. If one parent is deported, it is usually the father of the family. For some of the youth, their father's absence strengthened the bond with their mother, as their family was forced to compensate for a missing member (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). Conversely, a youth in a study by Dreby (2012) reported that children often resented and blamed the family rupture on the parent who stayed in the United States more than the deported parent. Youth who were able to reunify with deported parents describe difficulty returning the traditional roles that were in place before the separation; children reported a strain in their relationships after so much time apart.

Parenting style. Rivas (2008) echoed what many youth participants expressed regarding the authoritarian parenting style that undocumented Mexican parents typically use while raising their children. Traditionally, children of Mexican-origin are expected to listen to parental advice, respect their parents' authority and demonstrate near-unquestioned obedience. Rivas (2008) recalled, "my parents' wishes were paramount when I lived under their roof" (p. 3). Youth develop their collective identity by spending so much time with their families. Many youths reported that they understood that their parents kept them close to home to insulate them from physical danger, real or perceived (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). Parents also told youth that they worried about their children becoming too exposed to American culture.

Biculturalism. Living "betwixt and between" was the way that one youth in Corruner's (2012) study described the phenomenon of living as a bicultural youth in the United States. For the children of undocumented parents, the youth not only have to navigate racial, social and cultural divides between Mexican and American cultures, but legal ones as well. Youth throughout the review shared feelings of safety while in the home; they were free to speak Spanish and embody their identities as Mexican. Youth also noted the sense of belonging they

felt while together with their families, enjoying the customs, food, language and culture of traditional Mexican life (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). Outside of the home, youth understood the need to learn and practice the overt and informal rules of American culture.

Some youth communicated difficulty in managing the expectations of each culture and never felt Mexican or American “enough” to satisfy either culture while others reported positive experiences with biculturalism (Maciel & Knudson-Martin, 2014). Some youth in Bacallao and Smokowski’s (2007) study had difficulty learning to abide by different and often competing sets of expectations, rules and norms, and never felt Mexican or American “enough” to fit in with either culture. Other youth reported positive experiences with biculturalism. One participant reported that she enjoyed learning more about American holidays and customs so that she could create a mixture of the two cultures, rather than maintaining two separate identities. (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2013)

Responsibilities of cultural brokering was a sub-theme of biculturalism mentioned by youth in Bacallao and Smokowski’s (2007) and Gonzales and Ruis’ (2014) studies. Youth described how their undocumented Mexican parents needed assistance navigating American systems and often called upon their children to act as cultural brokers on their behalf. Manuel, a participant in Bacallao and Smokowski’s (2007) study noted how much he and his siblings helped his parents meet the challenges of living undocumented in the U.S. “My parents didn’t really have to adapt because of us [their children]. We are there as their mediator between two cultures.” (p. 63).

Citizenship

The perspectives of children included in the research revealed complex and often contradictory ideas about the definition of citizenship. Although youth in the research did discuss cultural citizenship -- the informal and cultural ways that their parents mirror citizens without being legal citizens (Moreno, 2008)—they focused primarily on the aspects of legal citizenship. Children discussed legal citizenship in terms of two legal statuses—those who had papers and those who did not.

When asked about citizenship in the studies, youth reported that their parents taught them the most about what makes a person a good citizen (Moreno, 2008; Getrich, 2008). Overall, children noted that their parents stressed the importance of engagement in the democratic process because they had the legal right to do so, unlike other members of their family or community. Youth defined “good citizens” as people who obeyed laws, followed rules, socialized with positive people, were civically engaged and registered to vote (Bacallao, Sarabia & Fillingim, 2016; Moreno, 2008). Youth in Moreno’s (2008) study reported that their parents also stressed hard work as a component to good citizenship.

Immigrant equals illegal. The research demonstrated how closely youth connected their personal and familial identities to the notions of illegality. Several studies demonstrated that children of undocumented Mexican immigrants equated the word “immigrant” to “undocumented” and “illegal.” (Bloemraad, Sarabia & Fillingim, 2016; Dreby, 2012; Zayas & Gulbas, 2017). Children interviewed by Dreby (2012) internalized feelings of shame and embarrassment due to their belief in their identity as illegal and criminal. Notably, the only youths in the study who did not make a connection between the definitions of “immigrant” and “illegal” were the children included in the comparison group of children with at least one citizen-

parent. Youth from both sample groups defined “immigrant” as “someone who is not supposed to be here” (p. 841) and resisted sharing their family’s history of immigration.

Citizenship surveillance. Youth living on the borderland of México and the United States communicated their experiences with “citizenship surveillance” (Moreno, 2008; Getrich, 2013), a form of racial and legal profiling where police, ICE and even American citizens assume that someone is undocumented simply because they are or appear to be Mexican. Several youths in the study reported that when “police-ICE” question the legitimacy of their citizenship, it takes away their rights to be identified as legal citizens (Moreno, 2008). Two second-generation youth participants described feelings of helplessness when questioned about their race and legal status, fearing legal repercussions for their parents if they were not cooperative. Yet another Mexican youth reported she was held for several hours on the U.S./México border, even though she was carrying proof of legal citizenship (Moreno, 2008, p. 472).

(Still) no path to citizenship. Currently in the United States, there is no “pathway to citizenship” for undocumented parents or their children. The implications for 1.5 generation and migrant youth were noted to be especially difficult, since their documentation status will not change after they reach the age of 18 and they will face the same restrictions and exclusions as their undocumented parents. DACA recipients do not have access to citizenship; the action grants undocumented children a temporary deferment on deportation and gives the youth the right to study and work in the U.S., but does not offer any guarantee of permanent residency or citizenship. Second-generation youth reported feeling frustrated by the fact that their parents might never have the opportunity to experience life in the United States as legal citizens. One youth participant in Getrich’s (2008) study recognized his “citizen privilege” and reported that

he was aware of the advantages he had over his undocumented family members, “All the time. ALL the time” (p. 453).

Participation. Although undocumented Mexican immigrant parents and their children may be able to claim belonging while participating in informal spaces, fear of legal repercussions often prevents full social or cultural participation and inclusion. One child featured in Bacallao and Smokowski’s (2009) study explained that her undocumented parents limited their attendance at her extracurricular activities or school functions because of their fear of exposure. She expressed anxiety about lying to her teammates whenever they asked why her mom didn’t attend her soccer games like “other parents” (p.11). She reported feeling alienated from her teammates because she could not share the real reason for her mother’s absence.

Youth discussed the restrictions of mobility they experienced because of the legal status of their parents. The inability to drive was a major sub-theme of rights associated with citizenship. Research demonstrated that even citizen-children reported limiting their driving habits because it was an easy way for police to initiate contact with the youth and inquire about their race or status (Moreno, 2008; Bloemraad, Sarabia & Fillingim, 2016; Muñoz, 2016). The 1.5 generation and migrant youth noted that in most states, their legal status prohibited them from obtaining a driver’s license at all. Undocumented youth are also limited in their ability to travel safely within the United States and prohibited from participating in small rites of passage of American culture, like obtaining a library card (Gonzales & Ruis, 2014).

Discrimination

Youth throughout Solis’ (2003) study revealed that they experienced acts of blatant racism and legalism almost daily, in multiple public spaces and from both youth and adults.

Children reported hearing insults targeting their legitimacy and right to belong, such as, “Go back to your country” or “Go back to where you came from” (p.21) Other studies detailed children’s experiences with verbal assaults on their racial identity hearing slurs like, “Dirty Mexicans;” (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2013, p. 11) “wetback,” or “*el mojado*.” (Zayas & Gulbas, 2017, p. 65), even within “safe” spaces like schools or churches. One migrant youth reported, “We are categorized as being ‘*chalin*’ (immigrant gang member). I mean they call us all kinds of different names like, ‘*chiquinaricos* (little drug traffickers) and other dumb names like that.” (Maciel & Knudson-Martin, 2003).

In-group discrimination. Previous research demonstrated that Mexican youth often experience racism and rejection even within groups of other Latinx. Undocumented Mexicans are often identified by other Latinx groups as “less than.” One undocumented Mexican youth describes fighting with Puerto Rican girls who were teasing her because she was an “illegal” Mexican (Solis, 2003). Migrant youth reported experiences of bullying, harassment and ridicule from classmates for wearing traditional styles of dress or speaking English with limited-proficiency (Gonzales & Ruis, 2014; Solis, 2003). Even among Mexican teenagers, there was a big divide between documented and undocumented children.

Language. When discussing the issue of language as it relates to the undocumented Mexican community, most of the previous studies on the topic have focused on the issue of children acting as language brokers for their parents. However, in the studies included in this systematic review, many of the children focused instead on the political and social implications of language and how the use of English correlated to being American (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2009).

Second-generation and 1.5 generation youth reported being very strategic with their use of English. Multiple children of undocumented Mexican immigrants reported that they had conflicted feelings about speaking Spanish in public where Americans were present because they did not want to draw attention to themselves (Getrich, 2013). Alienation from American peers for misunderstanding cultural context or slang was also a worry faced by youth in Bacallao and Smokowski's (2013) article. Migrant youth noted how monolingualism inhibited their sense of belonging and inclusion in mainstream society (Gonzales & Rivas, 2014; Maciel & Knudson-Martin, 2003). One undocumented youth told researchers that learning English was important for youth from immigrant families, but also shared how speaking English affects her self-perception and she stops "feeling" Mexican, "just a little" (p. 5).

Education

The literature demonstrated that youth understood that one of the primary pull factors of immigration to the United States for Mexican parents was the opportunity for their children to receive a quality education.

Educational expectations. Part of the reason that undocumented parents stressed the importance of education for their children was because they did not have access to education while living in México; youth participants from several studies noted that their parents were never able to attend high school (Muñoz, 2016; Maciel & Knudson-Martin, 2014; Bacallao & Smokowski, 2009). Despite the desire for immigrant youth to pursue an education, Rivas (2008) described the dissonance that can occur between the educational expectations of parents and the realities of the social and legal barriers children face while trying to achieve their educational goals. Bacallao and Smokowski (2013) found that many youths reported that their undocumented Mexican parents possess a desire to be more actively involved in their educational journey, but

they simply do not understand the complexities of the American educational system and are often too intimidated to ask for clarification.

Children without a Social Security number are not legally allowed to apply for federal financial aid for college, so most migrant and 1.5 generation youth reported that they were forced to let go of their dreams of attending a university. Some states do not allow undocumented children to attend institutions of higher learning at all, while others require that students pay out-of-state tuition. Undocumented youth reported feelings of hopelessness when they thought about the possibility of a future with few options after graduation (Gonzales & Rivas, 2014; Maciel & Knudson-Martin, 2003).

Fitting in. School is supposed to be a safe place for youth, but research conducted by Getrich (2008) found that many children of undocumented Mexican immigrants viewed schools as institutions of exclusion. One youth participant described schools as “Pure American,” rife with cultural, behavioral and linguistical nuances that were difficult for Mexican-origin youth to navigate. School-age youth reported getting into fights, experiencing power struggles with staff and encountering racism on a near daily basis (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2013). Undocumented and citizen-children in the same study reported that they did not have very many American friends, as American youth tended to devalue traditional Mexican beliefs and customs. One migrant youth described being excluded from a group of American peers, saying, “They want to make us feel lower, or they push us aside...they want to make us feel like less” (Maciel & Knudson-Martin, 2014, p. 490).

Migrant youth in Gonzales and Ruis’ (2014) study reported that their education had been disrupted in adolescence because they were required to work when they were 12 or 13 years old. Migrant children and children living in a rural area reported they had even less access to

educational opportunities and fewer connections to resources than urban youth. They shared the worry with their parents that attempts at upward mobility through education were futile. One other participant in Gonzales and Ruis (2014) study, Adrian, an undocumented migrant youth, commented “I saw what life was like for my parents and brothers. I worried I wouldn’t have more options” (p. 206).

Youth seeking help from school staff also reported that when teachers or administrators found out about their documentation status or the status of their parents, they experienced rejection or dehumanization from adults in positions of authority (Dreby, 2012). Some teachers were openly racist and actively limited undocumented youth’s access to resources available through the school. One child had an experience with a school counselor who questioned how much he “deserved” to continue attending school as an undocumented student. (Getrich, 2008). Manuel, an undocumented high school student, stated that his school guidance counselor dismissed him after finding out about his legal status, saying nothing more than, “I’m sorry, I don’t know what to tell you.” (Munoz, 2006 p. 723) In the same study, one migrant youth commented that whenever he went to school, “I felt like people were always expecting me to fail” (p 723).

Resistance to Illegality

Despite the barriers that children of undocumented Mexican immigrants face, articles by Getrich (2008), Bloemraad and Trost (2006) and Corrunker (2012) feature the stories of youth activists engaged in the immigrant rights movement who are using political action aimed at resisting the notion of illegality. Bloemraad and Trost (2006) found that parents and youth have mutual influence on each other regarding participation in the immigrant rights movement. The literature demonstrated that undocumented parent and youth participants in Muñoz (2016) study

were more likely to attend public demonstrations than participants with legal status, even though the risk to the undocumented individuals was far greater.

Making (re)claims. Youth activists participating in the immigrant rights protests of 2006 and 2010 shared that the focus of the movement involved reclaiming the narrative of their parents' immigration journey and their identities as undocumented (Getrich, 2008; Corruner, 2012). Children involved in the movement saw themselves as deeply connected to their family's roots and saw their parents' struggle as a model of resilience and perseverance, rather than a sign of illegitimacy or illegality (Zayas & Gulbas, 2017). Youth participants reported that their understanding of the meaning of their parents' sacrifice changed over time. One young woman participant in Getrich's (2008) article recognized that as undocumented immigrants, her father may have been incarcerated or killed attempting to come to the United States. She expressed a deep sense of respect and awe toward her parents' story, asserting, "I'm not ashamed of my parents getting here the way they did" (p. 548).

Many youths in Muñoz's (2016) study said that being involved in activism it is a way for them to take action in the face of systems of oppression and power. Confronting fear was identified as a major reason youth became involved in activism (Corruner, 2012; Bloemraad, Sarabia & Fillingim, 2016). Youth activists embraced the idea that change will not come without risk or visibility. Youth who were part of the "undocumented and unafraid" movement (Bloemraad & Trost, 2006; Getrich, 2008; Muñoz, 2016) were breaking the culture of silence and the idea of being "ghosts in the system" or "walking in the dark," to publicly declare their status of being undocumented. Children described how "coming out" about their status relieved some of the shame of living undocumented. In contrast to the culture of fear their parents may

adhere to, youth participants in Getrich's (2008) and Corrunker's (2012)'s stated that that the more public they are about their status, the safer they feel.

In Muñoz's (2016) study youth activists used civil disobedience as a way to increase visibility for immigrant rights and as a symbol of resistance in the face of deportation. One youth activist, Sarai, had been arrested and released for an act of civil disobedience. She described how her relationship with fear changed after she was apprehended. "It's like, what is there to fear? You faced your biggest fear" (p. 724).

Empowerment and inspiration. Youth voices in the research highlighted the fact that many Mexican children are involved in the immigrant rights movement to empower themselves and inspire other young people to take pride in being Mexican and in being part of the local, national and global communities of undocumented immigrants (Muñoz, 2016). For example, in Getrich's (2008) study, Carmen shared how her identity shifted after she became involved in the protests in San Diego in 2006. She shared that she did not have much of a connection to her identity as Mexican prior to her involvement in the protests, identifying as, "Latina, Chicana, whatever you want to call me" (p. 547). After the protests, she reported that her racial and ethnic identity became more important to her. "I know I'm lucky being who I am. I can't picture myself being ashamed of what I am. I grew up Mexican. I am Mexican" (p. 547).

Representation. Voting was another important sub-theme highlighted by both youth and parents in the research related to youth activism (Bloemraad & Trost, 2006; Getrich, 2008; Bloemraad, Sarabia & Fillingim, 2016). Undocumented Mexican immigrant parents stressed the importance of voting, since undocumented immigrants have no right to formal participation within the political system. (Moreno, 2008). Citizen-children were charged with being a "voice for the voiceless" (Bloemraad, Sarabia & Fillingim, 2016) and voice of the community. At the

same time, youth also noted that it was important for them to recognize power that their parents do have to change the system, as demonstrated by their participation in the resistance movement against H.R. 4447 and the One Michigan protests.

Discussion

Although the results of this systematic review produced only a small body of literature to consider, the use of qualitative methods afforded a rich set of data derived from the narratives of children of undocumented Mexican immigrants. Eighteen articles and 13 different sample groups were represented within this systematic review. Each of the studies included contained information gathered from direct interactions with the youth participants.

As the data was synthesized, salient themes embedded in the narratives of the youth began to emerge as they discussed the impact of their parents' status on their lives. Children detailed how the legal status of their parents impacted their identity and sense of belonging while informing their individual sense of self, collective identity as family, definition of citizenship, experiences with discrimination, involvement in educational systems, resistance to illegality and empowerment and inspiration through activism.

Overall, children included in the research demonstrated a deep understanding of the risks, dangers, complexities and nuances inherent in living undocumented in the United States. Previous research on this topic posits that the status of being undocumented is considered, like poverty, a fundamental disadvantage for those affected. Youth participants in articles in this review confirmed that parental legal status did have negative impact on their lives across individual, familial, social, cultural and legal systems.

Overwhelmingly, fear was the theme most often repeated throughout the literature and appeared as a major topic in 17 of the 18 articles reprinted in the review. Youth participants discussed the impact of fear on their well-being at length and reported living their lives in a constant state of stress, fear, anxiety and hypervigilance. Participants were keenly aware of the possibility of the arrest and deportation of one or both of their parents. Youth were aware of presence of “police-ICE” in their neighborhoods, schools and community spaces and even the sight of law enforcement left youth with intense feelings of anxiety and distress, regardless of documentation status. For youth participants, it seemed they could not stress enough how much of their identity was tied to fear. One youth participant aptly stated, “People need to live. Like, if you live in fear every single day of your life, are you happy?” (Munoz, 2016, p. 724).

As Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) noted, the desire to maintain close connections with family members was present among the youth interviewed, but the actualization of that desire becomes challenging when faced with the harsh realities of living life without legal status in the U.S. Researchers interviewed several undocumented immigrant parents along with their children and found that five out of seven mothers included reported that they began working outside of the home for the first time after their partner was deported. Interviews with their children detailed their struggles with feelings of isolation and depression after the reconfiguration of their family structure. As the family is the nexus of belonging in traditional Mexican culture, the rupture of bonds between family members disrupts all other areas of their lives as well.

Yet, the desire to remain close to family members was not in question among youth participants and youth continued to view family as a source of strength and fought to maintain connection with the loved ones in their lives. One adolescent youth was explaining the connection he has to his family to an American friend, saying, “That’s actually a really big part

of the Hispanic population, being close to the family and the family being a priority all the time” (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, p. 32). Maintaining close connection to family and cultural ties is known to be a major factor in an individual and community’s ability to build resilience.

Youth challenged the legal boundaries of legal citizenship to include notions of both social and cultural belonging. They tended to embrace the idea of a “good citizen” passed down by their parents and expressed a desire to make their parents proud by completing their educational goals, working hard and becoming successful. Ironically, many of the core values of good citizenship stressed by undocumented Mexican parents are shared by many American citizens, at least ideally. Hard work, dedication, contribution and success are valued between both cultures but are rarely recognized as such.

Although some research found that youth are beginning to understand the benefits of biculturalism and view their fluidity as a tool to increase mobility, balancing the demands and conflicts of biculturalism proved to be difficult for others in the research. Children reported that they often faced pressures to assimilate rather than integrate into mainstream American culture; they also reported they felt conflicted by how much they were even willing to “become American” or “act American.” Managing the demands of biculturalism was reported to be especially difficult for many 1.5-generation and migrant youth because they faced an added layer of social and legal exclusion. Mateo, one young man in Bacallao and Smokowski (2009) study summed up his experience with the constant pressures of biculturalism this way: “You have to be able to look at a situation and see where you are at, which people you are with, what places you are at, what are the right ways of acting, what to say, what not to say, what language you say it, how to say it” (p. 441).

Discrimination, racial profiling, criminalization of immigration and national rhetoric about illegal immigration affected children's perception of themselves and their community. Children often experienced racism and instances where their legitimacy or legal status was called into question. One youth shared how, as a child, his mother had to carry his birth certificate in her purse to make sure she could readily prove his citizenship. The young man was a second-generation youth and had the legal right to claim citizenship, yet he questions, "Who really belongs when they have to carry proof?" (Moreno, 2008, p.56). As part of the undocumented Mexican community in the U.S., youth reported internalizing the notion that "immigrant" is simultaneous with "illegal." The foundation of youth's identity then becomes synonymous with Other, bad, dangerous, and criminal. If children are led to believe that the whole undocumented Mexican community is considered illegal, they will naturally question their right to belong. Most children understand that "criminals" do not belong within bounds of who an American should be.

Parents continually stressed the importance of education for their children, as many undocumented Mexican immigrants left México with hopes for a better future, which included their child's access to a quality education. Youth reported desires to exceed their parents' expectations and find a way to surpass the barriers that hinder their participation and attend college or a university. School was reported to be both a site of opportunity and oppression for children of undocumented Mexican immigrants. Many 1.5-generation and migrant youth encountered experiences of exclusion and racism as they navigated their schooling and reported mixed feelings about graduating at all, due to limited vocational and educational opportunities after high school. Conversely, a few youth activists viewed schools as sites of mobilization and resistance in the immigrant rights movement.

One empowering theme that was present throughout the literature was that most of the youth participants expressed optimism about their future in the United States, despite the systematic and systemic barriers that were designed to prohibit belonging to a place that has become their home. Civic engagement was a primary way that children of undocumented Mexican immigrants faced their fears of arrest and deportation. Youth stressed the importance of increasing visibility of the struggles of undocumented immigrants, empowering their communities to mobilize and make change, and pushing back on law enforcement and national immigration policy to find a place to belong in a country that is actively rejecting them.

Limitations and Future Research

This systematic review revealed several important implications for future research. As the body of literature is very small, any additional studies that feature the voices of children of undocumented Mexican immigrants would add valuable information to the current body of knowledge. This systematic review was representative of only 13 sample groups from very different locations in the United States; the results may not be able to be generalized to other Mexican-origin youth with undocumented parents.

Historically, reaching the undocumented Mexican community has been problematic because the community is difficult to access, but researchers in the studies included in this review described how youth were very open to discussing their relationship to their parents' documentation status when approached about the subject. However, most of the authors stressed that it is essential to first build trust with the community, either by direct membership, invitation or through a cultural broker.

The “Undocumented and unafraid” and other immigrant rights movements may allow researchers more access to the community, as more and more youth are re-defining their narratives and stepping out of the shadows to share their stories of being undocumented. As they interface with other undocumented communities, children are beginning to embrace the complex, multi-faceted aspects of their identities. Future research should consider the intersectionality of all the identities of Mexican-origin immigrant youth. For example, participates in Muñoz (2016) also identified as LGBTQ and described the similarities between their “coming out” experiences. One participant added, “I mean, we talk about gender, race, class, privilege but we never talk about status in terms of your legal status.” (Muñoz, 2016, p. 6).

More research is also needed to understand how location compounds the impact of parental documentation status as it relates to access, education, poverty and urban networks. Gonzales and Ruis (2014) interviewed migrant youth and found out that their transient lifestyle is another layer of intersectionality unique to their population. Migrant youth expressed a deep rift in their feeling of connectedness even to other undocumented Mexican communities.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Given the amount of influence that fear has on the lives of children of undocumented Mexican immigrants, it is imperative that social workers understand the deep and lasting impact of fear on the lives of these youth. Living in a constant state of hypervigilance and stress causes youth to experience a variety of mental and physical health concerns. If practitioners have not been personally affected by deportation and/or are not knowledgeable about the legal and social realities of children of undocumented immigrants, we will treat acute behavioral concerns, symptoms of depression or generalized signs of anxiety without recognizing that the root of

those fears are so much deeper and more influential than documented and/or White practitioners will ever truly understand.

When collaborating with Mexican-origin youth seeking care, social workers also need to recognize that the notions of illegality and deportability produce a particular kind of trauma; the racism and discrimination that that youth reported experiencing will have lasting effects on their sense of safety and self-esteem. It is wise for White practitioners to acknowledge the privilege and power inherent in their working relationship with the youth and discuss how its effects play out in the therapeutic relationship. Citizen-privilege may also be a topic that needs to be addressed by the social worker if the client-practitioner relationship reaches a level where youth feel comfortable to disclose their own status or that of their parents. However, practitioners must also be aware that some youth might be open and eager to discuss their family's status and immigration story and be careful not to perpetuate a culture of silence in the therapeutic relationship.

Reconstructing Identities

Rivas (2008) beautifully described his connection to his family's immigration story as a "single, uninterrupted narrative that is the source of our family's pride." (p. 301). Since so many youth participants equated the identity of immigrant with the status of illegal, social workers should ask youth about their connection to their family's immigration story and their beliefs around their parents' decision to immigrate to the United States. Social workers can serve as witnesses to the narratives of clients while supporting their growth and ability to articulate, recreate and reclaim the meaning behind their personal and collective history.

With the increasing criminalization of immigration and the introduction of Executive Order 13767, which declared Mexican immigrants a threat to the country's safety and security, the United States is once again shifting its attitude toward the legal and social exclusion of undocumented immigrants, particularly those of Mexican-origin. Social workers must stay aware of local, state and national policies which affect this population and take any action possible. Attending marches, contacting elected officials, protesting or marching alongside of the undocumented community members; and voting in local, state and national elections are all ways that social workers can help influence the political system as it continues to evolve. Social workers need to have conversations regarding systemic and systematic oppression outside of social work circles; as members of a profession committed to working for social justice, conversations about privilege and oppression also need to happen within our own families, larger professional networks, White spaces and public forums.

True change will only happen when oppression and entitlement are broken down by the dominant culture; White professionals must commit to dismantling the systems of power from within and recognize how our work may contribute to our clients' ongoing encounters with power and oppression. As the family of social workers is ever-expanding, care should be taken to elevate the voices and perspectives of social workers of color within the field. Bilingual providers should be available for families as often as possible. Social workers must also be creative, flexible and genuine in our reactions with youth from undocumented communities and provide them a safe space in which to receive care.

Finally, social workers must also remember that we are not in the position of "saving" a community; the profession of social work recognizes and respects the agency that clients and families have in deciding whether or not to seek assistance from social service providers outside

of the Mexican community at all. Many of the youth involved in the research reported that they are seeking help and protection from within their own communities, rather than from external sources. For example, in accordance with the rules of the Institutional Review Board and in an effort to maintain anonymity of participants, Muñoz (2016) asked the youth if they wanted to sign a confidentiality agreement before agreeing to the study; every single participant declined to do so. One young woman, Yhaira, explained to the researcher why she turned down the offer, “My narratives, my story is a political act. Besides, I didn’t ask for your protection” (p. 720).

Conclusion

Throughout history, youth have been at the forefront of social change and political movements. Resistance to oppression manifests itself in many ways, and the children of undocumented Mexican immigrants represented in the literature have been fighting back against the notion of illegality. They are continually making new claims to their rights within the cultural and legal boundaries of citizenship, personally and politically. Breaking the culture of silence in micro- and mezzo- level systems to “coming out” as part of the national and global undocumented community, youth represented in the literature demonstrated that they possessed incredible tenacity and optimism in the face of opposition. Even as migrant and 1.5-generation youth realized the limitations and exclusions of their undocumented status, they too demonstrated their willingness to try to change the trajectory of their futures and continue to *salir adelante*, or persevere.

Within the systematic review, youth participants shared how being Mexican is not tied to a specific place, but rather, it is a general state of connectedness to a history and a set of customs and beliefs that keeps youth grounded in their history, collectivity and identity. Although the pressures of assimilation and Americanization are considerable, one research participant,

Nohemi, commented, “I think that one can live a while lifetime here [in the U.S.], and you will never ever let go of these [Mexican] customs...the customs are part of me” (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2009, p. 432). Juan, another participant in the study eloquently stated, “My blood, my Mexican blood, my country’s flag, my color [pointed to arm’s skin color]—coffee—my language, my culture, our customs, the way we do things, all this makes me proud to be Mexican” (p. 432). The pride and perseverance of the youth represented in this study demonstrate how children of undocumented Mexican immigrants find the strength to continue to define and redefine their ever-evolving connection to México, immigration and citizenship.

References

- Ayón, C. (2013). Service needs among Latino immigrant families: Implications for social work practice. *Social Work* 59(1) 13-24. Doi: 10.1093/sw/swt031.
- Ayón, C. (2016). Talking to Latino children about race, inequality, and discrimination: Raising families in an anti-immigrant political environment. *Journal of Society for Social Work and Research* 7(3), 449-477.
- Ayón, C., Aisenberg, E., & Erera, P. (2010). Learning how to dance with the public welfare system: Mexican parents' efforts to exercise their voice. *Journal of Public Child Welfare* 4: 263-286. DOI: 10.1080/15548732.2010.496077.
- Bacallao, M.L., Smokowski, P.R. (2007). The costs of getting ahead: Mexican family system changes after immigration. *Family Relations* 56: 52-66. Doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2007.00439.x. Retrieved on 11/2/17.
- Bacallao, M.L. & Smokowski, P.R. (2009). Entre dos mundos/between two worlds: Bicultural development in context. *Primary Prevention* 30: 421-451.
Doi: 10.1007/s10935-009-0176-x. Retrieved on 10/28/17.
- Bacallao, M.L. Smokowski, P.R. (2013). Obstacles to getting ahead: how assimilation mechanisms impact undocumented Mexican immigrant families. *Social Work in Public Health* 28: 1-20. Doi: 10.1080/19371910903269687. Retrieved on 10/28/17.
- Bloemraad, I., Sarabia, H., Fillingim, A.E. (2016). "Staying out of trouble" and doing what is "right": ideals, and the effects of legal status on second-generation youth. *American Behavioral Scientist* 60(13), 1534-1552. Doi: 10.1177/0002764216664941. Retrieved on 10/22/17.

- Bloemraad, I. & Trost, C. (2008). It's a family affair: Intergenerational mobilization in Spring 2006 protests. *American Behavioral Scientist* 52(4): 507-532. Doi: 10.1177/0002764208324604. Retrieved on 10/30/17.
- Corrunker, L. (2012). "Coming out of the shadows": DREAM Act activism in the context of global anti-deportation activism. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 19(1), 143-167. Doi:10.1353/gls.2012.0013. Retrieved on 10/30/17.
- Dreby, J. (2012). The burden of deportation on children in Mexican immigrant families *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74: 829-845. Doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.00989.x. Retrieved on 10/28/17
- Getrich, C.M. (2008). Negotiating boundaries of social belonging. *American Behavioral Scientist* 52(4), 533-556. Doi: 10.1177/00027642083240605. Retrieved on 10/26/17
- Getrich, C.M. (2013). "Too bad I'm not an obvious citizen.": The effects of racialized US immigration enforcement practices on second-generation Mexican youth. *Latino Studies* 11(4), 462-482. Doi: 10.1057/lst.2013.28. Retrieved on 10/22/17.
- Gulbas, L.E., Zayas, L.H., Yoon, H., Szyk, H., Aguilar-Gaxiola, S., & Natera, G. (2015). Deportation experiences and depression among U.S. citizen-children with undocumented Mexican parents. *Child Care, Health and Development* 42(2), 220-230. Doi: 10.1111/cch.12307. Retrieved on 10/22/17.
- Gulbas, L.E. & Zayas, L.H. (2017). Exploring the effects of U.S. immigration enforcement on the well-being of citizen children in Mexican immigrant families. *Journal of the Social Sciences* 3(4), 53-69. Doi: 10.7758/RSF.2017.3.4.04. Retrieved on 11/7/17.

Gonzales, R.G., & Ruiz, A.G. (2014). Dreaming beyond the fields: undocumented youth, rural realities and a constellation of disadvantage. *Latino Studies* 122(2), 194-216.

Doi: 10.1057/lst.2014.23. Retrieved on 11/8/17.

Hall, M., & Greenman, E. (2013). Housing and neighborhood quality among undocumented Mexican and Central American immigrants. *Social Science Research* 42: 1712-1725.

Doi: 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2013.07.011.

Hillemeier, Marianne M., Landale, Nancy S., & Oropesa, R.S., (2015). Family legal status and health: Measurement dilemmas in studies of Mexican-origin children. *Social Science Medicine* 138(2015) 57-67. Doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.15.0380277-9536.

Holleran, L. & Waller, M. (2003). Sources of resilience among Chicano/a youth:

Forging identities in the borderlands. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 20(5):335-350. Doi: 10.1023/A:1026043828866

Kiang, L., Yip, T., Gonzales-Backen, M., Witkow, M., & Fuligni, A.J. (2006). Ethnic identity and the daily psychological well-being of adolescents from Mexican and Chinese backgrounds. *Child Development* 77(5), 1338-1350.

Doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00938.x

Krieger, J., & Higgins, D.L. (2011). Housing and health: Time again for public action. *Public Health* 92 758-768. Retrieved from:

http://www.pccyfs.org/2011_Spring_Conf/2011_Conference_Present/3_Thursday/T10_Housig_and%20Health.pdf

Kwon, H. (2015). Intersectionality in interaction: Immigrant youth doing American from an outsider-within position. *Social Problems* 62, 623-641. Doi: 10.1093/socpro/spv019

- Landale, Nancy S., Hardie, Jessica Halliday, Oropesa, R.S., & Hillemeier, Marianne M. (2015). Behavioral functioning among Mexican-origin children: Does parental legal status matter? *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 56(1) 2-18.
Doi: 01177/0022146514567896.
- Luna, G.T. (2004). Immigrants, cops and slumlords in the Midwest. *HeinOnline* 61: 61-84.
Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228164621_Immigrants_Cops_and_Slumlords_in_the_Midwest.
- Martinez, D. & Slack, J. (2013). What part of “illegal” don’t you understand? The social consequences of criminalizing unauthorized Mexican migrants in the United States. *Social & Legal Studies*, 1-17. Doi: 10.1177/0964663913484638.
- Maciel, J.A., & Knudson-Martin, C. (2014). Don’t end up in the fields: identity construction among Mexican adolescent immigrants, their parents and sociocontextual processes. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy* 40(4), 484-497. Doi: 10.1111/jmft.12044.
Retrieved on 11/7/17.
- Moreno, M. (2008). Lessons of belonging and citizenship among *hijas/os de inmigrantes Mexicanos*. *Social Justice* 35(1), 50-74. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29768479> on 11/8/17.
- Muñoz, S.M. (2016). Undocumented and unafraid: Understanding the disclosure management process for undocumented college students and graduates. *Journal of College Student Development* 57(6), 715-728. Doi: 10.1353/csd.2016.0070. Retrieved on 11/7/17.
- Oropesa, R.S., Landale, N., & Hillemeier (2015). Family legal status and health: Measurement dilemmas in studies of Mexican-origin children. *Social Science & Medicine* 138: 57-67.
Doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.05.038

- Perez, Carmela M. & Fortuna, Lisa. (2005). Psychosocial stressors, psychiatric diagnosis and utilization of mental health services among undocumented Latinos. *The Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Services*, 3(½), 107-123. Doi: 10.1300/J191v03n01_06.
- Portes, A. & Rivas, A. (2011). The adaptation of migrant children. *Future of Children* 21(1) 219-246. Retrieved from http://www.futureofchildren.org/publications/docs/21_01_10.pdf
- Raymond, J., Wheeler, W., & Brown, M.J. (2011). Inadequate and unhealthy housing 2007-2009. *Supplements* 60(01); 21-27. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/su6001a4.htm>
- Rivas, A. (2008). We are the people who love us and the stories we tell ourselves. *The Annals of Academy of Political and Social Science* 620:1-3. Doi: 10.1177/0002716208322725. Retrieved on 11/6/17.
- Saleebey, D. (1994). Culture, theory, and narratives: The intersection of meanings in practice. *Social Work* 39(4), 351-359. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23717045>
- Shief, H., Ullman, C., & Nunez Mchiri, I. (2014) Mexican (im)migrant students and education: Constructs of and resistance to “illegality.” *Latino Studies* 12(2) 172-185. Doi:10.1057/lst.2014.32.
- Solis, J. (2003). Re-thinking illegality as a violence against, not by Mexican immigrants, children, and youth. *Journal of Social Issues*, 59(1): 15-31. Doi: 10.1111/1540-4560.00002. Retrieved on 11/7/17.
- Sullivan, M.M., & Rehm, R. (2005). Mental health of undocumented Mexican immigrants: A review of the literature. *Advances in Nursing Science* 28(3) 240-251. Retrieved from <http://www.williamperezphd.com/articles/sullivan-rehm-2005.pdf>

- Tienda, M., & Haskins, R. (2011). Immigrant children: Introducing the issue. *Immigrant Children* 21(1). Retrieved from http://futureofchildren.org/publications/docs/21_01_01.pdf
- Tovar, J. & Feliciano, C. (2009). "Not Mexican-American, but Mexican": Shifting ethnic self-identifications among children of Mexican immigrants. *Latino Studies* 7(2), 197-221. Doi: 10.1057/lst.2009.18
- Vollmer Hanna, A-M., Ortega, D.M. (2014). Salir adelante (perseverance): Lessons from the Mexican immigrant experience. *Journal of Social Work* 0(0), 1-19. DOI: 10.1177/1468017314560301.
- Zayas, L.H., Aguilar-Gaxiola, S., Yoon, H., & Rey, G.N. (2015). The distress of citizen-children with detained and deported parents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* (2015) 24: 3213-3223. Doi: 10.1007/s10826-015-0124-8. Retrieved on 11/8/17
- Zayas, L.H. & Gulbas, L.E. (2017). Process of belonging for citizen-children of undocumented Mexican immigrants. *Child and Family Studies* 26, 2463-2474. Doi: 10.1007/s10826-017-0755-z. Retrieved on 10/28/17
- Zhou, M. (1997). Growing up American: The challenge confronting immigrant children of immigrants. *Annual Review* 23(1) 63-95. Doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.23.1.63.
- Zuniga, M. (2004). Mexican immigrants: "Would you sacrifice your life for a job?". *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Services* 2(1/2), 119-138. Doi: 10.1300/J191v02n01_08