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Discovering One's Undocumented Immigration Status: The Perspectives of College Students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

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by

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ABSTRACT

Discovering One's Undocumented Immigration Status:

The Perspectives of College Students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

by

Monica C. Cornejo

Using Communication Privacy Management (Petronio, 2002) and the Revelation Risk Model (Afifi & Steuber, 2009) this study explores Deferred for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients' discovery of their immigration status. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 DACA recipients—primarily of Latinx and Asian backgrounds—across California to explore DACA recipients' perceptions of: (a) why family members might or might not tell their children (i.e., DACA recipients) about their undocumented status; (b) what such disclosures, when they occur, look like communicatively; (c) how the disclosures affect their family relationships; and (d) how the disclosures affect DACA recipients' identity. Results suggest different emerging themes of the disclosure process (e.g., DACA recipients' perceptions of their family members' disclosure motivations and disclosure-strategies used by DACA recipients' parents) for DACA recipients who learned of their undocumented status as children or who always knew their status compared to those who were told their status during adolescence. In addition, our findings shed light on DACA recipients' perceptions of how this disclosure process influenced their family relationships (e.g., resentment, parental appreciation) and identity reconceptualization (e.g., empowerment, dehumanized). These findings help extend prior communication privacy

management scholarship with an understudied group, as well as provide practical implications for DACA recipients and allies that work with immigrant youth communities.

In the United States, recent political conversations around immigration have largely focused on the future of undocumented[1] immigrant youth who were brought to the United States as children (Zong, Ruiz Soto, Batalova, Gelatt, & Capps, 2017). These youth are known as DREAMers—undocumented immigrant youth who qualify for the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. The DREAM Act, if passed, would have offered these undocumented youth a path to legal residency because they migrated to the United States as children, and they attended school in the United States from an early age (American Immigration Council, 2017). Although various versions of the DREAM Act have continued to fail in Congress, some DREAMers have obtained temporary relief from deportation through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that former U.S. President Barack Obama established in 2012 (Gonzales, Terriquez, & Ruszczyk, 2014). The DACA program allows qualifying undocumented youth[2] to receive temporary relief from deportation, a two-year work permit, and access to applying for and obtaining a social security number. Since DACA's inception, around 800,000 DREAMers have disc

[1] Undocumented immigrant refers to an individual who entered the United States without inspection or who entered the United States with authorization but overstayed their visa (IRS, 2018).

[2] To be eligible for DACA, applicants must meet the following guidelines: must have been less than 31 years of age as of June 15, 2012; arrived to the United States before the age of 16; resided continuously in the United States since June 15, 2007 until the present time; were present in the United States on June 15, 2012; no lawful status on June 15, 2012; currently enrolled in high school, have a GED or high school diploma, or have been honorably discharged from the U.S. Coast Guard or Armed forces, and have not been convicted of a felony, three misdemeanors, or pose a threat to the United States' public safety (USCIS, 2018).

Many undocumented immigrants, including DACA recipients, who come to the United States as children do not learn of their undocumented status until their family discloses such information to them. If they do know of their status at a young age, undocumented youth may not fully understand its meaning and implications until high school when their undocumented status poses certain barriers to applying for college, internships, or employment (Gonzales, 2011). At that point, undocumented youth might talk to their family members (e.g., parents, grandparents, siblings) about their undocumented status, perhaps to find ways to attend college or to obtain employment. Nevertheless, postposing this conversation until high school can affect undocumented children's relationship with their family members (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011). For example, previous research suggests that some undocumented children feel resentment toward their parent(s) when their status is disclosed later in life (Gonzales, 2011). Delaying this conversation is also likely to lead to identity uncertainty and require immigrant children to reconceptualize their identity (C. Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & M. Suárez-Orozco, 2011; Hogg, 2007).

Indeed, immigrant children might deeply reflect on their self-conceptualization because an undocumented identity is often categorized negatively and unidimensionally as "illegal" (DeAngelo, Schuster, & Stebleton, 2016). For DACA recipients, such a negative identity might be hurtful because they grew up in the United States, and up until that point, DACA recipients felt similar to their documented peers (e.g., U.S. Citizens, permanent residents; Hernandez et al., 2010; Jefferies & Dabach, 2015; Seif, 2016). Learning that they have a stigmatized undocumented identity can become a core part of DACA recipients' self-view

(Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguineti, 2013). Previous research (Núñez, 2013; Smith, 1992) suggests that identity labels can influence self-view; therefore, the negative perceptions society has of undocumented immigrants (e.g., "illegals" or "parasites") is likely to affect immigrant youth's self-concept and self-esteem (Suárez-Orozco, 2012). Moreover, learning of their undocumented status may lead immigrant youth to feel uncertain of their identity and group membership (Hogg, 2007).

Although previous research (e.g., Gonzales & Chavez, 2012) has found that learning of one's undocumented status can be traumatic, limited research has explored how immigrant youth discover their undocumented status (i.e., what such disclosures look like communicatively, and the motivations their family members have for disclosing their status), how the discovery affects their identity and family relationships, and how the discovery specifically affects DACA recipients who have unique experiences separate from other undocumented immigrants. Identity is a sense of self that is co-constructed through communicating and creating relationships with others (Kam & Hecht, 2009). DACA recipients are likely to experience identity uncertainty after learning of their undocumented status from a family member(s) (Hogg, 2007). Thus, focusing on the communicative process of status disclosure is crucial to understanding the influence that such disclosure has on DACA recipients' identity.

In addition to reconceptualizing one's identity, learning that one is undocumented also is likely to affect DACA recipients' relationship with their family. Several studies have found that immigrant family members often wait until adolescence to disclose to their children their children's undocumented status, which can result in resentment (e.g., Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Nevertheless, such findings

do not elucidate how relational outcomes can depend on the ways in which family members disclose an undocumented status and parents' motivations for disclosure. Drawing from the privacy management literature that has considered motivations for concealment and disclosure (Ow, Katz, 1999), DACA recipients might perceive some motivations as legitimate and well-intentioned such as a family member's desire to protect the DACA recipient. In turn, protection motivation might decrease the likelihood of DACA recipients experiencing resentment toward family members upon discovery. Exploring DACA recipients' perceptions of their family members' motivations for disclosure, as well as how family members informed DACA recipients of their undocumented status can enhance our theorizing of the conditions under which status discovery can negatively or positively affect family relationships.

To understand the motivations for disclosure and the effects of disclosure, this study uses Communication Privacy Management Theory (Petronio, 2002, 2004, 2010) and the Revelation Risk Model (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). Based on these two theories, this study explores DACA recipients' perceptions of: (a) why family members might or might not tell their children about their undocumented status; (b) what such disclosures, when they occur, look like communicatively; (c) how the disclosures affect their family relationships; and (d) how the disclosures affect DACA recipients' identity. CPM is useful in focusing our attention on rules that dictate who has access to private information and why they may or may not gain access to such information. Nonetheless, CPM is primarily rooted in the experiences of White U.S. Americans; therefore, we know little about how past work on privacy management between family members applies to undocumented immigrants of Latinx and Asian origin (Kam, Steuber Fazio, & Mendez Murillo, 2018; Scranton, Afifi, T., Afifi, W., & Gangi,

2016). Thus, this exploration can shed light on privacy rules and the process of permeability of privacy boundaries within Latinx and Asian immigrant families. Understanding the disclosure process can help future immigrant families learn when and how to inform immigrant children of their undocumented status in ways that help reduce the traumatizing nature of status discovery.

Family Members' Motivations and Timing of Undocumented-Status Disclosure

For immigrant children, learning of their undocumented status can be traumatic, possibly leading to shock, anger, frustration, hopelessness, and suicide attempts (Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Gonzales et al., 2013; Pérez, Cortés, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010). The limited research that has been conducted suggests that family members often wait to tell their children of their undocumented status until middle adolescence to protect them from their stigmatized identity, but we know little about how such delayed disclosures affect children's family relationships and identity (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Family members' decision to tell their children of their children's undocumented status might be best explained by Communication Privacy Management theory (CPM; Petronio, 2002, 2004, 2010) and the Revelation Risk Model (Afifi & Steuber, 2009).

Communication Privacy Management Theory

CPM is a theory that has been used to elucidate the disclosure of private information within a family context. At its core, CPM focuses on risk-assessment as a primary component for disclosure of a secret (i.e., "a conscious choice to withhold information from a particular person"; Afifi & Steuber, 2009, p. 154). Using a boundary metaphor, CPM proposes two boundaries of private information (i.e.,

exterior boundary and interior boundary). The *exterior boundary* describes how family members share information outside the family unit. The family unit owns and manages information within the exterior boundaries. The family has established rules or norms of whether and how this information should be shared with outside members. For example, exterior boundaries might be formed around a family's undocumented status to keep non-family members from knowing about the family's undocumented status. Using CPM and semi-structured interviews, Kam, Steuber Fazio, and Mendez Murillo (2019) found that some undocumented Mexican-origin youth disclosed their status to non-family members such as friends, teachers, and school counselors to garner emotional and informational support. To acquire assistance from non-family members, some youth re-shaped the exterior boundaries established within their family.

The interior boundary can help explain why family members might wait to tell their children of the child's undocumented status. *Interior boundary* describes how family members share information within the family unit (i.e., with each other). Information within this boundary might only be shared with certain members of the family, while excluding others (Petronio, 2002, 2004, 2010). Once a new member is informed of a secret, the rules managing the interior boundary change (Afifi, 2003; Petronio, 2002). Applied to undocumented disclosures, some family members form interior boundaries that exclude their children from knowing their undocumented status until the children reach high school (Gonzales, 2011). Among DACA recipients of Latinx and Asian backgrounds, family members might wait to reveal to them their undocumented status because cultural values influence the norms around information management with their children. For example, it may be that some Latinx and Asian immigrant families adhere to a hierarchical family structure, and parents' authority

over their children's information may make it acceptable to withhold information from the children (Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994; Smetana, Metzger, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006).

Moreover, the adherence to respeto, a value commonly reported among Latinx samples, means Latinx immigrant children might not challenge the delayed disclosure out of respect for their parents' authority (Calzada, Fernandez, & Cortes, 2010; Schwab, 2013; Valdés, 1996). Immigrant families who adhere to a hierarchical family structure and respeto might not disclose certain private information to their children because it is expected that the older family member is in charge of managing the child's information (Smetana, Metzger, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006). Moreover, the privacy rules among Latinx and Asian families may be influenced by acculturation gaps that may exist between DACA recipients and their parents such that the two parties adhere to different levels of acculturation toward U.S. mainstream culture. Because DACA recipients spent most of their childhood in the United States, they are more likely to adhere to U.S. mainstream culture (e.g., the right to know personal information) than their parents who immigrated to the United States at a later age. Thus, acculturation gaps may create different perceptions surrounding privacy management rules between DACA recipients and their parents.

Motivations for boundary permeability. Some immigrant children are aware of their undocumented status in early childhood, whereas other immigrant children do not learn of their undocumented status until they are older (e.g., adolescence; Gonzales, 2011). For immigrant children who do not learn of their undocumented status until later, cultural norms around privacy management might be a factor that influences the disclosure process and parents' motivations for disclosure (Julian,

McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994). For example, some Latinx and Asian immigrant families are more likely to engage in information sharing when directly asked as opposed to offering the information unsolicited (Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, & Yau, 2009). This may explain why previous research has found that some immigrant children reported learning of their undocumented status at a young age, while others reported learning of their undocumented status at a later age (Gonzales, 2011). Perhaps immigrant children varied in their direct request for such information or certain external factors (e.g., applying to college or applying for a job) prompted such requests for information. Alternatively, it may be that parents' motivations for status disclosures were influenced by the child's age. Parents might have felt that it was not appropriate to discuss with a young child an "adult conversations" that pertained to an undocumented status, which might have deterred their motivations from talking with their children of the child's undocumented status.

Because the age at which immigrant children learn of their undocumented status varies, this study explores the factors that spark such disclosures from family. When immigrant families' interior privacy boundary becomes permeable, this study asks, what factors contribute to that permeability? What motivates parents (or other family members) to inform their children of the children's undocumented status? Understanding the factors that contribute to interior privacy boundary permeability is crucial because DACA recipients may perceive certain factors as more legitimate than others, which in turn, can affect DACA recipients' family relationships and identity.

Drawing from past disclosure literature, we know that people are motivated to share secrets for many reasons (Petronio, 2002, 2004, 2010; Vangelisti, 1994). For example, some people might be motivated to share a secret because of what Vangelisti

et al. (2001) refers to as *exposure*—disclosing a secret when the DACA recipient directly seeks information about the secret, or the person would learn of the secret through other means. Among immigrant families, some family members might disclose when the children seek out pertinent information related to their undocumented status (e.g., social security card to apply for a driver's license). Immigrant children might also learn of their undocumented status because of what Vangelisti et al. (2001) calls, *important reason*—disclosing a secret during a crisis or when the disclosure is necessary. Some immigrant family members might inform the immigrant children of their undocumented status because of a nearby Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid.

Prior work on disclosure has identified many other potential reasons for sharing a secret, which can inform our understanding of family members' motivations for revealing to their child that the child is undocumented. Nevertheless, such work has not considered factors that contribute to the interior privacy boundary permeability of undocumented immigrants or DACA recipients. Thus, the following research question was created:

RQ1: According to DACA recipients, what prompted their family to inform DACA recipients of their (i.e., DACA recipients') undocumented status?

Revelation Risk Model: What might Disclosure Look like for Undocumented Families?

The main purpose of RRM is to identify the factors (e.g., relational closeness, risk assessment, communication efficacy) that predict the disclosure of private information (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). In addition, RRM describes six disclosure

strategies that individuals may use to share private information, which are of particular interest to the present study. RRM suggests that individuals may engage in: (1) *preparation* and *rehearsal,* which refer to practicing one's disclosure with another person in preparation of revealing the secret to the targeted individual; (2) *directness,* which refers to explicitly revealing the secret to the DACA recipient in person. The *directness* strategy also encompasses disclosing a secret even if it was first brought-up by the other person; (3) *third party revelations* refers to revealing a secret to a third person who will share the secret with the targeted person, (4) *incremental disclosure* refers to disclosing the secret in small doses to see the reaction of the family member prior to disclosing further, (5) *entrapment* refers to revealing the secret during an argument or out of anger, and (6) *indirect mediums* refers to revealing a secret through the phone or written text (e.g., letter, email; Afifi & Steuber, 2009).

Among immigrant families, these strategies might also be seen when family members reveal their child's undocumented status to that child. For example, undocumented activist and Pulitzer Prize winner Jose Antonio Vargas published a news article sharing how he learned of his undocumented status and the conversation that ensued with his grandfather afterward (Vargas, 2011). In his account, Vargas (2011) discovered his undocumented status after trying to apply for a driver's license, which led him to discover that his green-card was fake. After learning of his fake documents, Vargas confronted his grandfather about the card. His grandfather acknowledged that he had purchased the document and told Vargas not to show it to others. Vargas's account suggests that his grandfather used a *direct strategy* when revealing his undocumented status after being confronted by Vargas (Afifi & Steuber, 2009; Vargas, 2011).

Vargas's account of discovering his undocumented status is insightful, but it only focused on his own experience and does not shed light on conversations that occur when family members inform children of their undocumented status. Vargas's account and previous research (Gonzales, 2011) have not explored how family members of DACA recipients disclosed their status to them (directly or indirectly), what such conversations look like communicatively (main themes), or other motivations that encouraged family members (e.g., parents, grandparents, siblings) to inform DACA recipients of their undocumented status. Moreover, the process of disclosure of an undocumented status is complex, and different disclosure strategies (e.g., direct, indirect) can be utilized within a conversation or across multiple conversations over time (Kam, Merolla, & High, in press). Thus, such research can tell if there are certain disclosure strategies and motivations that might be related to different outcomes for DACA recipients (e.g., increased family bonding or resentment towards family members).

Among DACA recipients, their family members may utilize different disclosure strategies (e.g., indirect, direct) depending on the reactions of the DACA recipients (Kam et al., in press). These different strategies may differ depending on how much information the family members are willing to disclose to the DACA recipient during that initial disclosure, as well as how much information about their undocumented status the DACA recipient knows. For example, among DACA recipients who already know or suspect that they are undocumented, the DACA recipients may have asked their family members for information surrounding their status. At this time, DACA recipients' family members may have directly told the DACA recipient that the DACA recipient is undocumented. Alternatively, the family

members may have decided to utilize other strategies (e.g., incremental-, indirect-disclosure strategies) to inform the DACA recipient of what it means to be undocumented, but then they might have engaged in other strategies when the conversation was brought up again (e.g., direct disclosure strategies). Moreover, family members might utilize distinct disclosure strategies depending on the age of the child. Research among Latinx and Asian families suggest that many families adhere to a hierarchical structure, so it is possible that families who adhere to these cultural norms may view a young child as not "ready" to be informed of information they may consider is better managed by older adults (Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994). Thus, family members may decide to use different strategies and emphasize different content themes to the DACA recipients depending on distinct factors (e.g., age of the DACA recipient, response of the DACA recipient, context of disclosure of status).

Disclosure of a secret is a complex process, but cultural values and scripts that may underly this process can make this disclosure process more intricate. This is because culture is likely to influence the way in which information is disclosed (Kam et al., in press; Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, & Yau, 2009). Although Latinx and Asian immigrant families are heterogenous, the cultural values that these immigrant families might adhere to (e.g., interdependence, hierarchical parent-child roles, familismo[3]; Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994; La Roche, 2002) can influence the way in which they manage their private information. Among Latinx and Asian DACA recipients, the values that their family members follow may alter the way in which family members disclose to the DACA recipient. For example, to save face, Asian and Latinx family

[3] Among Latinx, familismo refers to commitment to the family above individual commitment, as well as having loyalty to the family unit (La Roche, 2002).

members might inform DACA recipient of their undocumented status by indirectly revealing the secret, or by assigning someone else (e.g., an older sibling) to reveal the secret to the DACA recipient (Ow & Katz, 1999). Given the influence that cultural norms have on privacy management, the disclosure process for Latinx and Asian immigrant families may be distinct from what White U.S. Americans (Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994). Thus, further research is needed to systematically explore the types of strategies family members of DACA recipients use when disclosing their undocumented status to DACA recipients. Because we know little about how family members inform immigrant children of the children's undocumented status, the following research questions were developed:

RQ2: According to DACA recipients, what disclosure strategies did family members use to inform DACA recipients of their undocumented status?

RQ3: What were the main content themes that family members emphasized when they informed DACA recipients of their undocumented status?

How Learning of One's Undocumented Status Can Affect Family Relationships

Learning of one's undocumented status is likely to affect immigrant children's relationships with their family members, particularly when the immigrant children do not learn of their undocumented status until adolescence. Although the timing of undocumented-status disclosures varies, waiting to reveal an undocumented status "only postpones a difficult and alienating conversation" (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011, p. 449), which can further complicate an already sensitive family dynamic that comes from living in a home with undocumented family members (Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011). This postponement might lead to a strained family relationship causing

immigrant children to become angry and resentful toward their family members. Undocumented children might blame their family members for keeping their undocumented status secret and not reveling this information sooner (Gonzales, 2011). DACA recipients might feel upset with their parents because the DACA recipients feel like they have a right to have access information that is directly about them. Moreover, DACA recipients may feel that their parents should have told them about their status sooner. This blame might emerge because DACA recipients, like other undocumented immigrant children, grew up in the United States and might value greater parent-child openness (Gonzales, 2011).

For DACA recipients who experienced family relational problems upon learning of their undocumented status, acculturation gaps might serve as one possible explanation for the negative impact on the relationship. Specifically, an acculturation gap refers to a difference of traditions and values between immigrant parents and their children. This gap may occur when the child more strongly adopts the host countries' cultural patterns than the parent (Schofield, Parke, Kim, & Coltrane, 2008). Because DACA recipients grew up in the United States, they may adhere to U.S. mainstream cultural practices regarding privacy management and disclosure. If this is the case, it may change the expectations that DACA recipients have around information that pertains to their personhood, and they may expect that their family members will disclose this information to them sooner rather than later. Moreover, this acculturation gap may increase as the DACA recipient becomes older because they spend more time exposed to U.S. mainstream cultural norms, which may exacerbate the family relational problems they may face once disclosure occurs. By contrast, their parents, who grew up in another country, might adhere more strongly to privacy management

and disclosure norms from their native country. For example, they may enact the belief that it is the adult family members' legitimacy and authority to manage their child's information (Smetana, Metzger, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006). If this is the case, then parents might not see an issue with waiting to disclose to their child the child's undocumented status. Ultimately, this acculturation gap can result in parents and DACA recipients having different norms and interpretations of the disclosure process, which can affect their relationship.

Although some immigrant children may experience resentment toward their parents upon learning of their undocumented status, positive relational outcomes can emerge, as well. For example, when family members tell immigrant children of their undocumented status, family members may emphasize that they brought the family to the United States for a better future. For DACA recipients, it is possible that when they hear that their parents migrated to a foreign country to improve their lives, they may appreciate their parents' sacrifices and feel a sense of gratitude toward their parents.

Although we know little about how undocumented-status disclosures affect family relationships, we can turn to research on disclosures in adoptive families to inform the present study. For example, Colaner and Kranstuber (2010) suggested that family discussion of an adoptee's identity is important to forming positive family relationships. By contrast, withholding such information and disclosing it at a later time can negatively impact family relationships. Children might feel betrayed by their adoptive parents and develop feelings of relational distance (Passmore, Feeney, & Foulstone, 2007). Although adoption disclosures are different from undocumented-status disclosures, parallels can be seen in both situations including the revelation of a secret that can be stigmatizing to the DACA recipient (Colaner & Kranstuber, 2010;

Seif, 2016). Thus, similar findings could be observed among immigrant children as those observed in the adoptee literature. Nevertheless, it is important to note that discovery's impact on family relationships might depend on DACA recipients' age of discovery, their perceptions of their family members' motivations for disclosure, the way in which disclosure occurred, and the content emphasized in such discussions. To extend previous research that suggests undocumented-status disclosures affects family relationships (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Enriquez, 2015; Gonzales, 2011; Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011), the following research question was developed:

RQ4: According to DACA recipients, how did undocumented-status discovery affect their family relationships, and did the perceived effect vary by age of discovery?

How Learning of One's Undocumented Status Can Affect Identity

In addition to affecting DACA recipients' relationship with family members, learning of their undocumented status is also likely to affect their identity because DACA recipients grew up in the United States and might have viewed themselves as U.S. citizens (Hernandez et al., 2010; Seif, 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Moreover, for DACA recipients learning that their identity is not what they thought may lead DACA recipients to become uncertain of their identity (Hogg, 2007; Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010). Moreover, this identity uncertainty may be exacerbated after learning that their undocumented status assigns an "illegal" identity to DACA recipients, which has negative connotations (Gonzales, 2011, 2015). "Illegality" as an identity that depicts undocumented immigrants as outsiders, unwanted, and illegitimate (Abrego, 2008; Bosniak, 1988; Chang, 2017; Coutin, 2005; Delgado, 2018; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Suárez-Orozco, 2012). These negative perceptions and stereotypes

depict undocumented immigrants as "parasites who are siphoning away limited resources (such as jobs and social services) or conversely as powerful and sinister aliens who control vast resources, thus eliciting envy" (Suárez-Orozco, 2012, p. 144).

Such a negative "illegal" identity affects the kinds of immigration policies that are created, how undocumented immigrants are treated, and how undocumented immigrants view themselves (Hughes, 1945; Núñez, 2013; Ommundsen, Larsen, van der Veer, & Eilertsen, 2014; Smith, 1992). Thus, for DACA recipients, many who grew in the United States, such a negative identity might be hurtful and capable of impacting their self-view (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Jefferies & Dabach, 2015; Suárez-Orozco, 2012). Moreover, DACA recipients' identity reconceptualization may be distinctly influenced depending at the age that the DACA recipient discovered about their undocumented status. For example, DACA recipients who found out about their undocumented status in adolescence might experience increased negative self-view than DACA recipients who discovered their undocumented status in childhood. This is because older DACA recipients would have had more time developing their identity as American, which would have created uncertainty in their self-view once they found out of their undocumented status.

Ultimately, learning that they have a stigmatized identity can become a core part of DACA recipients' self-concept, and it can also lead DACA recipients to reduce their certainty of who they are (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales et al., 2013; Hogg, 2007). Thus, to further extend this research, this study explores how DACA recipients perceive their identity to be affected after learning about their undocumented status. This exploration will allow us to further understand the impact that being

undocumented has on identity, which can inform those who work with DACA recipients. Hence, a final research question was developed:

RQ5: According to DACA recipients, how did undocumented-status discovery affect their identity, and did the perceived effect vary by age of discovery?

Method

Participants

The data for this study come from a larger project on the stress, resilience, and thriving of DACA college students. The analyses are based on the interview component. Semi-structured interviews were conducted over the telephone with 40 DACA college students, 39 undergraduate- and one graduate-student. Among the 40 DACA college students, 28 were female, and 12 were male. Seventy percent identified as woman, 25% as man, and 5% as gender non-conforming. The average age was 20.8 years (*SD* = 2.44).

The majority of the DACA students were born in Mexico (75%) followed by: Guatemala (10%), Taiwan (5%), El Salvador (2.5%), Honduras (2.5%), Indonesia (2.5%), and South Korea (2.5%). The average time DACA students lived in the United States was 16.48 years (*SD* = 3.38; MIN =11; MAX = 24), and the majority (60%) migrated to the United States when they were one to five years of age. Thirty percent migrated between six to 10 years of age, and 10% migrated when they were less than one year old. Among the 40 DACA students interviewed, 87.5% primarily speak Spanish with their family, followed by Chinese (5%), English (2.5%), Korean (2.5%), and mixed English-Spanish (2.5%). All 40 DACA students reported primarily speaking English with their friends.

With respect to education, 35% of the DACA students attended a community college, 32.5% attended a University of California, 25% attended a California State University, and 7.5% attended a private university. Thirty percent of the DACA students were in their first year of college, 30% in their second year, 17.5% in their third year, 15% in their fourth year, and 7.5% in their fifth year.

When asked about the documentation status, 94.7% of the 40 DACA recipients reported that their biological father is undocumented, and 5.3% indicated that their biological father used to be undocumented but now has legal status. Ninety percent of DACA recipients reported that their biological mother is undocumented, and 10% reported that their biological mother used to be undocumented but now has legal status. Four DACA recipients reported having a stepfather, and five reported having a stepmother. All DACA recipients indicated that their stepmother and stepfather are undocumented. DACA recipients were also asked about their siblings' documentation status. Five percent reported not having a sibling. Among students who have a sibling(s), 42.5% indicated that some of their siblings were undocumented and some were documented. Twenty-five percent indicated that all their siblings were undocumented, and 27.5% of DACA recipients reported that all their siblings were documented.

Procedures

After obtaining approval from our university's institutional review board, 41 undocumented immigrant college students 18 years and older were recruited to participate in this study. To participate, students had to meet our eligibility criteria: (a) be currently enrolled at a two- or four-year college/university in California, (b) be a current or former DACA recipient, and (c) be 18 years or older. One participant was

removed from our data because it was later discovered that she was not currently enrolled in a California college/university. Thus, the present study is based on 40 interviews with DACA college students who fulfilled all the requirements. Recruitment of participants happened between December 2017 and April 2018.

To recruit participants, an introductory email (see Appendix A) with an attached flyer (see Appendix B) was sent to various public and private universities and community colleges across California. Colleges with Dream Centers or Undocumented Student Services were primarily targeted because of their involvement with undocumented students. The introductory email informed the centers of the study and asked that they distribute the information to their undocumented students. In addition, flyers (see Appendix B) advertising the study were also posted on social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) and sent to undocumented student clubs at various colleges in California asking for their participation in the study. Interested participants were asked to email the Project Manager (the first author) to schedule an interview date and time. Once data collection started, students were recruited through snowball sampling because they are members of a hard-to-reach population (Gonzales et al., 2014). At the end of each interview, the interviewer would ask the student to distribute the flyer and share the study information with their friends or family members.

Once an interview date and time was scheduled, a confirmation email was sent to the student. That email included the date and time of the interview, as well as a link to a short online Qualtrics survey (see Appendix C). The survey (see Appendix D) included demographic questions that asked about students' age, sex, gender, annual income, year in college, type of college, nativity, age of migration, and DACA details. Participating students had to complete the survey prior to completing the interview.

Three undocumented Latinx undergraduate research assistants (two females and one male) and one Latinx graduate student (female; the first author) conducted the interviews. All interviewers were bilingual in English and Spanish.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the principal investigator and another faculty member on the research team extensively trained the interviewers. During fall 2017, the interviewers went through four weeks of training with a similar procedure as Kam, Pérez-Torres, and Steuber Fazio (2018). The interviewers practiced the interview protocol and met with the two faculty members on the research team to discuss ways to improve their interviewing skills. Once data collection started, the interviewers continued their training. Initially, they met each week with the two faculty members to discuss their process, struggles, and strategies for probing. After the interviewers developed more experience, they met with the two faculty members every two weeks, and then they met every three weeks to discuss the progress of the interviews. By the end of the study, the three undergraduate students had conducted 18 of the 41 interviews, and the graduate student had conducted 23 of the 41 interviews.

When interviews were conducted, interviewers used the Department's research lab to call the participating DACA college students. The research lab contained four individual rooms, each with a telephone, and the interviewers called their corresponding interviewee from one of the rooms at their scheduled date and time. Prior to beginning the interview, the interviewers informed the participating DACA students of the study's purpose, its voluntary nature, their option to skip any question that made them feel uncomfortable, and their ability to quit the interview at any time. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, interviewers emphasized that the goal of the study was not to get anyone in trouble but was instead meant to understand the

experiences of DACA college students. After informing students of their rights, interviewers requested permission to audio record their conversation. Student also chose a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Once the interview started, interviewers followed a semi-structure interview protocol (see Appendix E). To build rapport, interviewers initially asked students to tell the interviewer "a little something about yourself," followed by the reason for their participation in the study and how they immigrated to the United States. Following these initial questions, the interviewers used the interview protocol and asked a series of open-ended questions about their experiences being undocumented or DACA recipients. The questions of particular interest for the present study are the ones that asked how DACA recipients learned that they were undocumented. More specifically, interviewers asked, "When/how did you find out that you were undocumented? Please try to describe that experience in detail. How did learning about your undocumented status affect your relationship with your family? How did learning about your undocumented status affect your identity (how you view yourself)?" Interviewers used probing questions such as, "Can you explain what you mean…?, Can you give me an example when…?, Can you elaborate…?, Tell me more…, What does that look like…?, What does that mean to you…?, How does that make you feel…?."

At the end of each interview, the interviewer thanked the participating student and offered to answer any questions that the student might have regarding the study. Interviewers also wrote memo notes to reflect on each interview and anything unexpected that the participating student shared. Each participating student received a $20 Amazon gift card either in the mail or via email.

Data Analysis

Undergraduate research assistants transcribed the audio recordings verbatim, and they removed all identifying information to ensure confidentiality. Another set of undergraduate research assistants conducted accuracy checks of the transcriptions. To analyze the data, two undergraduate research assistants and a graduate student (the first author) used Tracy's (2013) constant comparison approach, which notes similarity of data to each code created throughout the coding process. This approach allows for the modification of a code to fit new data or for the creation of a new code, if needed. For example, we began coding data that points to "effects of family relationship after learning of undocumented status" as causing anger for DACA recipients and code it as ANGER. Over time, new data (e.g., "why did you bring me here so late") did not fit the code; therefore, with the constant comparative approach, we decided that the new data should be coded as "blaming parent for having limited opportunities due to undocumented status" as being RESENTMENT. Throughout the coding process, the research assistants and the first author kept an open mind to the codes that were emerging from the data.

In addition to the constant comparison method, we used Owen's (1984) open coding thematic analysis criteria: *recurrence*, *repetition*, and *forcefulness*. First, *recurrence* refers to the repetition of at least two parts within a report with the same meaning even if different words are being used. For example, recurrence allowed us to code learning about undocumented status as affected identity as EMPOWERMENT when DACA recipients shared phrases like, "it made me work harder" or "I have a tougher skin". Both examples are about the same meaning—DACA recipients' perception that learning of their undocumented status empowered their self-view—but

stated with different words, thereby meeting the recurrence coding criterion. Second, *repetition* refers to the explicit reiteration of words or phrases. For example, repetition allowed us to code RESENTMENT TOWARDS PARENTS when students repeated phrases such as, "my resentment towards my parents", throughout the interviews. Lastly, *forcefulness* refers to emphasized messages indicating importance, either through changes paralanguage (e.g., volume, tone, pitch) or through verbal phrases (e.g., introductory phrases such as "The most important thing"). For example, forcefulness allowed us to create a code, IDENTITY CONFUSION, when DACA recipients emphasize that learning of their status resulted in an "identity crises". Using Owen's (1984) open coding criteria allowed the codes to naturally emerge from the data.

Two undergraduate research assistants and the first author developed a codebook by reading 20 randomly selected interview transcripts (50% of the interviews). Although the interview protocol included many different questions related to stress, coping, privacy management, allies, and college resources, our coding focused on information pertaining to the research questions on family relationships and identity. The two undergraduate research assistants and the first author coded five interviews each week for four weeks. They chose this time frame because of restraints in the shortened summer quarter session. During this process, they each independently developed their own codebook, which included construct labels, as well as their corresponding definitions and exemplary quotes. Each week, they met for one and a half-hours to discuss their progress, and they discussed codes and overarching themes that they observed during that week of coding. During their meetings, they were careful not to impose their own attitudes and beliefs on the codes. This allowed the

codes to be emergent from the data. After reading all 20 interviews, they met to discuss the themes and subthemes from each of their codebooks. They then combined the three codebooks into one comprehensive codebook. This master codebook included the themes and subthemes' definitions and sample quotes. If disagreement occurred, they discussed the disagreement until reaching consensus and revisited any interview transcripts related to the disagreement (Kam et al., in press).

After the codebook's creation, the research assistants and the first author independently assigned codes to the remaining 20 interviews and their corresponding text using the master codebook as a guide. During this process, the first author and two research assistants read and coded four randomly selected transcripts per week for a period of 5 weeks. This time frame was chosen because it allowed the research team to finish coding all the interview transcripts, as well as discuss the codes during the 10-week academic quarter. The first author and two research assistants highlighted the text in the interviews where they saw a code emerge, and they wrote the corresponding code's name in the margins. Each week, they had a 2-hour meeting to discuss the codes and emergent themes. They also discussed any discrepancies until they reached consensus. As a final step, the principal investigator independently read all the highlighted text in the interviews and coded them. Together, the principal investigator and the first author finalized the coding and their labels, and they selected sample quotes for each theme or subtheme.

Results

Using CPM (Petronio, 2002, 2004, 2010) and RRM (Afifi & Steuber, 2009), this study explored DACA recipients' perceptions regarding: (a) why their family members informed them (or did not inform them) of the DACA recipients'

undocumented status, (b) the disclosure strategies that family members used, (c) content themes of the disclosure, (d) how status discovery affected DACA recipients' family relationships, and (e) how status discovery affected DACA recipients' identity. The following sections describe the results, which are broadly summarized in Table 1.

RQ1: Motivations for Status Disclosures

The first research question explored DACA recipients' perceived family members' motivations for informing DACA recipients of their undocumented status (RQ1). Four distinct motivations emerged from recipients' experiences: (a) *ineligibility,* (b) *protection,* (c) *information seeking,* and (d) *future security.* The most commonly referenced motivation for disclosure was *ineligibility* (n = 19 interviews). According to several DACA recipients, family members told DACA recipients of their (DACA recipients') undocumented status to inform DACA recipients of their ineligibility to pursue different opportunities (travel, job, awards, etc.). DACA recipients were unable to participate in those opportunities because, for example, an award required applicants to be U.S. citizens or a job required applicants to have a social security number, which the DACA recipient did not have at the time. Moreover, ineligibility emerged primarily during adolescence when the DACA recipient wanted to take advantage of these different opportunities. For example, a female DACA recipient shared the following:

> [When] trying to develop a plan for after I finish school, that's kind [of] when my status first started becoming more evident. I think it was just like once I started growing up and realizing that there were limitations in the things that I could do. And, whenever they make you fill out paper work they would ask you, 'oh what's your social security number', and I was like

> oh okay I don't have one. What do I put here? I think as we grew up we just started talking about it more and trying to make us understand more. But, they never sat us down and told us—basically, as things came up they would talk about the situation. (#24, p. 27, female)

Similarly, another female DACA recipient shared that her parents told her about her undocumented status when she was thinking about applying to college. This DACA recipient's parents told the DACA recipient that she may be ineligible to continue with her higher education due to her undocumented status. She shared the following:

> I found out I was undocumented after I took the PSAT in high school…I've been a great student. Always getting good grades, and after I took the PSAT, that's when I found out. I had told my parents I wanted to go college. I wanted to start visiting campuses and then that's when they told me, you don't have papers, I don't know if you can go to college. (#39, p. 15, female)

The second most prominent motivation for disclosure was *protection* (*n* = 7 interviews), which refers to family members informing the DACA recipients of the DACA recipients' undocumented status because they were trying to prevent the DACA recipients from being detained or deported. The following example from a male DACA recipient demonstrates the *protection* motivation: "when we first learned that we were undocumented and…the risk we had and like my parents told me to be careful about who I tell that I'm undocumented" (#1, p. 21, male). This example demonstrates how this DACA recipient's parents were trying to protect him from putting himself at risk, which may arise if he disclosed his undocumented status to

others who were not allies. A female DACA recipient shared a similar example. She stated:

> I came in out of state, so I was born in Mexico. My parents would be like, no, no, no you don't say that [talk about the fact that the DACA recipient was born outside of the United States] and I'd be like 'oh, okay'. Like yea. Oh, my parents would use the word special for the word different: 'you're special we don't, we don't talk about our status out loud in public', but I do want to talk about things in public I'll be like 'oh is this cause were special?' and they'll be like 'yea'. And I'm like 'okay yea that's that. (#22, p. 26, female)

Ultimately, these family members wanted to protect DACA recipients from dangerous situations that might arise due to DACA recipients' undocumented status, which might occur if the DACA recipient talked about their undocumented status with others.

In addition to the protection theme, *information seeking* also emerged (n = 2 interviews). Family members had to disclose the DACA recipients' undocumented status because the DACA recipients started asking questions about their undocumented status. For example, a female DACA recipient shared the following:

> People would ask us all the time, 'oh where are you from'… 'oh, we're from Mexico'. But, then we didn't start to realize what that meant until middle school when some kid was like 'oh where are you from', and I was like oh I'm from Mexico, and he was like 'so you're illegal?' and I was like 'what?'. And then that's usually when we actually found out what illegal actually meant….Yeah, I asked my mom and my dad, and they…just told

> me what it was…and then they started like telling me like its people who come from other countries who don't have a legal status here... (#2, p. 15, female)

Similarity, another female DACA recipient shared:

> I found out my freshmen year of high school, and I found out because we had just moved from [name of state] and, I was angry with this, I was like why are we moving here?, I'm about to start high school and all my friends are in [name of state] and that's when they like got fed up, I guess they got fed up of me complaining and sat me down and talked to me so this is the Dream Act and this is 8540 [sic] and the requirements are that you attend a California high school, so that you can get this and then they like talked to me in great detail about what happened when we came here why we weren't able to become documented. (#10, p. 10, female)

Finally, *future security* emerged in one DACA recipient's experience. Parents told the DACA recipient of her undocumented status because they wanted to ensure that the DACA recipient had a "secure" future (e.g., apply for DACA, or do well in school). She shared the following:

> I probably started to find out when I was like seventeen, so like junior year in high school. That was when I applied for DACA, so my parents were doing the application and I had to sign the papers. Well look through the papers to check information and so that's when I found out that I was undocumented, and I have to, there's this, it's like something big. It pretty much affects my life. (#9, p. 6, female)

Although *future security* only occurred in one interview, this student mentioned several times in her interview that her parents informed her of her undocumented status because they wanted her to apply for DACA, to attend college, and to obtain in-state tuition. The parents were highly concerned with creating as much security as possible for their daughter and her future wellbeing.

For DACA recipients who learned about their undocumented status during childhood or who always knew of their undocumented status, 17.5% reported that their family told them because they were *ineligible* to pursue different opportunities, 17.5% reported that their family told them because of *protection*, 0% *information seeking*, and 0% for *future security*. For DACA recipients who learned about their undocumented status during adolescence, 30% reported that their family told them because of *ineligibility*, 0% *protection*, 5% *information seeking*, and 2.5% for *future security*.

RQ2: Family Members' Disclosure Strategies

Our second research question explored the disclosure strategies that DACA recipients reported that their family members utilized to inform them of their undocumented status (RQ2). Four distinct disclosure strategies emerged from DACA recipients' interviews: (a) *direct disclosure*, (b) *always knew*, (c) *memories of crossing without belonging*, and (d) *accidental disclosure.* The most common disclosure strategy was *direct disclosure* (n = 19 interviews), which refers to DACA recipients' family members explicitly informing DACA recipients of their undocumented status. According to some DACA recipients, families engaged in the direct disclosure strategy during adolescence. This direct disclosure occurred because DACA recipients were beginning to pursue different opportunities (e.g., educational, traveling), and they were

sharing with their family members their intent to pursue these opportunities. It was during these discussions in which DACA recipients' immigration information became relevant for DACA recipients to pursue these opportunities that family members directly disclosed to DACA recipients that the DACA recipient had an undocumented status. Nonetheless, although DACA recipients sought out this information, DACA recipients did not seek the information because they suspected to having an undocumented status. Instead, DACA recipients wanted help from their family members to apply to different opportunities. For other DACA recipients, however, their families engaged in a direct disclosure strategy when the DACA recipient was a child. For these DACA recipients, their family members told them of their (the DACA recipients') undocumented status without the DACA recipients' situations requiring information around their immigration status.

An example that demonstrates family members using a *direct disclosure* strategy because the DACA recipient needed pertinent immigration information is that of a female DACA recipient. She shared the following:

> I remember getting the [FAFSA] application and…where it said…you needed a social security number, I kind of grew blank and was like, I don't know if I have one of those…So I took my application home…and my parents were like, well you don't have one. (#11, p. 28, female)

Similarly, another female DACA recipient shared the following: "I went home and I told my parents that I think I have a really good shot [at going to study at a different country]…I went home and my mom said well, unfortunately you know you can't travel" (#25, p. 11, female). These examples demonstrate that DACA recipients did not know of their undocumented status. Instead, they sought out relevant

information from their family members, so that they could pursue different opportunities. It was during these encounters that family members directly told the DACA recipients of the DACA recipients' undocumented status. An example that shows family members engaging in a *direct disclosure* strategy during the DACA recipients' childhood without the DACA recipient going to their family members for pertinent immigration information is that of male DACA recipient who stated: "I found out when, I was, I believe when I first started school…in second grade. Uh, through [a] conversation with my parents when we first came over here" (#1, p. 21, male). This example highlights that the parents of this DACA recipients directly told him of his undocumented status without the DACA recipient approaching the parent.

In addition to the *direct disclosure* strategy, some DACA recipients revealed that they *always knew* of their undocumented status (*n* = 11 interviews). These DACA recipients shared that they did not remember learning of their undocumented status from a family member, and they could not recall how they actually learned of their undocumented status. An example of *always knew* is seen in the statement of a female DACA recipient: "I honestly don't know, like I don't really recall knowing or not knowing" (#37, p. 17, female). Similarly, another female DACA recipient shared: "I always knew I was undocumented; however, when I was in 10th grade, that's where it stressed me because people were already applying to scholarships" (#13, p. 13, female).

Moreover, within *always knew*, *memories of crossing without belonging* emerged as a subtheme (*n* = 12 interviews). DACA recipients always knew of their undocumented status based on contextual information around them. For example, many knew they were undocumented because they had memories of crossing the

border. Solely, these memories did not indicate to DACA recipients that they were undocumented status, but it was these memories in combination with memories of being afraid, hiding, or using "fake names" when crossing the border that informed DACA recipients of their undocumented status. Ultimately, it was the contextual clues related to being undocumented (e.g., being told to "be careful") that made DACA recipients always know they were undocumented. An example that demonstrates *memories of crossing without belonging* is seen in the following statement from a male DACA recipient:

> I remember we were in a bus. It took us to [neighboring country] for multiple hours, from [neighboring country] we went into Mexico, we crossed a couple rivers just by the wheels of a big ol' truck. Not the wheels themselves, but the tubes of the trucks and that's what we used. They would sit us in there the people would walk in the water and they would cross us. Me being the smallest one at that time, I had to sit in my mom's lap for half the time. (#8, p. 3, male)

This DACA recipient gathered from his memory of crossing the border that he was undocumented because of the way in which they crossed. The journey was dangerous and arduous, and it was done secretively. Similarly, another male DACA recipient shared that he remembered using a "fake name" when crossing into the United States. He shared the following:

> When we were coming we had to use like this fake name. It was just like: oh, I guess I don't belong there. I'm going to pretend to be this other person, so that I can be allowed into this society type of thing. (#17, p. 24, male)

A final example that demonstrates the *memories of crossing without belonging* subtheme is that of a female DACA recipient who shared that she knew of her status because she had not crossed the "right way". She stated: "I remember like knowing how I had to cross and how I actually came to the U.S. Obviously I knew that I was not crossing the right way or the legal way" (#26, p. 24, female).

Moreover, other DACA recipients shared that they had found out of their undocumented status because they had overheard their parents talking about it (i.e., *accidental disclosure; n = 2*). *Accidental disclosure* was apparent among two DACA recipients. One of these DACA recipients, a female, shared the following:

> So, we were going to go to school, and my mom was like 'oh you're not going to school', and I was so happy. I didn't even question it. And, me and my brother were just really happy that we weren't going to school, but then when I overheard them talking, my parent's didn't go to work either…they were talking about how the reason we weren't leaving was because there were a lot of cops around, so they didn't want to risk getting stopped while taking or getting detained while they were dropping us off at school or them going to work. So, we just stayed indoors the entire day. (#20, p. 18-19, female)

Similarly, a male DACA recipient shared the following:

> Unfortunately, the door wasn't locked [laughs], and I kind of just tumbled in the room…my parents kind of knew I had overheard what was going on and kind of began to explain it to me what it meant to be undocumented. (#28, p. 5, male)

When looking at these disclosure strategies holistically, we noted that DACA recipients' parents used different disclosure strategies depending on the age of discovery. For DACA recipients who learned about their undocumented status during childhood or always new, 12.5% reported that their family engaged in the *direct disclosure* strategy, 7.5% reported that they *always knew* of their undocumented status, 20% *memories of crossing without belonging*, and 5% for *accidental disclosure*. For DACA recipients who learned about their undocumented status during adolescence, 32.5% reported that their family used the *direct disclosure* strategy, 12.5% *always knew*, 7.5% *memories of crossing without belonging*, and 0% *accidental disclosure*.

RQ3: Content Themes in Status Disclosures

Our third research question explored the main content themes that emerged when DACA recipients learned of their undocumented status from family members (RQ3). We identified six distinct content themes: (a) *barriers, (b) safety, (c) undocumented narrative, (d) meaning of "illegal"/undocumented, (e) procedural knowledge*, and *(f) planning.* The most frequent content theme was *barriers* (*n* = 12 interviews), which describes family members' emphasis to DACA recipients that due to their undocumented status, the DACA recipient could not partake in certain activities that required legal documentation (i.e., applying for academic opportunities, traveling outside the United States, and applying for employment where a social security number was required). An example that highlights the *barriers* content theme can be seen in the following example of a female DACA recipient who experienced the barriers that her status created in school. She stated the following:

> I didn't know it was [pause], it meant, like, 'oh you're undocumented', so when my sister was applying to college, that's when my parents told her.

> That was two years before I applied. So, she kind of told me, but she didn't really knew- know about it 'cause at our school there was no resources, or at our high school there was no resources. (#7, p. 3, female)

Similarly, another female DACA recipient shared the following statement that describes the *barriers* content theme: "I want to go to university at a different country and my mom said, 'you can't, because…you don't have the same, freedom as a U.S.-born person does'" (#35, p. 23, female).

Moreover, the content theme of *safety* emerged in DACA recipients' interviews (n = 7 interviews). *Safety* describes disclosure conversations that emphasized family members' desire to shield DACA recipients from experiencing negative consequences to being undocumented (e.g., detainment or deportation). For example, a male DACA recipient shared that when talking with his parents about his undocumented status, the parents told the DACA recipient to lie about his country of birth, so that others would not suspect that the DACA recipient is undocumented. He stated: "They [the DACA recipient's parents] told us to basically lie, you know, about where we were born, so people wouldn't suspect that we weren't properly or had U.S, you know, documentation" (#21, p. 13, male). Similarly, a female DACA recipient stated the following: "We never really spoke about not having papers or just our status in general. She was like, we never talk about that [about their undocumented status] (#33, p. 37, female). This example demonstrates how the DACA recipient's mother told the DACA recipient not to talk about her undocumented status, so that the DACA recipient would not draw attention to herself and her family. Possibly, this was an attempt of the DACA recipient's mother to ensure the safety of her daughter from possible deportation if the wrong person found out that her daughter is undocumented.

Additionally, the content theme of *meaning of "illegal"/undocumented* (*n* = 7 interviews) emerged. Parents explained to DACA recipients what it means to be "illegal" or have no documents or citizenship. Moreover, this theme describes that the parents explained to the DACA recipient their lack of status. The following example of a male DACA recipient highlights the *meaning of "illegal"/undocumented*:

> she [the DACA recipient's mother] basically told me you're not an American citizen, and I was 'oh what do you mean'. And, she was like 'oh you were born in [name of country], and didn't come here legally, so you don't have like citizenship to like enter'. At the time I didn't know what that meant and I didn't care. (#15, p. 14, male)

Similarly, a female DACA recipient shared that her mother explained to her what it meant to be undocumented. She shared the following:

> So, I had been telling my parents like yeah, my friend says that they…need a cashier girl that I could get a job and it could just be for the summer—maybe a lot longer and [her]…mom already said she would take me on, and that it's fine [if] I don't have to do an interview. And, they're like it's kind of not that simple, you… there's like things you have to fill out and the papers we don't have its kind of illegal and like you're technically not allowed to work. I had like even already figured out, like, I talked to the middle school about what papers. (#18, p. 17-18, female)

Although this quote also demonstrates the barriers to being undocumented, the DACA recipient's mother had to explain what it means to be "illegal"/undocumented by describing to the DACA recipient that she did not have U.S documentation. Being undocumented meant that the daughter did not have access to the same privileges as

U.S. citizens and permanent residents because she lacked lawful status. Moreover, the mother explained the extra steps that the DACA recipient had to take to participate in activities similar to U.S. citizens or permanent residents. In short, the aforementioned quotes demonstrate how parents contributed to their children's undocumented socialization.

Furthermore, *undocumented narrative* (*n* = 6 interviews) emerged as a content theme. When family informed DACA recipients of their undocumented status, some DACA recipients reported that their family used that disclosure as an opportunity to explain their migration journey to the United States. For example, a male DACA recipient shared a conversation that they had with their parents:

> I don't remember what they were talking about but think of it as a business thing. They couldn't do it because of their status, and they were telling me like oh, 'we—we can't do this because we're not legal here'. And, I'm just like 'what do you mean we're not legal here?' And, then that's when they kind of gave me the run down that we moved from a different country. Like sure, I remembered it, but I didn't know it was illegal that we did it [laughs]. And, they were telling me we came here illegally, we are not meant to stay here, according to some. (#12, p. 25, gender non-conforming)

Similarly, a male DACA recipient shared that he and his parents had a discussion about their migration experience, which clarified for the DACA recipient a recurring dream that was a memory of their immigration experience:

> I remember the first time I actually asked my parents about it, I was in elementary school. So, what had happened is that a lot of the kids were going to Mexico, and I was like, 'oh mom, dad, can, can I come, right?',

> and that's kind of when they began to explain to me. And, then a few things clicked because I would always have this reoccurring dream of this lady who would like, told me to be quiet and I wasn't sure who that was or anything like that, in the scenario. So, then I asked my parents about the dream, and they kind of explained to me that when we were coming over the—first time what happened. (#28, p. 4-5, gender non-conforming)

Additionally, when family informed DACA recipients of their undocumented status, some discussed information that reflected *procedural knowledge* (*n* = 3 interviews). *Procedural knowledge* describes family members providing information, so that DACA recipients could obtain DACA or fill out the paperwork. The following example of a male DACA recipient illustrates *procedural knowledge*:

> I was trying to get a job, and I was figuring out or filling applications. Applications after application and each one would reject me and that was because I would fill it out as undocumented—as I am not from here. So, I asked my parents how I would go about this, and they told me that I would have to -fill sign up for DACA just so I could get a job, and that's how I found out. (#3, p. 10, male)

A female DACA recipient shared a similar experience. She states:

> I went to this job, but they are asking for a social. I have to get another one because the other one didn't work because they printed the fake socials. Some of them were too blue, so she was like "oh, tengo que ir agarar otro por que el senor dijo que este no sirve" [translation: oh, I have to get another one because the man said this one didn't work] because it obviously looked fake. So, she was like "vamos a tener que ir agarar, a

comprar otro" [translation: we're going to have to get, go buy another one]. (#34, p. 32, female)

The final content theme that emerged from DACA recipients' interviews is *planning* (*n* = 2 interviews), which describes how some DACA recipients' families created a plan in case parent(s) were detained or deported. For example, a female DACA recipient shared the following:

> I remember when I was either 3rd or 4th grade my parents had a little meeting with us. I'm a sibling. I'm kind of like the second oldest child. It's my oldest sister, myself, and then my brother and then two younger brothers who are U.S citizens, and my mother she talked to us about what could happen if we got detained and we could get deported to [name of country] and what would happen to us. She told us about a small plan that she had that we would be staying with a secretary of the school that we were in, so for me, it was really open…conversation. (#19, p. 4, female)

Similarly, another female DACA recipient reported that her family also created a plan in case they faced deportation or detention. She shared the following:

> My sister and I were a little bit older when he [the DACA recipients' father] did have a conversation with us. He did have a conversation with us, he told us our situation, he never hid it from us, or try to pretend like it was not true. He always told us that in case that happened we'd have to be calm and just obey and not do anything that would put us in more danger. Or, give any reason for them to think badly of us I guess. (#32, p. 5, female)

For DACA recipients who learned about their undocumented status during childhood or always new, 7.5% reported the *barriers* content theme, 17.5% reported

safety, 7.5% *undocumented narrative*, 2.5% *meaning of "illegal"/undocumented*, 2.5% *procedural knowledge*, and 5% *planning*. For DACA recipients who learned about their undocumented status during adolescence, 22.5% reported the *barriers* content theme, 0% *safety*, 7.5% *undocumented narrative*, 10% *meaning "illegal"/undocumented*, 5% *procedural knowledge*, and 0% *planning*.

RQ4: Recipients' family relationships after disclosure

Our fourth research question explores how learning of one's undocumented status or understanding its significance influenced DACA recipients' family relationships (RQ4). The following themes emerged: (a) *little or no influence,* (b) *resentment,* and (c) *appreciation. Little to no influence* emerged as the most prominent theme (n = 16 interviews). DACA recipients felt that learning or understanding the implications of their undocumented status did not alter their family relationships. For example, one female DACA recipient shared that her relationship was not influenced because the whole family was confused. She reported: "I guess we were all [her family] learning at the same time, so we were all kind of confused" (#28, p. 34, female). Similarly, another female DACA recipient reported, "It didn't really effect my relationship with my family like at all. Like, everything is normal. Like, my family is very loving, so I feel like I can always go to them for anything" (#2, p. 16, female). To explain why status discovery did not negatively affect some DACA recipients' family relationships, some noted that they had a strong and loving relationship with their parents. For example, one DACA recipient noted, "coming to the United States like she is all I have and until this day she really is all I have, and I am all she has at the end of the day. And, so I never really questioned much of what she told me. If she told me the grass is blue the grass is blue" (#16, p. 7, female). Others noted that the

discovery had no effect because their family members (e.g., parents or relatives) also were undocumented; therefore, discovery did not feel like "a big deal" (#20, p. 11, female). In short, having a strong and loving relationship with parents or knowing that other family members were undocumented (and going through similar experiences) might have protected against status discovery's negative effects on the family relationship.

Resentment towards parents emerged as the second most prominent experience (*n* = 10 interviews). Learning of their undocumented status or understanding its implications resulted in some DACA recipients feeling anger or resentment toward their parents. For example, one DACA recipient shared the following:

> My resentment towards my parents that did change. Before I found out I had to take on these hoops just to do what other kids do normally. I didn't really resent my parents at all you know they did provide for me they did give me the tools I needed to succeed in high school and middle schools but then after I found out that I did need to do all these obstacles it did start to taking a toll on my relationship with my parents. (#3, p. 11, male)

Another DACA recipient felt betrayed by his parents:

> I guess kind of like in a way, betrayed? I was really confused and didn't understand why my parents would have done something like that… I was really angry at first, because I was like, Mom, Dad, don't you understand what this means now for me?...Luckily in recent years, I've been able to understand a little bit more and talk with them, just kind of like what their perspective of things were um as well as kind of how I felt at that point."(#28, p. 23, male).

This example shows that later, the DACA recipient was able to understand his parents' actions and not feel resentment, but at the time of disclosure he felt resentment.

Although some DACA recipients felt resentment toward their parents after learning of their status, others expressed that learning of their undocumented status or understanding its implications resulted in their *appreciation* for their parents *(n* = 6 interviews). For these DACA recipients, learning of their undocumented status created positive views of their parents, and they reported being thankful or grateful towards their parent(s), as well as feeling closer (e.g., bonding). For example, one DACA recipient shared her thoughts: "I feel like maybe more appreciation for them…because I knew we were all in the same situation, and so we all knew how it how it felt and just being able to go talk to them about it" (#20, p. 19, female). Similarly, another DACA recipient shared the following: "I believe it brought us closer. I believe that it improved our relationship with each other and has been able to make me further appreciate what they do for us" (#40, p. 18, female). These experiences demonstrate that although DACA recipients were told of their status, they became more appreciative towards their parents for the sacrifices they had made. Similar to the *little or no effect* theme, it seems that having a strong and loving family relationship or knowing that other family members are in a similar situation (i.e., undocumented) protected DACA recipients' family relationships against the negative effects of discovery. Instead, this may have allowed status discovery to result in appreciation for DACA recipients who had a strong family relationship or felt like others in their family shared the experience.

With respect to age of discovery, for DACA recipients who learned about their undocumented status during childhood or always new, 15% reported *little or no influence* to their family relationships, 5% reported *resentment*, and 10% reported *appreciation*. For DACA recipients who learned about their undocumented status during adolescence, 27.5% reported *little or no influence* to their family relationships, 12.5% reported *resentment*, and 5% reported *appreciation*.

RQ5: DACA recipients' identity reconceptualization after disclosure

Our final research question explored how status discovery affected DACA recipients' identity (RQ5). We found seven primary ways in which identity was affected: (a) *status concealment, (b) identity confusion, (c) little to no influence, (d) empowerment, (e) dehumanized, (f) feeling unwanted,* and (g) *being cautious.* The most prominent experience was *status concealment* (*n* = 8 interviews). Upon learning of their undocumented status, DACA recipients struggled to conceal their status from others. For example, one female DACA recipient stated:

> …for a long time I kind of tried to suppress that part…I never really experienced being proud of being undocumented or being Mexican…I guess for a long time I tried to kind of just pretend it wasn't a part of who I was." (#29, p. 12, female)

Another DACA recipient explained how she allowed herself to pass as White, so that no one would suspect her of being undocumented:

> I have been told to be considered what is like White passing because I have like really pale skin, green eyes, and like lighter brown hair. I guess to me it was like if I get rid of my accent, if I get rid of like you know my Latina identity, like this was all in high school. I could pretty much like pass by as

> a White person, and no one will ever know that I'm undocumented or I'm illegal. And that was like my ideology at the time. (#16, p. 8, female)

Both of these examples show how after learning of their status, DACA recipients felt they had to conceal or lie about their undocumented status. DACA recipients discussed concealing their identity because of the risk involved in being detained or deported, being unable to trust others' intentions, experiencing shame, and receiving messages from family not to reveal such information.

In addition, undocumented-status discovery resulted in *identity confusion* (*n* = 7 interviews). Upon learning of their undocumented status, DACA recipients felt caught between two cultures, did not know where they belonged, were unsure of who they were as undocumented immigrants, and experienced identity gaps (their self-concept differed from how society viewed them). For example, a female DACA recipient shared that she "[felt] like [she was] in two worlds and [didn't] know where [to] belong" (#39, p. 17, female). Another DACA recipient stated: "when I found out that I was undocumented, suddenly, it felt like a clash between what I wanted and what the reality was...I was kind of torn with myself but also with society and how I was viewed" (#23, p. 2-3, male). These examples demonstrate that for these DACA recipients, learning of their undocumented status made them feel as if they did not know who they were or where to belong. DACA recipients, like other undocumented youth, grew up in the United States and were exposed to U.S. culture, and they were acculturated to believe that they were part of the United States (i.e., they were American). Having been exposed to these ideals may have created identity confusion among DACA recipients because they did not know where to belonged. Ultimately,

growing up exposed to these ideals may have exacerbated DACA recipients' identity confusion once they learned that they have an undocumented status.

Although some DACA recipients shared that learning or understanding the implication of their undocumented status created confusion and that they struggled with hiding their status from others, other DACA recipients reported that their self-view experienced *little to no influence* (*n* = 7 interviews). For example, one DACA recipient shared the following: "Well, to me, it's a part of my identity, so I would see it as my identity just who I am, it's just a part of me. It's not so much on it has affected me, it's just, how, who I am" (#4, p. 23, female). Similarly, another DACA recipient stated: "I don't think it affected my identity…it just added another part to who I was" (#30, p. 18, female). These experiences show that although DACA recipients learned of their status, they did not feel different. Instead, their undocumented status was another part of their lives, but it did not alter the way they conceptualized themselves.

Whereas some DACA recipients reported that their identity did not change after learning or understanding the significance of having an undocumented status, some DACA recipients shared that they felt their identity became *empowered* (*n* = 6 interviews). They expressed that learning of their undocumented status changed their self-view to one that became powerful, tougher, stronger, and resilient. For example, one DACA recipient shared that she became a stronger person:

> I just think being undocumented, it just made me feel more powerful that I could achieve…as much as I can, or the same as my friends from school, which is not kind of true. But, I just felt like really powerful. (#33, p. 40, female)

Similarly, another DACA recipient expressed how learning of her status shaped who she was and that it made her mentally and physically stronger. She shared the following:

> I think it really shaped who I am today, and I think because of my undocumented status I had to work twice as hard as everybody…at everything, that's why I had to be mentally stronger, to be physically stronger, everything stronger than a regular person, so it really shaped who I am today. My undocumented status shaped who I am today. And I'm very proud of that person. (#25, p. 15-16, female)

Although having an undocumented status is attached to stigma, these DACA recipients became more empowered due to their undocumented status. Because they had to experience barriers, they became stronger in realizing that they were still achieving their goals, and they were proud of what they had become even with all the barriers they were facing.

Dehumanized (*n* = 6 interviews) also emerged, and it describes how DACA recipients' self-view changed to one where they felt dehumanized, less-than, or inferior. For example, one female DACA recipient shared the following: "I'm not fully a person because I couldn't even get an I.D…and so with the work permit and stuff like that with DACA that was helpful because I could finally have a piece of paper who said who I was" (#27, p. 25, female). Similarly, a male DACA recipient shared that he felt "less" (#14, p. 25, male). Likewise, a female DACA recipient stated:

> It made me feel inferior. It made me feel like I wasn't as deserving as others I guess. It made me feel like if everyone else is treating it this way

> maybe this is the way that it is. At first, I felt like I was, I was worth less. (#16, p. 8, female)

For these recipients, learning of their undocumented status and experiencing the stigma attached to the status made them feel as if they were less than those who were documented.

Feeling unwanted (*n* = 5 interviews) also emerged in DACA recipients' experiences. For some DACA recipients, learning of their undocumented status changed their self-view to one where they felt as if they did not belong in the United States. They expressed feeling foreign and uninvited in the United States. One DACA recipient shared the following: "It feels like I'm a burden to like the country and stuff; like I'm not wanted here. But, I can't really leave because I'm not sure what's in store for me back in [name of country], so I feel like I'm being dragged" (#15, p. 14, male). Similarity, another male DACA recipient shared that he felt as a foreigner:

> I transitioned myself to as a foreigner, and I still feel as an American. And, I still see myself as an American, but I slowly started to feel as an unwanted American or someone who shouldn't be here because of all that is going on in the news. (#3, p. 11-12, male)

For these DACA recipients, learning that they were undocumented made them feel like they did not belong in the United States, although they had spent most of their lives in the country.

Becoming more *cautious* also emerged as a way in which DACA recipients' identity was affected (*n* = 4 interviews). After learning of their undocumented status, they became more careful, did not take risks, and second-guessed their decisions. For example, one male DACA recipient shared that he "had to be even more careful" (#6,

p. 39, male). Similarly, another male DACA recipient stated: "[It] allowed me to be more reserved and more like, not exposing myself out there" (#36, p. 24, male). For these DACA recipients, understanding their status made them internalize their status and not take risks that may put them in danger. Their self-views changed to one where they became hyper-careful.

For DACA recipients who learned about their undocumented status during childhood or always new, 5% reported status *concealment* to their identity, 10% reported *identity confusion*, 7.5% reported *little to no influence*, 2.5% reported *empowerment*, 5% reported *dehumanized*, 5% reported *feeling unwanted*, and 2.5% reported *being cautious*. For DACA recipients who learned about their undocumented status during adolescence, 10% reported status *concealment*, 7.5% reported *identity confusion*, 10% reported *little to no influence*, 7.5% reported *empowerment*, 5% reported *dehumanized*, 5% reported *feeling unwanted*, and 5% reported *being cautious.*

Discussion

Prior research on undocumented children suggests that they often learn of their undocumented status during adolescence when they face important milestones (e.g., applying for a driver's license or applying to college; Gonzales, 2011). Although such research has been insightful, we still know little about the discovery process, such as the reasons that prompt immigrant families to inform their children of their children's undocumented status, how immigrant families disclose such information, the content of such disclosures, and the effects of discovery on undocumented children's family relationships and identity. To fill this knowledge gap, we interviewed 40 undocumented college students with DACA status, and we were able to identify DACA recipients' perceptions of their family members' disclosure process and how

such disclosure affected DACA recipients' family relationships and identity. The following section explores this study's findings in greater detail and highlights their theoretical and practical contributions.

Motivation for Status Disclosure

Our first research question asked what prompted family members to inform DACA recipients of their (the DACA recipients') undocumented status. Four different disclosure motivations (i.e., *ineligibility, protection, information seeking,* and *future security*) emerged that broadly fall under two of the disclosure motivations that Vangelisti et al. (2001) identified in their work. In particular, Vangelisti et al. described *exposure motivation*—disclosure for the purpose of responding to someone who directly seeks out information. They also identified *important reason motivation*—disclosure that occurs when absolutely necessary. DACA recipients learned of their undocumented status when they approached their family members for information about applying for jobs, awards, travel, or other opportunities. Thus, family members were motivated to disclose because DACA recipients sought out information, which is similar to Vangelisti et al.'s *exposure* motivation. In addition, *ineligibility, protection,* and *future security* could be subthemes of Vangelisti et al.'s *important reason*.

Despite some overlap, Vangelisti et al.'s (2001) *exposure* and *important reason* are broad motivations that provide little insight into the status-disclosure motivations of undocumented immigrants. Nearly any motivation could be construed in a way that is considered important; therefore, important reason tells us little about undocumented immigrants' unique experiences. By contrast, *ineligibility, protection, information seeking,* and *future security* offer greater specificity that better reflect the experiences

of undocumented immigrants, particularly our sample of DACA recipients. *Ineligibility* and *information seeking* are disclosure motivations in response to DACA recipients seeking opportunities that they were unable to participate in because of their undocumented status. *Protection* and *future security* are disclosure motivations rooted in the desire to ensure the safety of DACA recipients and to provide a promising future for them despite facing substantial uncertainty about their ability to remain in the United States and their ability to experience social mobility. Although outside this study's scope, this area of research would benefit from determining whether *ineligibility*, *information seeking*, *protection*, and *future security* attenuate or exacerbate the distressing nature of initial status-discovery on DACA recipients.

Despite identifying four status-disclosure motivations, some DACA recipients' experiences revealed that their family members did not engage in status disclosure. For these DACA recipients, their family members were not motivated to disclose to the DACA recipient. Concealing immigrant children's undocumented status from them might be different from other types of secrets because inevitably, most undocumented immigrant children will eventually have to learn that they are undocumented. Even if parents delay the disclosure, the children will eventually find out they are undocumented when the children seek employment during adolescence or adulthood. Thus, this study's findings lead one to ask, why wait to inform one's child that the child is undocumented?

Many possible explanations exist for concealment. First, family members might have been unmotivated to disclose because of the stigma that surrounds an undocumented status (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Privacy management scholarship (e.g., Afifi & Steuber, 2009) posits that people may be more likely to reveal a secret

when their perceptions of risk is low, which may not be the case for DACA recipients' family members who engaged in these non-disclosure strategies. Second, some parents might not feel their child can be trusted with such sensitive information because the child is too young to keep the information secret or to understand its seriousness. For example, one DACA recipient reported that their parents did not want the DACA recipient to tell her younger brother (around 10 years of age) that she was undocumented because of the risky nature of disclosure. The parents did not think the brother was "mature" enough to keep the information private. Similarly, parents might delay telling their child that their child is undocumented until the child is old enough to comprehend what it means to be undocumented and the importance of keeping that information private. Third, some parents might not be motivated to inform their children of the children's undocumented status because the parents believe the children already know such information. Some participants reported that they always knew they were undocumented because they had certain memories of crossing the border. Hence, their parents might have believed their children already know they are undocumented because they remember coming to the United States. Lastly, the findings are based on the DACA recipients' self-reported data, and some could not remember their parents disclosing to them. This limitation emphasizes the important of also obtaining the parents' perspective, in the future.

Family Members' Disclosure Strategies

This study also explored the strategies utilized by family members to tell DACA recipients of the DACA recipients' undocumented status. According to DACA recipients, family members utilized two different disclosure strategies (i.e., *direct disclosure* and *accidental disclosure*) to inform the DACA recipient of the DACA

recipients' undocumented status. Some DACA recipients, however, reported that they *always knew* of their undocumented status; therefore, their family members did not engage in any disclosure strategies. For example, some DACA recipients found out that they were undocumented because they had memories about crossing the border. For these DACA recipients, their understanding of their undocumented status occurred in childhood, but during this time, they did not realize the significance of their undocumented status. It was until they became teenagers that they realized what it meant to be undocumented.

Privacy management scholarship (e.g., Golish & Caughlin, 2002; Ilioi, Blake, Jadva, Roman, & Golombok, 2017; Vangelisti et al., 2001; Xiao, et al., 2015) suggests that a secret may never be disclosed. According to this scholarship, this may occur because the perception of judgement is high or because the person revealing the secret did not believe to have the communication skills to effectively reveal the secret (Afifi & Steuber, 2009; Vangelisti et al., 2001). However, although these are valid reasons for a person not to disclose a secret, it is also plausible that the secret holder believes that the target person already knows of the secret, which may deter them from engaging in secret disclosure. For example, in our study we found that some DACA recipients *always knew* that they were undocumented or that they knew of their undocumented status because they had *memories of crossing without belonging*—although they did not understand what these memories meant until they became older. This may be a reason why DACA recipients' parents did not engage in status disclosure; they perceived that the DACA recipients knew of the secret and understood the implications.

Already knew is distinct from reasons provided by previous privacy management scholarship (Derlega, et al., 2008), and it expands our knowledge of disclosure strategies that are utilized, which may be occur without the control of the secret holder. For example, in our study we found that parents *accidentally* disclosed to the DACA recipient the DACA recipients' undocumented status. This suggests that at the time of disclosure, parents were not ready to engage in disclosure, but doing so, still affected the boundary permeance around the secret of an undocumented status—possibly in a different way than those who utilized in a *direct disclosure* strategy. This is because using a *direct disclosure* strategy may communicate to the DACA recipient that they are being trusted with the information, so they can help to co-manage the secret. In contrast, those who found out of their undocumented status through an *accidental disclosure* may have a different interpretation of the boundaries constructed around their statuses' secret, which can influence the way that information is managed within the family unit and outside of it.

Moreover, although DACA recipients shared that their family members utilized distinct disclosure strategies (e.g., direct and accidental disclosures), they did not discuss multiple disclosure scenarios. In other words, DACA recipients' experiences did not suggest that their family members used multiple disclosure strategies to inform the DACA recipient of the DACA recipients' undocumented status. A possible explanation of why multiple disclosures did not surface in our interviews is because our questions did not specifically explore multiple disclosure scenarios, which is a limitation of this study. Nevertheless, it is possible that family members engage in multiple disclosure strategies when disclosing to the DACA recipient of the DACA recipients' undocumented status. Thus, future research should explore if multiple

disclosure strategies are utilized to inform children of their (the child's) undocumented status. This exploration is important because it is plausible that family members engage in multiple disclosures to ensure that a child understands the implications for their undocumented status. For example, it is possible that family members—initially—use an indirect disclosure strategy to inform the child of the child's undocumented status to gage the child's reactions. Then depending on the child's reactions, the family member may decide to continue to disclose the secret in a direct way or using another disclosure strategy. Alternatively, an initial disclosure may prompt the family member to suspend disclosure until a later time. Ultimately, exploring if family members use multiple disclosure strategies when informing a child of the child's undocumented status will expand our understanding of the privacy management rules and strategies utilized by non-U.S. White samples, as well as how and why multiple disclosures were utilized. This exploration can extend our privacy management theorizing.

Content Themes in Status Disclosure

In addition to exploring the disclosures utilized when informing the DACA recipient of the DACA recipients' undocumented status, we considered the main content themes that emerged during the disclosure process. Six different content themes emerged (i.e., *barrier, safety, meaning of "illegal"/undocumented, undocumented narrative, procedural knowledge*, and *planning*). Within these content themes, different individual messages were emphasized. However, similarities can be observed within these content themes. For example, *barrier, meaning of "illegal"/undocumented,* and *undocumented narrative* relate to clarification of information that parents are providing DACA recipients of the DACA recipients'

undocumented status, which is meant to help DACA recipients understand how they obtained their undocumented status, what their status allows them to do, and how others may view them due to this status (e.g., "illegal"). Thus, these content themes emphasize information that can help to socialize DACA recipients into navigating how to manage having an undocumented status, which—for many—did not occur until disclosure took place.

Additionally, *procedural knowledge*, *planning,* and *safety* have an action component (e.g., applying to DACA) within the information that DACA recipient are being provided by their parents. These content themes move past general information of the limitations of an undocumented status and provide direction of how DACA recipients can navigate having such a status, as well as outlining tactics of how DACA recipients can remain safe even with an undocumented status.

Although knowing the reasons of why DACA recipients' family members emphasized these six content themes during disclosure is beyond the scope of this paper, it's possible that family members emphasized these content themes to ensure the family units' protection. Given the stigmatized stereotypes that surround an undocumented status, as well as the negative perceptions of undocumented immigrants (DeAngelo, Schuster, & Stebleton, 2016), it may be that family members emphasized these content themes to ensure that the DACA recipients were careful when seeking resources (e.g., federal funding) and disclosing to non-family members that the DACA recipient has an undocumented status.

Recipients' family relationships after disclosure

The disclosure process of an undocumented status is complex, and it can have distinct family relationship implications. Indeed, our study found three different family

relationship implications for DACA recipients (i.e., *little or no influence, resentment,* and *appreciation).* Most DACA recipients shared that their family relationship was not influenced due to the disclosure of their status. Although we cannot be certain of why DACA recipients' family relationships were minimally influenced, it is plausible that these DACA recipients adhered more strongly to their cultural background that values family harmony. This may have buffered any negative consequence that their family relationships could have experienced (La Roche, 2002). Additionally, it may be that these DACA recipients had a stronger family closeness and family bond, which may have buffered any effects that their relationships could have experienced.

However, although some DACA recipients reported minimal influence to their relationships, other DACA recipients reported that their family relationships were impacted. Some shared that they experienced *resentment* towards parents. Given DACA recipients' demographics in our study, this finding seems contradictory to prior research that suggests that among Latinx and Asian families, family is viewed as more important than the individual (Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994). A possible explanation, however, is that DACA recipients' development in the United States and their exposure to U.S. mainstream culture may have influenced the way in which they viewed the role of their family. This could have changed their expectations around what information they had the right to know within their family dynamics (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). Thus, DACA recipients may have become upset with their family members when their expectation of information management was not met. The expectations that DACA recipients may have might be different to their family members' expectations. Possibly, this may occur because DACA recipients' family members have distinct cultural norms that surround their information management

(e.g., older family members have the right to manage children's information; Smetana, Metzger, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006), as well generational differences and acculturation gaps. Thus, this may have created conflicting views for DACA recipients and their family members. Ultimately, these differences could have created the feelings of resentment that some DACA recipients expressed.

Finally, some DACA recipients reported that their family relationship was positively influenced after status disclosure. These DACA recipients shared that they experienced *appreciation for their parents*. For these DACA recipients, it is possible that understanding the sacrifices that their parents had made for them to live in the United States increased their family unity (La Roche, 2002). Alternatively, it may be that for these DACA recipients, being part of their family secret—and thus including them in the boundary that their families created—made them feel as if their family members trusted them with the information. If true, this may have increased the positive views that DACA recipients had towards their family members. Alternatively, it may be that DACA recipients who reported positive family relationship implications had a closer relationship with their family members prior to status disclosure, which could have enhanced their family strength after the disclosure occurred.

Recipients' Identity Reconceptualization after Disclosure

Our final goal was to explore how DACA recipients' identity changed after learning that they were undocumented. Seven different themes (i.e., *status concealment, confusion, little to no influence*, *empowerment,* dehumanized, *feeling unwanted,* and *being cautious)* emerged in our findings. When looking at these seven themes holistically, we noted that many of these constructs describe a negative impact in DACA recipients' identity reconceptualization (i.e., *status concealment, confusion,*

dehumanized, *feeling unwanted*, and *being cautious*). It is possible that these negative implications emerged because DACA recipients were socialized into U.S. mainstream culture. The socialization experienced by DACA recipients is similar to the socialization of other immigrant children who are raised to be similar to their U.S. peers, and it occurs from living and developing in the United States (Hernandez et al., 2010; Seif, 2016). Thus, for DACA recipients, finding out that they are undocumented—and therefore separate that how they were socialized by American ideals—might create identity uncertainty, which can change their perceptions of the group they identify with. Moreover, the identity uncertainty they experience could also have potential implications to their self-esteem (Hogg, 2007; Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010). An alternative explanation for these findings is that the stigma that surrounds an undocumented status exacerbated DACA recipients' identify reconceptualization after they discovered that they had an undocumented status. This may have resulted due to the negative stereotypes that surrounds an undocumented status, which portrays undocumented immigrants negatively and inferior (Seif, 2016).

Ultimately, these negative identity implications create uncertainty in DACA recipients' identity, which may negatively influence their health. This is because having to deal with their identity uncertainty can create extra stress in DACA recipients as they are trying to understand who they are and why they are being rejected if they grew up in the United States. Additionally, the identity uncertainty that may emerge in DACA recipients' self-view can create an extra burden in them as they try to "earn" their American identity, so they can be accepted as "Americans". Moreover, identity uncertainty among DACA recipients may result in DACA recipients' developing feelings of distrust of who they can share their status with. This

is because in the United States, being undocumented is attached with criminality (Suárez-Orozco, 2012), which can influence how DACA recipients communicate with non-family members of their undocumented status. Potentially, disclosing an undocumented status to someone who has anti-immigrant ideals could have serious negative consequences for DACA recipients (e.g., detention, deportation; Afifi & Steuber, 2009; Brabeck & Xu, 2010). Thus, in addition to changing the way in which DACA recipients viewed themselves, it can influence the way in which they navigate their environment when disclosing to others about their undocumented status (i.e., it can change their external boundaries; Petronio, 2002).

Although some DACA recipients experienced negative identity implications after status disclosure, others experienced positive identity implications (i.e., *empowerment)*. For these DACA recipients, it may be that communication about their identity prior to disclosure could have contributed to this positive self-view. For example, it may be that prior to disclosing to DACA recipients of their undocumented status, parents communicated positive messages to DACA recipients about undocumented immigrants. Alternatively, it is possible that DACA recipients experienced positive identity implications because they were able to develop stronger identity attachments to their U.S. American identity or their native identity prior to disclosure. This strong identity formation may have helped them to be certain of who they are, and it could have prevented DACA recipients from experiences the identity uncertainty they would have otherwise experienced. Thus, after disclosure took place, this strong identity could have resulted in *empowerment*.

In our study, we found that some DACA recipients' experienced negative or positive identity reconceptualization implications after finding out they were

undocumented, but we also found that other DACA recipients experienced *little to no influence* in their self-view. It is plausible that for these DACA recipients, finding out they were undocumented did not influence their self-view because other factors buffered the implications that this might have to their identity. For example, it may be that the age of disclosure, the perceived motivation for disclosure, or the disclosure strategy utilized by their family members resulted in DACA recipients experiencing minimal influence to their self-view. Alternatively, it is possible that these DACA recipients' may have stronger family bonds that could have deterred them from experiencing any influence in their identity. Finally, it is possible that their cultural identity may be more salient than their undocumented status, which could have acted as a protecting factor.

Theoretical Implications

According to Communication Privacy Management theory (CPM; Petronio, 2002) families create different rules and norms around a secret, which may be disclosed using different disclosure strategies (e.g., direct-disclosure; Afifi & Steuber, 2009). Among DACA recipients' immigrant families, we found that different rules and norms exist around their private information. These distinct rules and norms dictate who has access to their private information (Petronio, 2010). For some DACA recipients, their families created a boundary surrounding DACA recipients' undocumented status. The cultural upbringing and the cultural norms around privacy of these immigrant families may have played a role in the boundaries created around DACA recipients' undocumented status, which resulted in some families not telling DACA recipients of the DACA recipients' undocumented status until later (Calzada, Fernandez, & Cortes, 2010; Schwab, 2013; Valdés, 1996). This finding is consistent

with prior research that suggests that many undocumented immigrant children did not find out of their undocumented status until adolescence—when they were reaching important milestones (e.g., applying for a driver's license; Gonzales, 2011).

Furthermore, we found that immigrant families had different motivations (e.g., *ineligibility*), used different disclosure strategies (e.g., *direct-disclosure*), and emphasized distinct content themes (e.g., *barriers*) when disclosing to the DACA recipients of the DACA recipients' undocumented status (Afifi & Steuber, 2009; Petronio, 2002; Vangelisti, 1994). The disclosure strategies that DACA recipients' family members utilized were influenced by the DACA recipients' age (i.e., childhood & adolescence). Because of this disclosure process, we found that DACA recipients reported different consequences to their family relationships (*resentment, appreciati*on, etc.) and identity reconceptualization (e.g., *confusion, empowerment*). Table 1 outlines the different factors of DACA recipients' perceived disclosure process *(motivations, disclosure strategy,* etc.).

Nevertheless, although some of our findings are consistent with some previous research findings, our findings also provide new insights in understanding the boundaries that surround secrets. For example, we found that some parents did not disclose to the DACA recipient of the DACA recipients' undocumented status. Instead, DACA recipients expressed that they *always knew* of their status, or they shared that they had memories of their migration experiences. For these DACA recipients, their parents did not create a boundary that excluded them from their undocumented status. However, although this boundary was not constructed, the information around their undocumented status functioned as a secret because DACA recipients' parents never told the DACA recipients of the implications their

undocumented status had until the DACA recipient became older. Moreover, once these conversations took place, there was no need for boundary negotiation between DACA recipients and their parents since the boundary around their undocumented status never existed. This finding is important because it helps to expand our understanding of boundaries surrounding secrets and how information can function as a secret without the construction boundaries.

Moreover, our findings broaden our understanding on the motivations for secret disclosure. Indeed, Vangelisti et al. (2001) posit that there are nine motivations for secret disclosure. For example, *important reason* describes that a secret may disclosed when the information is necessary or to avoid a crisis. However, although this motivation can be helpful to understanding motivations for disclosure, in the context of an undocumented status disclosure, it does not allow an in-depth understanding in the motivations for status disclosure. This is because the *important motivation* is too broad, and it leaves out important information that helps us understand why DACA recipients' family members—and possibly family members of other undocumented youth—engaged in status disclosure. Indeed, our findings suggested three motivations (i.e., *ineligibility*, *protection*, & *future security*) that fall under Vangelisti et al.'s (2001) *important reason* criteria. Our three motivations demonstrate a specific view of motivations for secret disclosure among DACA receipts' experiences, which all related to helping avoid a crisis. Moreover, they provide a deeper insight that described different components of avoiding a crisis. Thus, using the broad *important reason* motivation would have prevented a deeper understanding around the motivations of an undocumented status disclosure. Similarly,

Vangelisti et al.'s (2001) *exposure* motivation was too broad and did not fully capture the experiences of an undocumented status disclosure for DACA recipients.

Furthermore, our findings also help to extend the Risk Revelation Model (Afifi & Steuber, 2009) by identifying two different disclosure strategies (i.e., *accidental disclosure* & *always knew)*. The *accidental-disclosure* strategy provides a new insight of an alternative way that secret-holders reveal a secret, which occurs without intention. In the case of the secret surrounding DACA recipients' status, we found that DACA recipients' parents accidently disclosed to the DACA recipient the DACA recipients' undocumented status. This occurred because the DACA recipient overheard a private conversation between their parents. Moreover, the *always knew* strategy sheds light in expanding our understanding on how knowledge of private information can exist between a secret keeper and the target individual without the secret keeper engaging in a disclosure strategy. In the case of DACA recipients, their parents might not have engaged in a disclosure strategy because they suspected that the DACA recipient knew of the information. Still, although some DACA recipients *always knew* the information around their status and their parents did not engage in a disclosure, the information of their status functioned as private information managed by the DACA recipients' parents. Ultimately, this finding extend our understanding of how information can function as private, which is known by various members within a family. Thus, functioning as an "open" secret.

To extend how these findings may be related, we propose a theoretical model of the process of status disclosure for undocumented immigrant children. This model extends previous privacy management scholarship by providing a disclosure process model with different factors that DACA recipients reported when they found out they

were undocumented (Figure 1). In this model, we propose that culture functions as an umbrella that influences DACA recipients' family members' motivation for disclosure of an undocumented status (e.g., *protection).* Additionally, we propose that culture influences the disclosure strategies (e.g., *direct* disclosure) that DACA recipients' family members utilize when engaging in status disclosure. Moreover, we propose that DACA recipients' family members' motivations (e.g., *indelibility)* for status disclosure dictate the disclosure strategies (e.g., *accidental* disclosure) that the family members utilize when they engage in disclosure. In turn, family members' use of different disclosure strategies will lead to different family relationship outcomes (e.g., *resentment)* and identity reconceptualization (e.g., *empowerment*) implications for DACA recipients. Furthermore, our model describes that the influence that different disclosure strategies have on DACA recipients' family relationships and identity will be moderated by the content themes that DACA recipients' family members emphasized during the disclosure process. Finally, we posit that DACA recipients' age at the time of disclosure will function as a moderator between the relationships of family members' disclosure strategies and family relationship outcomes, as well as DACA recipients' identity reconceptualization.

Practical Implications

Our study's findings can inform those who work with immigrant families of strategies that family members can use to disclose to their child of the child's undocumented status. These findings can be disseminated among various organization who work with undocumented immigrants (e.g., non-profits, educational institutions), so that they can support immigrant children once they learn of their undocumented status. Additionally, our findings can be given to institutions that interact with

immigrant families soon after they enter the country. For example, although immigrants have distinct experiences when entering the United States (e.g., some enter undetected through the U.S-Mexican border, others overstay their visas), they have similar process of learning how to navigate a new culture and finding resources to thrive.

These resources include access to health and educational institutions that provide immigrants with information of how to navigate their lives in the United States (e.g., free English courses). For example, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 47% of undocumented adult immigrants are uninsured in the United States (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019). Therefore, uninsured undocumented immigrants must rely on public health clinics to obtain health care (Castaneda, 2016). Providing these institutions—that already work with a large number of immigrant families—informational pamphlets of ways that they can manage discussions around an undocumented status can lessen the possible negative strains to their family relationships or to their child's self-concept. Moreover, disseminating this information can also encourage immigrant families to continue to engage in disclosure strategies that may lead to positive implications for their children once the family member tells the child of the child's undocumented status. This information can have an important impact on the lives of these families as they will be receiving the information early on.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although this study provides insights of how DACA recipients found out they were undocumented, their perceptions of their family members' motivations for this disclosure (or lack thereof), content themes emphasized in the disclosure process, as well as how disclosure influenced DACA recipients' family relationships and identity

reconceptualization, it is important to recognize that our findings have limitations. For example, DACA recipients in our study were primarily of Latinx and Asian backgrounds, thus these findings may not be generalizable to other immigrant groups.

Moreover, our study's findings cannot predict which motivations and disclosure strategies used by DACA recipients' parents are helpful or harmful to DACA recipients' family relationships and identity reconceptualization. Thus, although this study provided a deeper understanding of the disclosure process of DACA recipients' undocumented status, we still cannot predict the outcomes that these different factors have for DACA recipients. Additionally, our study focuses on DACA recipients' perceptions of various disclosure outcomes, but it is possible that their perceptions differed from the intent that their family members had when disclosing to DACA recipients the DACA recipients' undocumented status. Moreover, because our exploration of status disclosure comes from a larger study that focuses on stress, coping, and resilience, the questions relating to disclosure of an undocumented status are limited. Thus, the focus of this larger study was not on privacy management, which resulted in limited questions that related to information management.

Nevertheless, although this study has its limitations, it still sheds light into immigrant family's disclosure process, as well as how this disclosure process influenced different aspects of DACA recipients' life (e.g., identity, family relationships). These implications are important to understand because it is DACA recipients' perceptions of the disclosure process that influences different outcomes. Future work, however, should continue to explore this disclosure process—in-depth—and include participants from distinct ethnic and racial backgrounds, as well as undocumented immigrants of different ages and educational levels. Moreover, future

research should explore other ways in which family disclosure of an undocumented status influences DACA recipients' privacy management (e.g., the disclosure strategies the DACA recipients use to disclose their undocumented status to non-family members). Finally, future work should quantitatively explore how the different factors in DACA recipients' disclosure process, that were found in our study (motivations for disclosure, disclosure strategies, etc.), predict different relational and identity outcomes for DACA recipients, as well as other outcomes (e.g., wellbeing).

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Table 1

Results Summary for DACA Recipients Discovering their Undocumented Status

#	Pseudonym	Gender	Age of disclosure	Family member that engaged in disclosure	Motivations	Disclosures	Content themes	Family Relationship	Identity Reconceptualization
1	Brian	Man	Childhood	Parents	Protection	Direct-Disclosure	Safety	N/R	N/R
2	Soccer	Woman	Adolescence	Parents	Information Seeking	Direct-Disclosure	Meaning of "illegal"	Little to no influence	Dehumanized, Status concealment
3	Cortez	Man	Adolescence	Parents	Ineligibility	Direct-Disclosure	Procedural Knowledge	Resentment	Feeling unwanted
4	Jessica	Woman	Childhood	N/R	Ineligibility	Memories	N/R	N/R	Little to no influence
5	Crystal	Woman	Adolescence	Mother	Ineligibility	Memories	Barrier, Meaning of illegal	Resentment	Confusion
6	Carlos	Man	Childhood	N/R	N/R	Always knew	N/R	N/R	Being cautious
7	Melody	Woman	Adolescence	Sister	N/R	Direct-Disclosure	Barriers	N/R	Feeling unwanted
8	George	Man	Childhood	N/R	N/R	Memories	N/R	Little to no influence	Little to no influence
9	Jamie.	Woman	Adolescence	Parents	Future Security	Direct-Disclosure	Procedural knowledge	Little to no influence	Status concealment.
10	Zoey	Woman	Adolescence	Parents	Information seeking	Direct-Disclosure	Narrative, Meaning of "illegal"	Resentment, Little to no influence	Empowerment
11	Karen	Woman	Adolescence	Parents	Ineligibility	Direct-Disclosure	Barriers	Little to no influence	Being cautious
12	Audress	Gender non-conforming	Childhood	Parents	Ineligibility	Direct-Disclosure	Barriers, Narrative	Little to no influence	N/R
13	Quinten	Woman	Childhood	N/R	Ineligibility	Always knew, Memories	N/R	N/R	N/R
14	Spencer	Man	N/R	N/R	N/R	Always knew	N/R	Little to no influence	Dehumanized
15	Matt	Man	Childhood	Mother	Ineligibility	Direct-Disclosure	Barriers, Meaning of "illegal"	Little to no influence	Confusion, Feeling unwanted
16	Carla	Woman	Adolescence	Mother	Ineligibility	Direct-Disclosure	Barriers, Meaning of "illegal"	Little to no influence	Dehumanized, Status concealment
17	Tony	Man	Adolescence	N/R	N/R	Always knew, Memories	Narrative	Little to no influence	Little to no influence
18	Jennifer	Woman	Adolescence	Parents	Ineligibility	Direct-Disclosure	Barriers, Meaning of "illegal"	Little to no influence	Empowerment, Status concealment
19	Sarah	Woman	Childhood	Parents	Protection	Direct-Disclosure	Planning	Little to no influence	Status concealment.
20	Noemi.	Woman	Childhood	Parents	N/R	Accidental-Disclosure	Safety	Parental appreciation	Little to no influence

#	Pseudonym	Gender	Age of disclosure	Family member that engaged in disclosure	Motivations	Disclosures	Content themes	Family Relationship	Identity Reconceptualization
21	Santiago	Man	Childhood	Parents	Protection	Direct-Disclosure	Barriers, Safety	Parental appreciation	Dehumanized, Confusion, Not wanted
22	Xiomara	Woman	Childhood	Parents	Protection	Memories	Safety	Little to no influence	Empowerment
23	N/R	Man	Adolescence	Mother	Ineligibility	Direct-Disclosure	Meaning of "illegal"	Resentment	Confusion
24	Sophia	Woman	Childhood	Parents	Ineligibility	Memories	N/R	Parental appreciation	Empowerment, Confusion
25	Ana	Woman	Adolescence	Father	Ineligibility	Direct-Disclosure	Barriers	Resentment	Empowerment
26	Alicia	Woman	Adolescence	N/R	N/R	Always knew, Memories	N/R	Little to no influence	Little to no influence
27	N/R	Woman	N/R	N/R	N/R	Always knew, Memories	N/R	Resentment	Dehumanized
28	Luis	Gender non-conforming	Childhood	Parents	Ineligibility	Accidental-Disclosure	Narrative	Resentment	Status concealment.
29	Natalie	Woman	Childhood	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R	Status concealment.
30	Victoria	Woman	Adolescence	N/R	Ineligibility	Always knew	N/R	Little to no influence	Little to no influence
31	Carla	Woman	N/R	N/R	N/R	Always knew	N/R	N/R	Feeling unwanted
32	Elizabeth	Woman	Childhood	Father	Protection	Direct-Disclosure	Narrative, Planning	Parental appreciation	Dehumanized, Status concealment
33	Jennifer	Woman	Childhood	Mother	Memories	Memories	Safety	Resentment	Empowerment
34	Kenya	Woman	Childhood	Mother	Protection, Ineligibility	Always knew, Memories	Protection, Procedural knowledge	Little to no influence	Confusion
35	Sam	Woman	Adolescence	Mother	Ineligibility	Direct-Disclosure	Barriers	Resentment	N/R
36	David	Man	Adolescence	Parents	Ineligibility	Always knew	Narrative	Parental appreciation	Being cautious
37	Mulan	Woman	Adolescence	N/R	N/R	Always knew	N/R	N/R	Little to no influence
38	Daisy	Woman	Childhood	Mother	Protection	Memories	Safety	N/R	Being cautious
39	Vanessa	Woman	Adolescence	Parents	Ineligibility	Direct-Disclosure	Barriers	Resentment	Confusion
40	Emily	Woman	Adolescence	Parents	Ineligibility	Direct-Disclosure	Barriers	Parental appreciation	N/R

Note: N/R = not reported; Memories = memories of crossing without belonging

Table 2

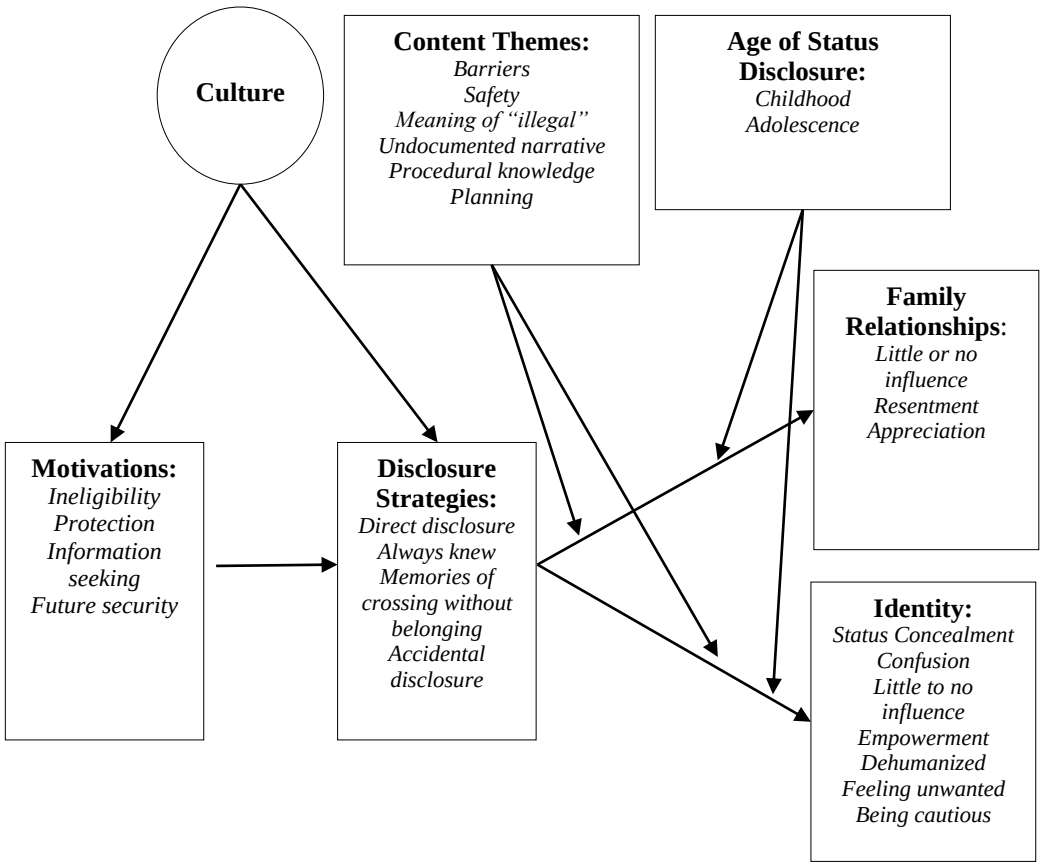
Frequency of thematic themes for DACA recipients' discovery of undocumented status

Item	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Family member that engaged in disclosure		
Parent(s)	17	42.5
Mother	9	22.5
Father	1	2.5
Sibling	1	2.5
N/R	12	30
Age of status disclosure		
Childhood	18	45
Adolescence	19	47.5
N/R	3	7.5
RQ1: Motivation for status disclosure		
Ineligibility	19	47.5
Protection	7	17.5
Information seeking	2	5
Future security	1	2.5
N/R	12	30
RQ2: Family members' disclosure strategies		
Direct-disclosure	19	47.5
Always knew	11	27.5
Memories of crossing without belonging	12	30
Accidental-disclosure	2	5
N/R	1	2.5
RQ3: Content themes in status disclosure		
Barriers	12	30
Safety	7	17.5
Meaning of "illegal"/undocumented	7	17.5
Undocumented narrative	6	15
Procedural knowledge	3	7.5
Planning	2	5
N/R	12	30
RQ4: Family relationship after status disclosure		
Little to no influence	16	40
Resentment	10	25
Appreciation	6	15
N/R	9	22.5

Item	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
RQ5: Identity reconceptualization after status disclosure		
Status concealment	8	20
Identity confusion	7	17.5
Little to no influence	7	17.5
Empowerment	6	15
Dehumanized	6	15
Feeling unwanted	5	12.5
Being cautious	4	10
N/R	5	12.5

Note: N/R = not reported

Figure 1. Disclosure process of DACA recipients' undocumented status



Appendix A

Center recruitment email template

Subject line: UCSB Paid Interview Study on DACA recipients

Hello,

My name is Monica Cornejo, I am an undocumented graduate student at UC Santa Barbara. I am emailing you because I am working with several professors on a research project looking at the stress, coping, and resilience of DACAmented College students. I would like you to invite you and anyone from your campus to participate in this study. :-)

We have been recruiting students to participate in our study—**our goal is to find ways to help undocumented college students successfully manage stressful experiences relating to being undocumented or DACAmented.**

Attached is our flyer, with more information on this study. If you'd like, you can share the flyer with folks who might be interested, even on social media--we are trying to have as much voices as possible participate in this study.

Lastly, below is a brief explanation of the study. If you have any questions, I am more than happy to answer them. :-)

I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

Monica Cornejo
Communication | Doctoral Student
University of California, Santa Barbara

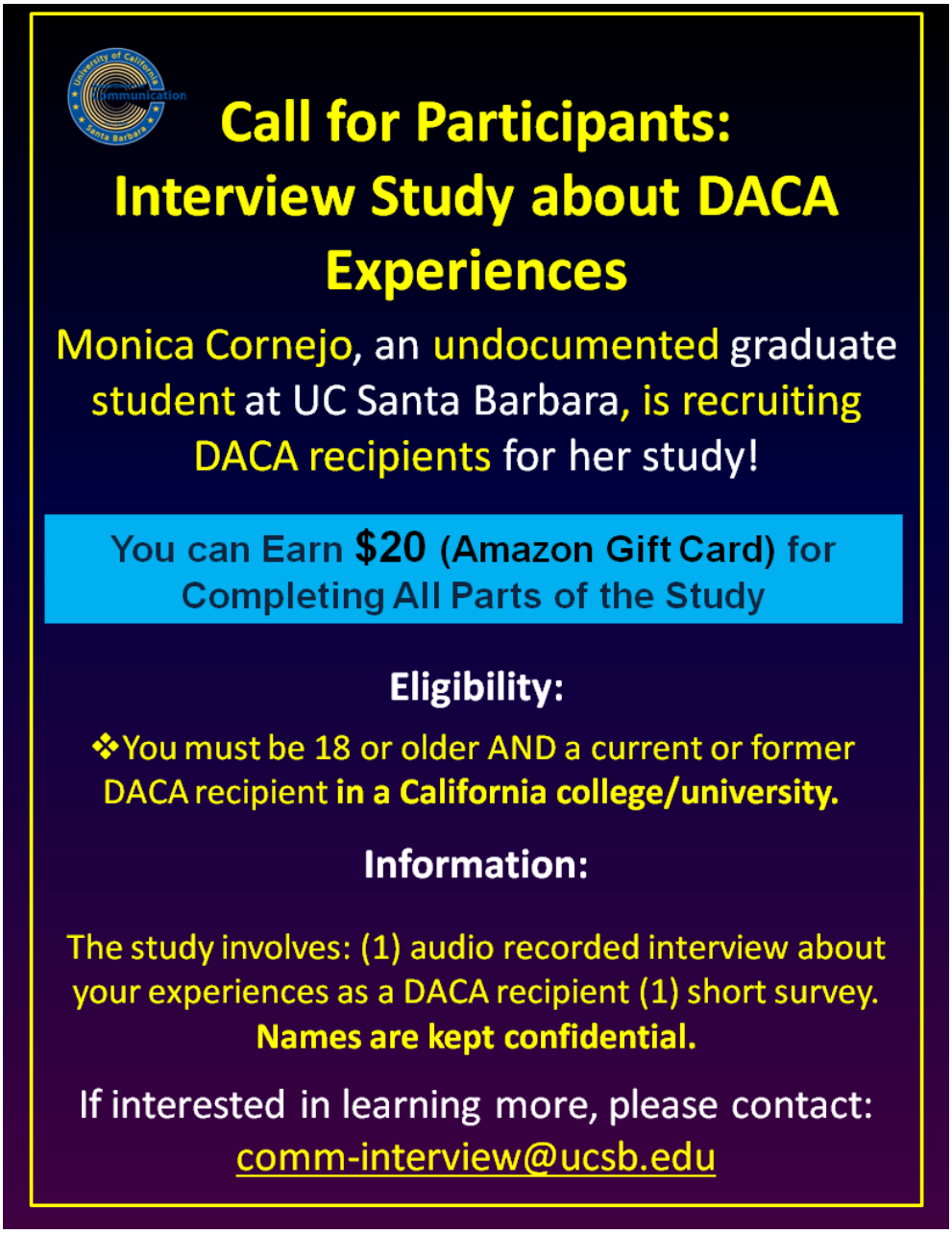
Information about the study

To be eligible to participate students must be:

1. Current student at a CA higher education institution
2. 18 years and older
3. A current DACA DACA recipient or former DACA DACA recipient
4. Agree to participate in a one-on-one audio recorded interview about your experiences as a DACA recipient

Students will be completing one 60-90 minute audio recorded conversation about how they manage stressful experiences related to being undocumented or DACAmented and how family, friends, professors, and the university can provide support. Students will also be taking a brief surveys before the interview. Each student who participates will receive **$20,** as an Amazon gift card, for completing all parts of the study, and partial compensation for completing parts of the study. All information will be confidential, and participation is voluntary.

Appendix B
Recruitment flyer



Appendix C

Interview confirmation email template

Subject line: interview confirmation

Hello. Thank you for participating in our study. This email confirms that we have conversation scheduled on _____ (insert the date) from _____ (insert time frame) via _____ (insert Skype or telephone, depending on participants' preference). An RA will contact you at (insert participant's telephone).

Next steps…
For now, please complete this 10-minute online survey. You can click on the link below to access the survey.

When you complete the survey, it will ask you for an identification (ID) code.

Individual ID: Please type the first three letters of your biological mother's first name and the last four numbers of your cell phone.

https://ucsbltsc.qualtrics.com/...

1. Please complete the survey in a quiet and private location where you won't be distracted
2. Please complete the survey in the next 48 hours

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. We look forward to talking to you on _____ (insert date/time).

Thank you.
Monica.
comm-interview@ucsb.edu

Confidentiality Assurance: We will keep all your information and your friend's information in secure university folder on a password-protected computer that can only be accessed by the research investigators. We will not share your personally identifying information (e.g., name, e-mail address) with anyone outside our research team.

Appendix D

Interview Survey

This is NOT a test, so there are NO right or wrong answers. We are only interested in your thoughts and opinions. And, we will NOT share your individual answers with any of your family members, friends, professors, university, or anyone else outside the research team.

Please provide only one answer per question unless told otherwise.

1. **What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?**
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female

2. **How do you describe yourself? (Check one)**
   - ☐ Woman
   - ☐ Man
   - ☐ Gender non-conforming

3. **Please check how old you are**
   - ☐ 18 years old
   - ☐ 19 years old
   - ☐ 20 years old
   - ☐ 21 years old
   - ☐ 22 years old
   - ☐ 23 years old
   - ☐ 24 years old
   - ☐ 25 years old
   - ☐ Other: _____

4. **What year are you in college?**
   - ☐ 1st year
   - ☐ 2nd year
   - ☐ 3rd year
   - ☐ 4th year
   - ☐ 5th year
   - ☐ 6th years
   - ☐ Other: _____

5. **What country were you born in?**
   - ☐ Argentina
   - ☐ Bolivia
   - ☐ Brazil
   - ☐ China
   - ☐ Colombia
   - ☐ Dominican Republic
   - ☐ Ecuador
   - ☐ El Salvador
   - ☐ Guatemala
   - ☐ Honduras
   - ☐ India
   - ☐ Jamaica

- ☐ South Korea
- ☐ Mexico
- ☐ Philippines
- ☐ Peru
- ☐ Venezuela
- ☐ Vietnam
- ☐ Uruguay
- ☐ Other: _____

6. **Do you identify as:**
   - ☐ DACAmented
   - ☐ DREAMer
   - ☐ Undocumented
   - ☐ Illegal
   - ☐ Alien
   - ☐ AB-540
   - ☐ Other: _____

7. **At what age did you first move (i.e., immigrate) to the United States? _____**

8. **How many years have you lived in the United States? _____**

9. **What year did you first move (i.e., immigrate) to the United States? _____**

10. **What country was your biological MOTHER born in? _____**

11. **What country was your biological FATHER born in? _____**

12. **What language do you primarily speak at home with your family?**
    - ☐ English
    - ☐ Spanish
    - ☐ Korean
    - ☐ Other: _____

13. **What language do you primarily speak with your friends?**
    - ☐ English
    - ☐ Spanish
    - ☐ Korean
    - ☐ Other: _____

14. **How many friends do you have who are from your ethnic/racial group?**
    - ☐ None
    - ☐ Only one
    - ☐ A few
    - ☐ Many

15. **How many friends do you have who are DACA recipients?**
    - ☐ None
    - ☐ Only one
    - ☐ A few
    - ☐ Many

16. **How many friends do you have who are NOT DACA recipients but who are undocumented? (*Undocumented is also sometimes referred to as having papers or no papers, authorized/unauthorized, legal/illegal status*)**
    - ☐ None
    - ☐ Only one
    - ☐ A few
    - ☐ Many

17. **How many friends do you have who are documented immigrants?**
    - ☐ None
    - ☐ Only one
    - ☐ A few
    - ☐ Many

18. **How many friends do you have who U.S.-born ALLIES?**
    - ☐ None
    - ☐ Only one
    - ☐ A few
    - ☐ Many

What is the documentation status (*also sometimes referred to as having papers or no papers, authorized/unauthorized, legal/illegal status*) of the following people?

19. **Biological Father**
    - ☐ Undocumented
    - ☐ Documented
    - ☐ Used to be undocumented, but now have legal status

20. **Biological Mother**
    - ☐ Undocumented
    - ☐ Documented
    - ☐ Used to be undocumented, but now have legal status

21. **Stepfather (If applicable or leave blank)**
    - ☐ Undocumented
    - ☐ Documented
    - ☐ Used to be undocumented, but now have legal status

22. **Stepmother (If applicable or leave blank)**
    - ☐ Undocumented
    - ☐ Documented
    - ☐ Used to be undocumented, but now have legal status

23. **What is your SIBLINGS' documentation status (*also sometimes referred to as having papers or no papers, authorized/unauthorized, legal/illegal status*)?**
    - ☐ All your siblings are undocumented
    - ☐ Some of your siblings are documented and others are undocumented
    - ☐ All your siblings are documented

24. **How many siblings do you have? _____**

25. **Among your siblings, how many are also DACA recipients? _____**

26. **Does your university have a center dedicated for undocumented students? _____**
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ I don't know

27. **Have you ever visited a "Dream Center/Undocumented Student Services Center"?**
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

28. **How often do you participate in events hosted by your university's Dream Center/Undocumented Student Services Center?**
    - ☐ None
    - ☐ Once
    - ☐ A few times
    - ☐ Many times
    - ☐ All the times

29. **How often do you access resources provided by your university's Undocumented Student Services?**
    - ☐ None
    - ☐ Once
    - ☐ A few times
    - ☐ Many times
    - ☐ All the times

30. **What year did you first become a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipient? _____**

31. **When does your DACA expire? _____ (month), _____ (year)**
32. **How often have you worried that a family member(s) might be detained or deported?**
    - ☐ Never
    - ☐ Once
    - ☐ A few times
    - ☐ Many times
    - ☐ All the time

33. **How often have you worried that you might be detained or deported?**
    - ☐ Never
    - ☐ Once
    - ☐ A few times
    - ☐ Many times
    - ☐ All the time

34. **Have any of the following people been detained or deported because of their undocumented status?** *(Please check all that apply)*
    - ☐ You

- ☐ Your father or stepfather
- ☐ Your mother or stepmother
- ☐ Your brother or sister
- ☐ Your stepbrother or stepsister

The following questions ask about your feelings and thoughts during the PAST MONTH (30 DAYS). Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

In the past month (30 days), I have felt:

35. **…unable to control the important things in my life**
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

36. **…confident about my ability to handle my personal problems**
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

37. **…that things were going my way**
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

38. **…difficulties were piling up so high that I could not overcome them**
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

The End! Thank You!

Appendix E

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Experiences of DACA College Students)
**Questions were added after DACA was rescinded*

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Documentation)

Introductions

Research assistant will introduce himself or herself and explain the purpose of the study:

"Hi. My name is (*RA, insert your name*)."

"I'm a student at the University of California in Santa Barbara. I'd like to invite you to fill out a short 5-minute survey and take part in a one-one-one interview discussion with me about your experiences living in the United States, focusing particularly on your experiences as a DACAmented student. Our discussion is confidential, and I will be audio-recording our conversation only to be able to remember what was said. I will not include your name or any identifying information with the typed interview.

The whole process can range from 45-75 minutes. For filling out the short survey and taking part in this interview discussion today, you will receive $20. You only need to participate once.

Please know that we are NOT interested in telling on you or getting you in trouble. Instead, we know that people of undocumented status may face certain challenges like being treated unfairly or being afraid of deportation. That can be really stressful. Our goal is to learn how students deal with these experiences. We also want to know how friends, family members, and teachers communicate support to you or a lack of support. Our goal is to provide resources to DACAmented students and to inform allies on how to be supportive.

Again, we're not interested in getting anyone in trouble.

Rights

"For the interview, I have a few things I'd like to cover. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or don't understand a question, please stop and let's talk about it. We'll try to figure out what it is that makes you feel uneasy. If you want to, you can stop the interview at any time. There is no penalty to stopping the interview. The questions we're going to talk about really don't have any right or wrong answers. We'd just like to know about your experiences."

Consent to Record the Interview

"You already agreed to participate in this recorded interview. I just want to remind you that this will be recorded so that you can talk as fast and as much as you want to without worrying about whether I'm able to write it all down. I am going to be writing some notes, but don't let that distract you. Just keep telling your stories and the recorder will get all the details. Remember that only the research team will know the comments are yours. We will delete the audio recording at the end of the study." ***If the student indicates s/he does not want to be recorded then terminate the interview.***

Emphasize Confidentiality

Example: "I promise to keep what you tell me private. That means that I'll take the

information you give me and put it with information from all of the other students we are interviewing. I promise not to ever put your name together with your words. There are only numbers on the tape and on this interview sheet. This is so you can talk about the issues we bring up without worrying that someone else will find out what you said. I'm sworn to keep the information private, even from your parents, teachers, and friends.

The only exception to this, as stated in the assent form, "If we suspect child abuse, we are required, by law, to follow up with a counselor familiar with cultural practices and, if the concerns are supported, follow up with the appropriate legal authorities. They may require that we give them the materials related to this interview."

Ask student to choose a fake name.
Example: "To ensure privacy, I'll call you by another name during the interview. You can make up any name. Just don't use your real name or even your nickname. Anything else will do. What name would you like to use?"

Introduction to the Interview
"Ready to start the interview? Please remember that all of your responses are private, and that we would like you to tell us your honest thoughts. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions."

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself.

2. What made you decide to participate in this interview?

3. Can you briefly tell me your story about moving to the United States?

4. What types of things worry you on a regular basis? Why?

> **Explain** (So, can you explain what you mean?)
> **Example** (Can you give me an example when...)
> **Elaborate** (Can you elaborate? Tell me more)
> **Extend** (What happened before…?)
> **Look** (what does that look like?)
> In what ways are they…?
> What does that mean to you…?

Challenges to being Undocumented

5. Now I'm going to have you focus specifically on being undocumented. What are some of the day-to-day experiences that remind you of being undocumented?

6. Describe ways in which people have unknowingly reminded you of your undocumented status?

7. What are some challenges that you've faced as an undocumented student?
   - ☐ What are some of the most stressful ones? Can you describe how you dealt with those challenges?
   - ☐ What did you do to get through them or to make yourself feel better?
   - ☐ What have others done to support you through these challenges?

8. What are some challenges that are unique to being a DACA recipient?
   - ☐ What did you do to get through them or to make yourself feel better?
   - ☐ What have others done to support you through these challenges?

9. What are some opportunities you feel you've missed out on because of your undocumented status? How do you deal with opportunities missed because of your status?

10. What kind of uncertainty, if any, do you experience surrounding your undocumented status? By uncertainty, I mean things that you are unsure about or things you worry about because you do not know what will happen. Things you feel you can't predict.

11. How have you dealt with the uncertainty?

12. What have you done to reduce any uncertainty?

13. *When Sessions announced on September 5, 2017 that the DACA program was rescinded, how did you feel? How have you coped with that news? What have you done to make yourself feel better about the situation?

14. *On January 10th, Judge Alsup blocked the Trump administration's decision to rescind the DACA program, and Judge Alsup ruled that the administration must accept DACA renewals. What's been your reaction to this news? How do you feel about it?

Experiences with Family

15. What are some things you or your family have done to make your undocumented experience better?

16. How do you and your family talk about being undocumented? Can you describe your conversations as if they were part of a movie script? "He said…, then I said…"

17. How has being undocumented affected your relationship with your family members?

18. You are a DACA recipient, but are some of your family members not DACA recipients? How has that affected how you talk to your family about your undocumented experiences? How has that affected your relationships with your family?

Learning of one's undocumented status?

19. When/how did you find out that you were undocumented? Please try to describe that experience in detail.

20. How did learning about your undocumented status affect your relationship with your family?

21. How did learning about your undocumented status affect your identity (how you view yourself)?

Experiences with Allies

22. How, if at all, has being undocumented affected your relationship with people at school (e.g., teachers, classmates, etc.)?

Explain (So, can you explain what you mean?)
Example (Can you give me an example when...)
Elaborate (Can you elaborate? Tell me more)
Extend (What happened before…?)
Look (what does that look like?)
In what ways are they…?
What does that mean to you…?

23. How, if at all, has being undocumented affected your performance at school?

24. When thinking about allies, who do you see as allies? What does it mean to be an ally to undocumented students? How can an ally be supportive?

25. How do you know someone is an ally?

26. Who do you go to for support?

27. Please tell me about instances when an ally has intentionally or unintentionally been unhelpful or hurtful? Please share any comments that you've received from allies that might have been hurtful.

28. Please tell me about instances when other DACA recipients has intentionally or unintentionally been unhelpful or hurtful? Please share any comments that you've received from other DACA recipients that might have been hurtful.

29. Please tell me about instances when other undocumented immigrants, who are *not* DACA recipients, has intentionally or unintentionally been unhelpful or hurtful? Please share any comments that you've received from them that might have been hurtful.

30. How have these comments created challenges for you?

31. How have allies supported you? How have they communicated support to you? How have they shown you they support you? What does that look like?

Disclosing one's Undocumented Status to People Outside the Family

32. Have you told people outside your family that you are undocumented? *(Stated differently, have you talked to anyone your family (e.g., teacher, friend, school counselor, etc.) about your undocumented status?)* Please try to describe where you were, who the person was, and how they reacted?

    <u>If yes,</u> what motivated you to talk to this person about your situation? Why did you talk to this person about your situation?
    - ☐ What did you say to that person? Try to describe it word for word like a movie script.
    - ☐ How did the person respond?
    - ☐ What happened afterward?
    - ☐ Are you glad you shared that information? How did you feel afterwards? Why or why not?
    - ☐ Do you feel like sharing that information helped in any way? Why or why not? How or how not?

<u>If no</u>, have you hinted to the person about your undocumented status?
- ☐ How did you hint to that person? Try to describe what you did.
- ☐ How did the person respond?
- ☐ What happened afterward?
- ☐ Are you glad you hinted that information? Why or why not?
- ☐ Do you feel like hinting that information helped in any way? Why or why not? How or how not?

33. **<u>If you haven't hinted or told someone else about your undocumented status</u>**, what might motivate you to talk to someone outside your family about your situation? Why would you talk to anyone about your situation?

34. What might be some good things that could (or did) come from talking to someone outside of your family about your documentation situation?

35. What might be some bad things that could (or did) come from talking to someone outside of your family about your documentation situation?

36. How has anyone outside your family helped you deal with being undocumented?

37. In what ways have they helped?

38. Overall, can you describe any good things, if there are any, that have come from being undocumented?

College Support

39. In this last part of the interview, let's talk more about your college. What does your college do to help undocumented students, if anything?

40. How have you found out about your college's resources for undocumented students?

41. What are some things that have prevented you from using your college's resources for undocumented students? Why might you not use your college's resources for undocumented students?

42. What more can your college do to support undocumented students?

43. What more can documented student allies do to support undocumented students?

44. How could faculty do more to support undocumented students?

Labels for Undocumented Communities

45. Undocumented communities have been given many labels; "undocumented, DREAMer, DACAmented, and illegal, etc." how do you feel about these terms? What do they make you think of? Is there another term you think would be better representative of this community?

46. Please share your thoughts on the "good immigrant" versus "bad immigrant" narrative. What does this narrative mean to you? How do you feel about this narrative?

47. How are you coping now that DACA has been rescinded? What do you do to make yourself feel better about the situation?

48. When you think of immigration reform, what do you think immigration reform should look like? Describe how immigration policy should be reformed. Please describe any concerns you have and hopes you have for immigration reform.

49. If there is no immigration reform and DACA is not renewed, what do you plan to do?

CLOSE: That's all the time we have for today. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about related to this interview? Thank you for taking the time to talk with me. Remember, your answers to these questions are completely private.
I would like to give you $20 to thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.
How would you like me to give you the $20? You can receive it through Venmo (ask for the ID) or as an amazon gift card.