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The Role of a Dream Resource Center at a CSU: How Institutional Agents Advanced Equity for
Undocumented Students through Interest Convergence

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Michael Rabaja Manalo-Pedro

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Role of a Dream Resource Center at a CSU: How Institutional Agents Advanced Equity for Undocumented Students through Interest Convergence

by

Michael Rabaja Manalo-Pedro

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Robert T. Teranishi, Chair

Undocumented students face several institutional barriers that impede successful graduation rates in higher education. In recent years, institutions of higher education have been confronted with the volatile political climate and heightened visibility surrounding undocumented student issues. The emerging Dream Resource Centers (DRCs) represent an understudied intervention for institutions of higher education to uphold their commitment to undocumented student success and educational equity. Drawing on concepts from Critical Race Theory, interest convergence, the liminal state of immigration policy, campus climate, and student centers, this study explored the role of a DRC in a large, public state university in California. Specifically, the research questions for the study were:

1. What factors led to the creation of the Dream Resource Center?
2. What Dream Resource Center programs, policies, practices, and structures meet the needs of undocumented students?
3. What role does the Dream Resource Center play in enacting institutional commitment to

undocumented students?

Answers to questions were acquired using qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews captured the perspectives of front-line staff members, allies, and upper level administrators who worked on creating and/or supporting the DRC at the institution. Findings reveal how institutional actors shifted the campus climate, how interest convergence was key in the opening of the DRC, and how the DRC furthers the institutions' objectives of recruitment, retention, and community empowerment.

This study highlighted the critical role that institutional allies, institutional leaders, and the DRC play in advancing educational equity for undocumented students. This study can build current practitioners' knowledge on starting new DRCs and provide high-level administrators with empirical evidence on the importance of supporting undocumented students.

Recommendations for practitioners include to (a) prioritize undocumented students' interests, (b) build coalitions to strengthen partnerships, and (c) utilize an immigrant justice approach. With the uncertainty and lack of leadership around federal immigration reform, institutions of higher education have an opportunity to shape the country's discourse around supporting undocumented communities.

The dissertation of Michael Rabaja Manalo-Pedro is approved.

Tracy Lahica Buenavista

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2018

DEDICATION PAGE

*I am the son of Maria Lourdes Rabaja Pedro from Manila
and Gerardo Calventas Pedro Junior from Dingras*

*They are the descendants of Magdalena Licuanan Rabaja, Mariano Gorospe Rabaja,
Felicitas Calventas Pedro, and Gerardo Manera Pedro Senior.*

They crossed the Pacific Ocean because they dreamt of a better life.

I am my ancestors' wildest dreams.

Para sa'yo

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore,” she wrote. “Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door! – Statue of Liberty inscription, New York

During the 2016-2017 academic year, undocumented students¹ feared for their safety and belonging on higher education campuses due to the national anti-immigrant climate and the increase of deportation forces set forth by the newly elected Trump administration. In response to the national climate, institutions of higher education reaffirmed their stance to support undocumented students. For example, over 200 university and college presidents signed on to a letter urging the federal administration to support the temporary program created by former President Obama called the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA (“College & University Presidents Call for U.S. to Uphold and Continue DACA,” 2016). This move by college presidents represents one of the different ways institutions of higher education enacted their support for undocumented students.

For this study, I examine how *Dream Resource Centers* (DRCs)² advance educational equity for undocumented students on the university campus and operationalize institutions’ commitment to undocumented students. For this study, a DRC is defined as an office or space that houses an undocumented student program and serves as a hub for services, resources, and/or a space where students and staff coalesce. Bell (1980) argues that educational equity can be achieved if policies and practices seek to address these racial and systemic inequities. Previous

¹ For this paper, I use the term undocumented students to encompass the multiple and fluid identities of those who self-identify as Dreamers, AB-540, DACAmented, unDACAmented, Dream Act student.

² I use the moniker *Dream Resource Centers* to represent centers that were created to support undocumented students in higher education.

research highlights the value of how institutional agents (faculty or staff) create supportive campus environments for undocumented students (Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Nienhusser & Espino, 2017). Although the role of institutional agents is valuable, agents are only one aspect of institutional change. I will expand on the understudied, yet growing, research on the role of how DRCs (Heckenberg, 2016; Sanchez & So, 2015) are another form of institutionalized support for undocumented students.

Increasingly, literature highlighting undocumented students' negative experiences illuminates that institutions of higher education are not *undocufriendly*. Most existing research focuses primarily on the counter-narratives of undocumented students in higher education (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Suarez-Orozco, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2015; Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011), the incorporation patterns of undocumented students in higher education (L. J. Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2015; Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013; Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009), and how federal policy impacts undocumented students (Gonzales, Terriquez, & Ruszczyk, 2014; Pérez Huber, 2015). Departing from this individual-focused approach, a University of California Berkeley report found that, on the university level, the climate on their campus was, at times, ambivalent and non-supportive of undocumented students (A. Ledesma, 2013). Less attention is paid to institutional perspectives of how universities and colleges support undocumented students, particularly via the unique intervention of DRCs. DRCs are a relatively newer phenomenon (Sanchez & So, 2015) specifically geared to span every aspect of the campus to support the range of needs for one of the most underserved populations: undocumented students.

Institutional Perspective

This project analyzes how DRCs operate within the larger context of the university. Undergirding this framework is Bronfenbrenner's (1992) ecological model that outlines four levels of contexts for development: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. This theory was originally developed to frame how humans grow as they navigate between multiple systems ranging from the microsystem (the person to person interactions) to the macrosystem (the patterns of culture, knowledge, and power). This study utilizes this ecological lens to understand how DRCs affect the university macrosystem.

Political Context

“We have people coming into the country, or trying to come in — and we’re stopping a lot of them — but we’re taking people out of the country. You wouldn’t believe how bad these people are. These aren’t people. These are animals.” – President Trump (Lind, 2018)

The current presidential administration has a strong stance against immigration and has a narrow definition of inclusion. According to the U.S. Constitution, America was created on the foundations of freedom and equality for all. Yet, scholars provide counter-narratives to illustrate how freedom and equality were only meant for those who identify as white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant, straight, and male (Anzaldúa, 1987; Takaki, 2012; West, 2001). These scholars argue that immigrants, despite bearing the brunt of building a strong nation, remain a marginalized and stigmatized community. Furthermore, undocumented immigrants continue to be oppressed under a racialized and criminalized political agenda (Wong, 2017). Within the past several decades, the topic of immigrants and immigration reform has been central not only within academic spaces, but also within the larger political discourse.

Immigration has been a central focus during the campaigns of previous presidents and certainly has been a central talking point during President Trump’s candidacy. This

administration remains adamant about proposals to build a higher and more fortified wall between the U.S. and Mexico borders (Davis, Sanger, & Haberman, 2017). The building of a wall reifies the insider/outsider binary that splinters communities and further marginalizes undocumented immigrants (Flores, 2003). Research shows that, even within the walls of higher education, undocumented students find it difficult to navigate the institutional barriers to their education. Although contentious across the country, both federal and state governments passed legislation to address systemic barriers.

Access to Higher Education

Policymakers in higher education debated whether undocumented students should have equitable access to higher education (Diaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners, 2011). Opponents to undocumented students' right to education believe it is illegal according to federal law (Kobach, 2007), whereas proponents argue that educating undocumented students is not only morally responsible but also beneficial to society as a whole (Piedra, Schiffner, & Reynaga-Abiko, 2011). During the 1990s, California led the country in anti-immigrant sentiment through the passing of the landmark Proposition 187, deeming undocumented immigrants ineligible for state benefits. From this legislation stemmed formally organized anti-immigrant groups including the Save our State coalition. For example, the California Coalition for Immigrant Reform and the Minuteman Project were two groups who lobbied for anti-immigrant legislation and were tabbed as extreme nativist groups through the Southern Law Poverty Center (Beirich, 2012).

This anti-immigrant fervor peaked when the federal government passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWOA) in 1996. Although undocumented

immigrants had access to K-12 education since 1982 through *Plyler v. Doe*, IIRIRA and PRWOA effectively restricted access to higher education. IIRIRA prohibited in-state residency status for undocumented students and PRWOA prohibited undocumented students from receiving federal aid. Compelled by the increase of aforementioned right-leaning, anti-immigrant policies, pro-immigrant groups, including students, voiced their concerns. Thus, students created a dialogue for comprehensive immigration reform with the discussion of the first Federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM) Act in 2001 (Nicholls & Fiorito, 2015).

Dreamer Movement

In the mid-1990s, the Dreamer movement began to combat anti-immigration policies and sentiments (Eilbaum, 2015; Nicholls & Fiorito, 2015; Torre & Germano, 2014). By the mid-2000s, students in the undocumented and unafraid movement, as popularized by UCLA's Improving Dreams, Equality, Access, and Success (IDEAS) vulnerably risked making public declarations of their undocumented statuses to provide counter-narratives of how the immigration system impacted them and their families (K. Wong et al., 2012). The “dreamers” fought for the Federal DREAM Act, which would have provided a pathway to citizenship for millions of undocumented youth. Conservatives disagreed with the idea of the Federal DREAM Act under the pretense that this would incentivize unlawful immigration:

On average, each illegal immigrant who attends a public institution will receive a tuition subsidy from taxpayers of nearly \$6,000 for each year he or she attends, for total cost of \$6.2 billion a year, not including other forms of financial assistance they may also receive. – Steven Carmota at the Center for Immigration Studies

Despite many years of lobbying for the Federal DREAM Act, anti-immigrant rhetoric again prevailed when the Federal DREAM Act failed to pass the Senate 55-41. Opponents of the DREAM Act critiqued that strengthening the U.S. border should take priority over protections

for Dreamers (Hing, 2010). After the failure of the Federal DREAM Act, youth began to wonder what would come of their immediate futures. Would undocumented youth have a place in institutions of higher education? Would they be less safe in their communities and more prone to deportation?

Deportation and Fear

The optics of President Barack Obama, a self-proclaimed supporter of dreamers (“The Obama Record on Deportations,” 2017), as President did not align with the actions of his administration. During the tenure of President Obama between 2008-2016, more than 3 million undocumented immigrants were deported—the most of any other administration to this point (“The Obama Record on Deportations,” 2017). Currently, President Trump has not only continued the expansion of the deportation force but has also invested in greater fiscal resources to hire more than 15,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol agents in 2017 (Rein, 2017). These agents have penetrated spaces that were previously considered “sensitive locations” from immigration enforcement.³ Several high profile cases of undocumented youth being arrested and detained brought the issue of aggressive immigration enforcement to the national forefront. In 2017, Claudia Rueda was attending California State University, Los Angeles when ICE arrested her parents and held them in deportation proceedings. Shortly after protesting her parents’ deportation, ICE arrested Claudia and detained her in an apparent targeted attack in her neighborhood of Boyle Heights. Although Claudia has since been released from deportation proceedings, the fear already spread across the student community in similar state institutions across the region (Richards, 2017). This example

³ In 2011, ICE abided by a memo citing that sensitive locations including city halls, library, and institutions of learning were protected from any immigration enforcement.

highlights how undocumented students face challenges from both governmental forces in their communities and even from within institutions of education.

The Pursuit of Higher Education

Scholars focused on how the number of undocumented students dwindle more drastically than other students as they progress through the educational pipeline. In a report by Passel (2011), of the 65,000 undocumented students who graduate from high school nationally each year, only about 10% actually matriculate into a university compared to 68.3% of the general population during that same year (“U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics,” 2015). According to the Pew Research Center (Passel & Cohn, 2011), undocumented students account for only 2% (about 200,000 students) of the national college student population compared to 3.7% of undocumented immigrants within the general U.S. population (Preston, 2011). Undocumented immigrants may be underrepresented in higher education due institutions’ inability to supporting the intersecting identities of being first generation, students of color in addition to being undocumented.

Undocumented immigrants represent a diverse population from the global south. In the most recent demographic report by the Pew Research Center (Passel & Cohn, 2014), of the 11.2 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, almost 95% come from Central and South American, Asia, and Africa. These data show that undocumented immigrants also contend with the lived experience of systemic racism, a well-researched problem in higher education (Center, 2017).

Microaggressions on Campus

Due to the visibility of the Dreamers movement, more attention is being paid to the experiences of undocumented students in college settings. Critical Race Theorists (Buenavista,

2016; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000) illuminate that spaces of higher education can also be traumatic for undocumented students of color. Scholars have documented the multiple forms of racial microaggressions that impede students' success. Racial microaggressions are defined as subtle insults (verbal, non-verbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously. For example, stereotype threat, where even having to provide a California ID for the GRE test, can trigger trauma leading to lower scores on standardized tests and lower academic performance in higher education overall (Solorzano et al., 2000).

Higher Education's Response

Using Bolman and Deal's (2008) political framework, an institution can consist of many different factions who oftentimes compete for varying interests. The lens describes how an institution is not monolithic per se, but may be a heterogeneous in the type of support for undocumented students within a single institution.

In 2011, a committee of faculty and staff conducted research on the campus climate surrounding undocumented students at University of California (UC) Berkeley. Through surveys and interviews, the committee found that the campus climate towards undocumented immigrants is fluid—at times uninformed, ambivalent, or even hostile. These findings brought to light the important need to create more resources to support undocumented students. Shortly after, in 2012, the institution became the very first in the nation to create a program specifically dedicated to undocumented students called the Undocumented Student Program.

Given the findings of negative student experiences in higher education (Perez et al., 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015), pioneering leaders within higher education institutions followed UC Berkeley's lead and created their own campus programs or center to support undocumented students. The story of how a DRC develops can illuminate how the DRC is then

perceived and how it supports students. In 2014, the Titan Dreamers Resource Center (TDRC) at California State University, Fullerton opened as the first DRC in the California State University (CSU). According to university leadership, the TDRC enacts the university mission of upholding “diversity and cultural competence” (Nault, 2014) in an ever-increasing and diversifying higher education student pool.

Dream Resource Centers in Higher Education

Institutions replicated these models of success across the University of California (UC), within the California State University (CSU), and California Community College (CCC) systems. Since the CSU and UC form the two largest U.S. educational institutions, they are commonly studied. Yet, there is no comprehensive study analyzing the overarching role of DRCs in institutions of higher education. Rather, studies focus either on center programs or institutional agents that serve the population, such as counselors (Perez, 2010). Although counselors play a central role in important in supporting undocumented students, research on the DRC as a unit of analysis would be beneficial to understanding its role in the institution.

Despite the growth of DRCs, there is a gap in the literature regarding how these centers shift institutional climate. This study examines how DRCs are a unique and innovative intervention to support undocumented students at the CSU. This research uncovers themes of how organizational philosophies align with daily practice. In my current position as a DRC front-line staff person at a large public university, I am in a unique situation to study how DRCs support students.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (Solorzano et al., 2000) illuminates how racism is embedded within institutions of education where students of color do not have parallel experiences as their white

counterparts. As mentioned earlier, institutional microaggressions are manifested in the structures (physical spaces and attributes), practices (programs and faculty and staff hiring and retention), and discourse of the campus. These racial oppressions impact the overall campus climate of the university, thus negatively impacting student experiences (Hurtado, 1992). Critical Race Theory plays an essential role in helping us understand how society is not colorblind and equitable.

In 1995, seminal Critical Race Scholar Bell suggested that the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* did not happen out of a pure pursuit for justice but rather an alternate agenda of *interest convergence*. Bell claimed that the “interest of Blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of Whites” (p. 22). Thus, educational integration was only implemented so that whites could pursue the agenda of espousing racial equality abroad and particularly to black World War II Veterans fighting internationally. Scholars have built on this idea to show how the interests of whites are achieved through educational policies and practices including affirmative action and school choice (Crowley, 2013; Park & Liu, 2014; Stovall, 2013). The research presented on interest convergence shows how initiatives were not simply created out of benevolence or an enlightenment of morality.

Applying Critical Race Theory to higher education, this study examined how DRCs uphold their institutional missions to support the student body through diversity and equitable inclusion programs, thus countering structural racism. This study examined DRCs (as the unit of analysis) as a unique intervention within the field of student affairs. Best practices in higher education were investigated within this study. In order to understand how institutions support the success of undocumented students, the following research questions framed this study:

1. What factors led to the creation of the Dream Resource Center?

2. What Dream Resource Center programs, policies, practices, and structures meet the needs of undocumented students?
3. What role does the Dream Resource Center play in enacting institutional commitment to undocumented students?

Design

The study used a qualitative design in order to understand in-depth experiences of students and professionals. With the many challenges that undocumented students face, semi-structured interviews humanized staff and administrator experiences (Freire, 2000). This methodology allowed participants to deeply reflect on their experiences and provide a thorough response not typically yielded through quantitative surveys. The semi-structured interviews functioned like a conversation allowing participants to engage with their emotions that would otherwise go undetected through quantitative methods. Document analysis and observational data from meetings and public events served as additional points for triangulation with interviews.

Participant Sample

This research focused on the experiences of student affairs professionals and administrators. Although student experience can provide a microsystem perspective on the DRC's functions, this study instead aimed to understand the role of the DRC within the larger context of the university. This study sought perspectives from staff, faculty, and administrators to provide understandings of the political history and the role the center plays within the institution. University staff and faculty understand the role of the DRC and its overall function to support undocumented students. Administrator interviews shed light on the organizational structure and philosophical alignment of the DRCs with the university at-large. Ultimately, through a mix of

staff, faculty, and administrators, themes emerged on the role of the DRC in the macrosystem of the institution.

Site

Understanding that the issues of undocumented students are national, they are ever more pronounced in the state of California where approximately 24% of the total undocumented population resides (Fortuny & Chaudry, 2016). Additionally, 40% of the total undocumented youth population resides in California and some of the highest enrollments of undocumented students in the country collectively are in California (McNair Jr., Driscoll, & D'Amico, 2010). Furthermore, California has a long legacy of immigrant justice through non-profit work. The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights Los Angeles has a presence at multiple CSUs through their higher education network called the California Dream Network (Nicholls & Fiorito, 2015).

For this study, I focused on one DRC within the CSU system. The CSU system is comprised of 23 public universities across the state of California and collectively one of the largest systems of higher education in the country, graduating more than 110,000 students each year. Compared to the UC and the private school system, the CSU is generally a more accessible system with lower tuition (\$5,742 annually compared to \$12,630 for UC) and higher acceptance rates (60% CSU versus 40% UC on average) ("College Prep / UC & CSU Admissions," 2017). Because of this, lower-income students, including undocumented students, may see the CSU as a more cost-effective option (California State University, 2017a). Of the 242,339 immigrants under DACA status in California, roughly, 72,300 attend public education in California; of those, there are 8,300 students in the CSU, about 60,000 in the CCC, and 4,000 in the UC (Gordon, 2017). Because of these large numbers, the CSU's individual campuses innovatively supported this population by opening the first DRC in 2014 at Cal State University, Fullerton, followed by

15 other CSU campuses as of spring 2018. Compared to the University of California system whose Dream Centers are more centralized in their creation and resource allocation. The CSU took a different approach and did not have a central directive nor funding source to open and support the DRCs at the Chancellor's level. Therefore, the DRCs at the CSU were strictly a grassroots phenomenon created from the demand of students and campus agents.

The specific site for this study is the Dream Resource Center at CSU⁴. Although 15 DRCs were created across the CSU system from 2014 to 2018, research on these DRCs are scant (University of California, 2017). The Dream Resource Center, as defined in this study, is a physical space where students can congregate and staffed by a full-time staff person. Some universities do have full-time staff people who are committed to supporting undocumented students; however, this study focuses on a campus that houses a physical DRC. The sampling method for this study was purposive; since the selected site was one of the first DRC to open across the CSU, it has had several years to reify its operations and institutional agents have had several years to reflect on the role of the DRC as it relates to the university strategic mission.

⁴ The pseudonym CSU was used to represent one site for this study.

Table 1.

Known California State University Dream Resource Centers as of Spring 2018

California State University Campus	Established	Dream Resource Center Name
Fullerton	2014	Titan Dreamers Resource Center
Northridge	2014	EOP DREAM Center
Long Beach	2015	Dream Success Center
Los Angeles	2015	Glazer Family Dreamers Resource Center
San Bernardino	2015	Dreamers Resource and Success Center
Channel Islands	2016	Multicultural Dream Center
Sacramento	2016	Dreamer Resource Center
San Francisco	2016	Dream Resource Center
San Luis Obispo	2016	Dream Center
Chico	2017	Dream Center
Dominguez Hills	2017	Toro Dreamers Success Center
Fresno	2017	Dream Success Center
Pomona	2017	Bronco Dreamers Resource Center
San Jose	2018	UndocuSpartan Student Resource Center

Significance of Study

Multiple studies assess the challenges that undocumented students face in higher education (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2011), the impact of student affairs professionals (Gonzales et al., 2013; Perez, 2010); and the strategies of DRC front-line staffers (Chen, 2013; Sanchez & So, 2015). However, no study investigates the role that DRCs play in changing campus culture at the macrosystem level. Findings from this study can help build current practitioners' knowledge on starting new DRCs and provide high-level administrators with empirical evidence on the importance of supporting undocumented students through a DRC. There are guides and best practices in circulation, yet these resources are not yet empirical and

researched based. Since Los Angeles, and California as a whole, is a leader for immigrant justice across the country, studying the outcomes of a DRC in this region provides insight into a unique phenomenon of undocumented student support. This research will be presented at national conferences, published in journals, and shared with student affairs professionals and university leadership. Ultimately, this work will add to the growing academic knowledge of the role of large, public universities across the country supporting their undocumented student communities.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examined how institutions of higher education support undocumented students and how Dream Resource Centers (DRCs) operationalize institutional commitment. In this review, I outline the political landscape, highlight students' experiences, and summarize responses to those experiences at student and institutional levels. First, I provide a background to the problem, including policies affecting undocumented students and related theories to frame how institutional context shapes the policies and practices of DRCs. The main theories for this study include Critical Race Theory (CRT), interest convergence, and campus climate. I then turn to research that focuses on how undocumented communities navigate through a liminal state of federal, state, and local policies. Next, I highlight research that describes the negative experiences of students in higher education. Then, I turn to student affairs practices geared to support undocumented students, including developing DRCs as an intervention. I conclude with an overview of the need to research DRCs in higher education.

Background and Purpose of Study

Undocumented students experiences some of the lowest educational access and retention rates of any subgroup. Diaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners (2011) summarize how the number of undocumented students diminishes the further along the educational pathway; each year, of the roughly 80,000 undocumented 18 year-olds, only about 65,000 students graduate from high school nationally. This is similar to the national average of roughly 80% (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). However, only around 10% of those who graduate from high school enroll in higher education (7,000 – 13,000) compared to the 68.3% of the general population ("U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics," 2015). A majority of undocumented students are first-generation, low-income, students of color. (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Suarez-Orozco et al.,

2015). Because systems of education have not historically served this population, there is an unmet need to address systemic educational inequities faced by this group.

Critical Race Theory: Undocumented and in the Margins

The negative experiences of undocumented students are rooted in systems of racism that can pervade the very institutions students navigate. CRT is a scholarly movement that broadly considers the role of race and racism in society and institutions (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 1993; Matsuda, 1987). With roots in Critical Legal Studies, CRT is a reaction to the civil rights movement of the 1960s where false notions of meritocracy began to take hold. Scholars critiqued the incremental victories of the civil rights movement and there came a need to understand the very foundations of power, neutrality, and the liberal order (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993). Meritocracy is the notion that hard work translates to upward social mobility. While this may be true for some individual cases, CRT tells us that not all people, particularly people of color, have equal access to institutions; conversely, whites have had the social, political, and economic advantages for generations. This power imbalance comes from institutional racism. One of the basic tenets of CRT is that racism is not aberrant; rather it is a function of the system. Therefore, education, policy, and practice can cure some overt forms of racism, yet covert and systemic racism is much more difficult to combat, let alone cure. A second tenet of CRT investigates how racial hierarchy benefits whites and eradicating racism would diverge from the interest of this group (Bell, 1980).

After the first wave of CRT legal scholars, researchers furthered the theory and applied its prism to education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and to the experiences of students of color (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Teranishi, 2002). This group of CRT scholars argue that the unequitable system of education is the tool that marginalizes

students of color. The notion of advancing racial equity is central to the question of why institutions of higher education should support DRCs for undocumented students. CRT is a framework that guides understanding of how educational institutions marginalize undocumented students through the dual identities of race and immigration status. Most undocumented students attending the California State University (CSU) are students of color (California State University, 2017b). As a student of color, one may encounter classrooms where curriculum is not culturally relevant, teachers who do not understand students' lived experiences, and a campus environment that is not welcoming (R. G. Gonzales, Suarez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013; Huber & Malagon, 2007). Solorzano (2000) examined the effects of racial microaggressions on students of color and found that microaggressions can have a cumulative impact on the psyche and well-being of students. These negative impacts manifest in ways that impede students' propensity for academic success. Research shows that students of color have far lower retention and graduation rates compared to their white counterparts (Ladson-Billings, 1998; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004).

Undocumented students are not only marginalized by their race, but also by their immigration status (Chan, 2010; Munoz, 2015; Pérez Huber, 2015; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). CRT provides a lens to understand how the experience of undocumented students have not been equitable to their U.S. citizen counterparts (Castro-Salazar, 2012; Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007; Passel, 2011). On an individual level, undocumented students feel an additional burden when institutional actors are not aware of the intricacies and laws pertaining to their experiences. One salient microaggression towards undocumented students is the use of the word "illegal" which dehumanizes individuals based of their immigration status ("Migrant 'Illegality' and

Deportability in Everyday Life,” 2002). The added layer of being undocumented exacerbates undocumented students’ academic success.

Interest Convergence

Interest convergence explains the intentions of stakeholders to advance an equity agenda. This view illustrates how race and racism is enacted from the perpetrators (oppressors) perspective. The theory of interest convergence stemmed from the Critical Legal Studies paradigm in the 1970s and explains the perceived intent of whites to advance racial equity and freedom (Bell, 1980). Interest convergence frames how whites in positions of power only advance the interest of marginalized groups if it aligns with their own self-interest. Interest convergence has been used to determine how those in power also benefit from implementing equity minded policy and practice such as the Affirmative Action decisions (Park & Liu, 2014) and educational policy in large metropolitan areas (Stovall, 2013). The first application of interest convergence was for the *Brown v. Board* decision. Here, Bell (1980) argues that whites backed the *Brown* decision not exclusively to enfranchise the black community, but rather to further their own agenda of a) providing credibility in the hearts and minds of third world people, b) appeasing black veterans returning from World War II, and c) furthering the industrialization of the South. Borrowing from this example, almost any situation where a person or group in power making a decision to advance the welfare of an oppressed group can be analyzed through the lens of interest convergence.

Interest convergence has been used to examine policies of different segments within higher education. It can be a valuable tool when examining the creation and existence of DRCs in higher education. There have been studies on the “undocufriendliness” of a campus, the role that a DRC may play, and even the institutional actors and practice of supporting undocumented

students (Heckenberg, 2016; Sanchez & So, 2015). Yet, there is less understanding of the intent of why institutions and administrators create DRCs. One niche of research that sheds light on the role of DRC are studies on cultural centers because of their similar role to combat institutional racism.

Critical Race Theory and Cultural Centers

The core tenets of CRT helps illuminate the role of these centers within the university power structure to shift the racial climate. Cultural centers challenge dominant ideology by placing the experiences and histories of students of color at the forefront (Yosso and Lopez 2010). In addition, the very existence of the center is a commitment to social justice as it reaffirms the need for physical and epistemological presence in what could be a racially hostile campus. Furthermore, a cultural center counters the racial microaggressions (Solorzano et al., 2000) students face by providing an affirming physical and emotional space. Yosso and Lopez (2010) argue that these centers are transdisciplinary, drawing from various academic disciplines and even move across academic and student affairs. Through these different roles, the DRC can similarly act, as not only a counter-space for racially marginalized and undocumented students, but also a site for power and liberation within the margins of the institution.

Although research (T. Yosso & Lopez, 2012) illustrate the benefits of centers for students, one counter-perspective is that the cultural centers were created because it also aligned with administrators' self-interest. Case in point, they highlight how the cultural centers advance the mission of diversity for the university by providing visibility for students of color; however, they do not provide "true" diversity. In other words, the institution provides a diversity of "convenience" but does not go as far as providing true diversity where students of color are not only represented, but supported with equitable resources and attention. Furthermore, Benavides

and Yosso (2010) argue that the diversity of convenience serves white students as they benefit by learning about the cultural aspects and experiences of students of color. This effectively maintains that power structure in which white students are at the center, students of color remain in the margins, and the cultural center's purpose is to serve the educational learning of those in the center. This perspective for undocumented students is nuanced when considering the federal, state, and institutional policies that act as institutional barriers.

Addressing the Liminal State of Immigration Policy

Liminal Status

The liminal state for undocumented students refers to the lack of clear and consistent immigration policy at the federal, state, county, and local level (Rincon, 2008; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). Without a comprehensive immigration blueprint, undocumented students are forced to navigate these multiple and oftentimes inconsistent layers. For example, some states provide a pathway to higher education for undocumented students in the form of state financial aid and in-state residency tuition whereas some institutions do not. In California, the AB-540 residency affidavit is be inconsistently applied across institutions and by individual practitioners within one institution (Wang, 2018). These multiple layers of this liminal immigration status causes developmental harm to undocumented youth (Cebulko, 2013; Menjívar, 2006) and an increased risk of anxiety.

Scholars argue that the lack of a clear and consistent immigration policy provides an opportunity for institutions of education to provide clarity in their support for undocumented students (Gonzales, 2015; Nienhusser, 2014; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). The current movement to establish DRCs is an extension of the demand to make institutions of higher education more

welcoming to undocumented students. At the core of this demand are institutional agents who worked to provide individuals and micro level support through their own will and determination.

Role of Institutional Agents

Institutional agents are typically the first responders to any educational inequity and play a crucial role in shifting campus culture to be more “undocufriendly” (Chen, 2013). The current movement to support undocumented students stems as far back as the 1980s when the Leticia A. decision enabled undocumented students to attain in-state residency status for tuition purposes (Guillen, 2002). The decision spawned the Leticia A. Network, comprised of allies and advocates who worked behind the scenes to ensure that the law was implemented correctly. Institutional agents are university faculty or staff who work actively to support student success. Although Leticia A. was more of an underground movement of institutional agents, the support became much more visible with the advocacy and passage of the California AB-540 law.

Table 2.

Timeline of Selected Government Decisions and Legislation Affecting Undocumented Immigrants

Decision	Year	General Impact on Undocumented Immigrants
Federal <i>Plyler v. Doe</i>	1982	Access to primary and secondary education
California <i>Leticia A. v. Board of Regents</i>	1985	In-state residency tuition
California <i>Bradford v. Board of Regents</i>	1992	Injunction to Leticia A.
Federal PRWORA	1996	Restricted federal benefits
Federal IIRIRA	1996	Restricted higher education in-state tuition
California Proposition 187	1994	Restricted state benefits
California AB-540	2001	In-state residency tuition
Federal DACA	2012	Deportation relief and work authorization
Federal DACA Repeal	2017	Proposed DACA phase out

After *Plyler v. Doe*, the Leticia A. decision became one of the earliest landmark decisions on undocumented students in education. In this court case, Judge Kawaichi argued that the 14th amendment of equal access should also be applied to undocumented immigrants in higher education and these students are afforded the right to in-state residency (Olivas, 2004). In the aftermath of the decision, a group of higher education professionals and community activists formed the Leticia A. Network that advocated for the application of this decision across all systems of higher education in California (Acuña, 1996) behind the scenes. The Network was one of the first grassroots groups to advocate for undocumented students in higher education. This was a precursor to the activism that occurred during the 1990s, the early 2000s with the creation of AB-540 and finally through the mid-2010s with the creation of DRCs.

The Leticia A. Network and movement played a central role in creating access for undocumented immigrants, yet the passage of Proposition 187, which excluded undocumented immigrants from using California's public benefits, put the issue at the forefront of California politics. When the proposition was passed, youth and community activists across the state advocated against it. In the Los Angeles area, youth protested to the tune of over 10,000 students walking out of Los Angeles area classrooms (Pyle & Shuster, 1994). Garcia (1995) argues that this piece of legislation only reified a racist system that marginalized Latino immigrants over hundreds of years. This legislation and the ensuing advocacy created the foundation for the imminent Dreamers movement (Nicholls & Fiorito, 2015).

Although there is a move to increase support for undocumented students, institutional agents can still be a source to marginalize students. Faculty and staff are the first members of the university with whom undocumented students interact. Many have best intentions to support undocumented students, research shows they are often hesitant to provide this support and in

some cases can hinder student success (Gildersleeve, 2010; Perez et al., 2009). Sanchez and So (2015) found that staff members were afraid to work with undocumented students because they lacked information or were afraid to provide the wrong information. In the instances where staff did reluctantly assist, students believed that there was a gap in staff's understandings of the undocumented experience, which led to subjectively poor counseling and advice (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). From the group of students interviewed by Teranishi (2011), more than half (53%) of students shared that they did not have any faculty or staff on their respective campuses with whom they can openly discuss financial issues surrounding their legal status. Investigating the phenomenon of why students distrust faculty and staff, Jefferies & Dabach (2015) found that teachers and counselors create barriers to college success through pre-emptive outing by naming students' undocumented identities without consent.

These studies highlight a vicious cycle where faculty and staff oftentimes marginalize students in classrooms and students ultimately choose not to “out” themselves to faculty and staff, thus decreasing future opportunities to build trust and community. As a response to the growing need to support undocumented students, some institutions created undocumented student programs or DRCs geared to foster undocumented student success. Although counselors, financial aid specialists, and faculty work to support undocumented students in various ways, their capacity to support is usually peripheral to an existing full workload. Paralleling the many efforts of institutional agents to provide support for undocumented students, state legislators sought to address the liminal state through California policy.

State Response

A watershed moment in the movement to support undocumented students came when the California Legislature passed Assembly Bill 540 (AB-540) in 2001. This piece of legislation

allowed all residents of California to qualify for in-state tuition if they attended at least three years of grades 9-12 in the state. AB-540 was not just a monumental step for access to higher education, but it validated the narratives of many Dreamers previously living in the shadows (Abrego 2008). Moreover, AB-540 does not “out” a student since many people in general still do not know what that term means and not all AB-540 students are undocumented since citizens from other states can also apply.

AB-540 gives undocumented students the means to become more active on campus and fight negative stereotypes through civic engagement (Seif, 2011). Yet, Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes (2010) found that 20% of 126 high school and college undocumented students surveyed had been involved in political activism and that those active had experienced negative social rejection. Because of this further marginalization, undocumented students and allies formed student advocacy groups that functioned as safe organizing spaces for students in higher education. A prime example is the IDEAS organization co-founded by Cinthya Felix Perez and Tam Tran at UCLA and is now present at multiple high school, university, and community settings (Chen, 2013). Similarly, the Dreamer movement, sprouting from student leaders in higher education, is now widely adopted into a larger immigrant justice movement that includes comprehensive immigration reform. A culminating point in this movement occurred in 2011 when the federal DREAM Act was voted down and the Obama administration responded by taking executive action to address the short-term protection of eligible undocumented youth.

Federal Response

As a response to the pressure applied from those in the Dreamer movement, then President Obama used executive action to institute Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) (Nicholls & Fiorito, 2015). DACA, although heavily critiqued, provided a sense of

safety and positive benefit for close to 800,000 eligible undocumented youth (Gonzales et al., 2014; Sudhinaraset, To, Ling, Melo, & Chavarin, 2017). DACA provides temporary reprieve from deportation and work authorization for undocumented youth who entered the United States unlawfully as children.

The Migration Policy Institute (2016) found that nearly 2 million undocumented youths were eligible for the program. However, a portion choose not to move forward with applying either as an act of resistance to keep their personal information away from the government or because of the lack of access to legal services and funding for the \$495 application fee (Buenavista, 2016; “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals at the One-Year Mark,” 2013; Gonzales et al., 2014). Nonetheless, research shows (Gonzales et al., 2014) that DACA provides a pathway for success for eligible undocumented immigrants that otherwise would not be possible because of its functions for work and reprieve from deportation. DACA is one example of how federal immigration policy provides gainful pathways for economic and social prosperity for some undocumented immigrants navigating these liminal states. Despite the challenges with federal immigration policy, undocumented students have to navigate their own institution’s climate, which can oftentimes be marginalizing to undocumented students.

The Impact of a Negative Campus Climate

Campus climates influence how undocumented students navigate the university. According to Lewin’s interactionist perspective (1947), behavior is a function of a person’s interaction with their environment. Researchers (Heckenberg, 2016; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado, Alvarado, & Guillermo-Wann, 2014; Rankin, 2005) have studied the immediate impacts of campus climate for different underrepresented identity groups on campus. According to a comprehensive study of campus climate literature since 2002, (Harper & Hurtado, 2007) students

of color feel isolated, alienated and have lower confidence and self-esteem in negative campus climates where there is racial conflict and racial tension. Mechanisms contributing to a negative campus climate include not centering student of color perspectives in university-wide assessment and curriculum, upholding reputational legacies for racism, and not providing platforms to discuss race on a deeper level. Harper and Hurtado (2007) found that an incongruence with espoused versus enacted institutional values also contribute to a negative campus climate. According to Heckenberg (2016), negative campus climates can push undocumented students to bypass campus support systems and rely on the community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) of their own family and social networks. Ultimately, this research shows how experiences of undocumented students are shaped by the campus climate.

Undocumented Student Retention

Student affairs professionals and campus allies can benefit from the understanding of how the intersection of racial and undocumented status shape the lived experiences of undocumented students. Although literature on the experiences of students of color in higher education is prevalent, research on the intersections of both racial and undocumented experiences are scant but growing (Leisy J. Abrego, 2011; Buenavista, 2018; Buenavista, 2012). This section focuses on how systems of racism, carcerality, and institutional barriers impact student retention in higher education.

Building on the concepts of racial microaggressions, scholars provided qualitative mixed methods on how and where the microaggressions stem from for undocumented students. Teranishi (2015) reveals that more than half (55.6%) of 909 undocumented students surveyed nationally experience being treated negatively or unfairly due to their status from their classmates, 47.9% from financial aid officials, 36.5% from campus administrators, and 32.1%

from their own professors. This data shows that undocumented students are experiencing microaggressions from individuals across the institution. These microaggressions exacerbate existing psychological stress (Perez 2009). Microaggressions can also take the form of infrastructures and policies that do not cater to the needs of undocumented students such as lack of resources or available scholarships. These concerns compound when students are not able to apply for specific jobs or qualify for scholarships and grants. Academically, students find difficulty participating in curricular and co-curricular activities including: traveling, participating in conferences, field trips, and study abroad programs, hindering the educational experience (Albrecht 2010). Even trivial practices such as showing identification during graduate school exams can be an example of everyday obstacles that culminate in low self-efficacy (Albrecht 2010). Through these studies, data shows that undocumented students of color are marginalized in higher education due to citizenship status. In the next section, I delve into scholarship that provides salient examples of systemic barriers that undocumented students face.

Carceral state. The carceral state in the context of immigration represents a system designed to terrorize and overly criminalize immigrants of color (Buenavista, 2016). In 2011, the National Immigration Law Center, reported data that thousands of undocumented individuals are being deported without the right of due process (National Immigration Law Center, 2011). Foucault (1977) built on the idea of *surveillance* as a controlling mechanism that separates the “normal” from the “problematized” as a form of control. Surveillance functions through a “normalizing gaze” determining whether a subject is in fact a problem. According to Foucault, an institution owns the “bodies” of its subjects and controls them through surveillance. These bodies are ultimately disciplined and punished.

In today's society, many institutions use the tool of surveillance. For instance, the military surveils the bodies of their soldiers: placed in barracks, observed, shaped, disciplined, and finally normalized. One can argue that soldiers in the military lose all sense of individualism and become part of the normal and functioning group (the military). Lustick (2015) extends this idea to modern day schooling where accountability and test taking become the dominating tool of surveillance. Those who do not meet the mark are then problematized and subject to punishment via lower grade point average or academic expulsion. This idea, originally applied to kindergarten through twelfth grade, can also be applied to undocumented students in higher education through negative interactions with campus police departments and navigation with institutional policies.

The very notion of policing and tracking students has negative implications on students upon entering the university. Campus tuition policies of AB-540 determinations are the first manifestations of surveillance with an insider or outsider status (Gildersleeve & Hernandez, 2012). AB-540 residency determination is one example of how undocumented students are accustomed to being policed not only in their institutions but also within society at large (Lawston & Escobar, 2009) through the political rhetoric and the media. The very thought of detention and deportation illustrates how a system, ideology, and expression of carcerality plays into the difficult lived experiences of undocumented students.

Students experience oppression from race, class, and the carceral state during their campus experience. In order for institutional agents to advocate alongside students, they must understand these intersecting challenges. Next, the literature and history of institutional agents advocating for a better campus environment for undocumented students is covered.

Institutional barriers. Undocumented students face institutional barriers in every facet of their education, and research on their experiences focus on three main areas. The first area of research focuses on barriers undocumented students face in higher education in general (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). The second area is focused on what institutional agents can do to help with the retention of students (Gonzales et al., 2013; Perez, 2010). The last area focuses on a sub-section of student affairs professional and highlights the strategies of undocumented student center coordinators (Chen, 2013; Sanchez & So, 2015) to support student success. A common theme across the three areas of research is how the lack of access to financial aid is apparent from the systemic and federal levels, to the granular institutional and individual level.

Undocumented student success can be measured as the acceptance and retention rates for incoming high school seniors and first year students, respectively. Data reveal how financial hardships present barriers at the initial stages and throughout college. In an in-depth three-year study by Enriquez (2011) where over 54 interviews were conducted with undocumented students at the community college, more than 50% shared that financial aid was a major challenge in their admissions and retention at the university. These financial aid challenges mirror the experiences of undocumented students across public UC and CSU campuses (Teranishi 2011). Financial aid is also a limiting factor into both the access and the retention of undocumented students (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Gonzales et al., 2013; Nguyen & Serna, 2014).

Although students of all backgrounds must navigate paying for college, researchers (Gonzales et al., 2013) found that undocumented students' particular experiences lead to poor mental health which compounds their struggles in education. Undocumented students are in a unique situation when dealing with college financing (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, &

Cortes, 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015) since federal and some private funding sources exclude undocumented students (Biswas, 2015). About 95% of undocumented students reported being concerned about financial aid and paying for college at some point during their experience (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). In a study by Perez (2009), all 14 undocumented participants surveyed expressed concern with how finances was a major barrier to their academic success.

Many undocumented students must support themselves and their families during their time in higher education. Yet, employment opportunities are limited for undocumented students due to extensive federal background checks and employers being unaware of ways to support students who are DACAmented⁵ and “out” (Biswas, 2005). Exacerbating the problem at the institutional level, there is a lack of knowledge and will to support for some financial aid practitioners and other university front-line staff members when it comes to supporting undocumented students (Wang, 2018). At UC Berkeley, practitioners found that students had a difficult time navigating college with less than a \$25,000 per year income (Sanchez & So, 2015).

Because of these financial experiences, many undocumented students struggle with retention. Diaz and Strong (2011) interviewed 34 students and found that most worked both a full- and part-time job to pay for college. Students frequently used the tactic of “stopping out” and worked for one full year, took a few classes, and then broke from school for one or two semesters to save money. Thus, due to this inconsistent enrollment schedule, few students remain in college and even fewer graduate (Biswas, 2005).

Financial hardships and being of low-income status also limits students’ ability to focus on their education. Gildersleeve (2010) conducted a life method ethnography of four Latino males taken in different courses of their lives. This study illuminated how family, labor, and

⁵ The term “DACAmented” is a colloquial term used to reference individuals who are part of the DACA program.

school affect college retention. The domain of family—where experiences of sacrifice, living in poverty, abuse, and security—negatively influences the psyche of undocumented students. About 38% of undocumented students come from low-income, impoverished backgrounds. When intersecting class with undocumented identities, students may feel a sense of shame (Gildersleeve, 2010; Perez, 2010; Teranishi et al., 2011). These studies collectively show how overlapping microaggressions across race, class, and citizenship status have a negative impact on self-efficacy.

When students experience microaggressions across multiple identities, the culmination of experiences becomes a source of trauma caused by the very educational institutions they are a part of. Perez (2009) found that due to intersectional factors of race, class, immigration status, and family histories, undocumented students feel a heightened sense of discrimination and can be emotionally triggered by their college environment. These complicated histories and identities often manifest in students feeling alienated from their college's higher education culture. When surveying both community college and students in higher education, researchers found that 67% experienced discrimination within a month's sample time due to their status (Teranishi 2011). Sanchez and So (2015) found that defeatism could serve as a major barrier to the educational and life success of undocumented students.

While much of the literature focuses on the institutional barriers that undocumented students face, literature also points to how undocumented students confront notions of defeatism by overcoming challenges through resilience. Scholarship points to how resiliency and affirming positivity in the face of challenging experiences are critical to sustain positive environments of nurture and support (Chen, 2013; Perez et al., 2009). Undocumented students go through many struggles even before college. Once undocumented students get to college however, practitioners

focus too much on deficiencies and not enough on strengths. Many undocumented students already served as caretakers and even language translators for family members (L. Huber & Malagon, 2007). Kim & Diaz (2013) uncovered how personal resiliency contributes to undocumented students' academic success through the educational pathway. Students come into college with a vast amount of cultural wealth and capital. In fact, one form of capital that students carry is activism (Corrunker, 2012) and institutional agents must recognize students' cultural wealth in order to better advocate alongside undocumented students. Institutional agents began to recognize the greater institutional barriers that undocumented students faced and advocated for greater resources to support undocumented students.

In 2012, UC Berkeley was the first institution in the nation to open a Dream Success Center geared to support undocumented students. Two years later, in 2014, the CSU system followed suit with the opening of the Titan Dreamers Resources Center at Fullerton (Titan Dreamers Resource Center, 2017). By 2018, 14 of the 23 CSUs had established DRCs. The purpose of this study is to examine how DRCs operationalize institutional commitment to undocumented students. Yet, in order to understand the positive impact of DRCs, there must be a close examination of how the DRCs function as a student affairs practice.

Centers as Student Affairs Practices

Administrators in higher education institutions have seen the need to consolidate services and hire full-time professional staff members either to coincide with the opening of or to precede a DRC. Some colleges went the route of institutionalizing support before hiring a full-time person or opening a center. For example, Mt. San Antonio and Fresno Community College provided information and education on *AB-540*⁶ and private scholarships for undocumented

⁶ California legislation granting resident status to undocumented students

students (Mt. San Antonio College, 2017) as their form of support. In 2012, UC Berkeley kicked-off the Undocumented Student Programs and its mission is to provide holistic and wrap around services for undocumented students at Berkeley. This model has been replicated at four-year universities including but not limited to the CSU Long Beach Dream Success Center and CSU Northridge EOP DREAM Center which provide college enrollment support and retention services. Both CSU centers have at least one full-time dedicated staff member dedicated to supporting the needs of undocumented students.

DRCs are part of a legacy connected to the cultural centers. Scholars have focused on the influence that Black cultural centers (BCCs) have had on the student populations they serve since the 1960s (Hefner, 2002; Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Princes, 1994; Richmond, 2012). Although these cultural centers serve a different purpose than DRCs, they function similar to those of DRCs as counterspaces.

Counterspaces

Understanding how a negative racial campus climate can impact students of color (Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, & Milem, 1998), DRCs continue a long legacy of advocacy to support marginalized students within higher education. For example, Beemyn (2005) analyzed the experiences of transgender students on campus and posited that they were in constant attack and in fear of their physical safety due to the negative campus climate.

Through a lens of CRT, Patton (2007; 2012) suggests that culture centers served as counter-space to the hostile campuses from which they came. Stemming from Frantz Fanon's (1967) work around combating psychological alienation through positive interventions, scholars have researched the ways in which institutions of higher education can validate students of color (Rendon, 1994). Some scholars posit that student-initiated retention projects are one form of self-

empowerment (Maldonado, Rhoads, & Buenavista, 2005) while others point out the necessity for dedicated ethnic and cultural spaces such as BCCs and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender centers to serve as these spaces (Fine, 2012; Princes, 1994; Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2002). Ultimately, cultural centers can be an essential intervention to create transformational institutional change (Eckel & Kezar, 2011) that benefits marginalized students. Furthermore, cultural centers can serve as a model for DRCs to address the intersection of racial identity and undocumented status.

DRCs are connected to not only the immigrant justice movement for comprehensive immigration reform but also to the larger movement to hold institutions of higher education accountable to support some of its most marginalized groups, low-income, students of color. Relatedly, Black students were one of the first in higher education to call for and establish safe and empowering spaces during movement for civil rights in the 1960s. Billings (2010) details the beginnings of BCCs rooted in the social justice movement of the late 1960s. During this era, students demanded relevant curriculum, diverse faculty and campus resources. These calls for action connected to the social movement of Black empowerment and third world liberation (Donald, 2016).

The research on DRCs build upon a history of research on culture and students centers in higher education. The earliest documented academic writings on BCCs focus on the historical accounts of how they met the needs of the black community both in and outside the university (Bennett, 1971; Princes, 1994). This early research consisted of anecdotal evidence and general assertions including how centers were a second home and are integral in building campus community. Only within the past twenty years, have researchers expanded studies on cultural centers and underscored the positive impacts of BCCs (Hefner, 2002; Patton, 2006; Richmond,

2012). Data corroborate the idea that centers are secondary communities within the larger university. Patton's (2006) work analyzes BCCs from the perspective of Black students within predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and found that students believed BCCs were a safe haven for marginalized students of color. Patton employed a phenomenological case study approach and conducted 11 in-depth student interviews to find major functions of the students center including: staff members influencing how students perceive BCCs and BCCs providing a sense of historical and personal identity. What is applicable from this study to DRCs is the concept that these centers shaped a sense of racial/ethnic identity for black students that did not exist prior to their involvement in the center. The concept of the center being a "home" away from home was essential, especially since students believed that their campuses did not support them.

Within the past ten years, researchers built on Patton's seminal study and applied similar analysis on other identity-based centers (Lozano, 2014; Marine, 2011; Vaccaro, 2012). While peer-reviewed studies on these centers are limited, doctoral dissertations have expanded the breadth of knowledge on the centers. Lozano's (2014) qualitatively interviewed students at a PWI to understand their experiences in Latino-based cultural centers. Lozano found that involvement in the Latino Native American Culture Centers revolved around involvement in Latino Native American Culture Centers student organizations; in other words, involvement in the center correlated with membership positions in mostly Greek based organizations. Furthermore, Lozano (2014) utilized Hurtado's (1998) work on sense of belonging and posits how the Latino Native American Culture Centers contributes to a sense of belonging not previously felt. The function of centers as spaces for belonging are central to understanding just

how undocumented student centers can serve as “safe spaces” amidst campus environments that do not support undocumented students.

Although early literature on cultural and identity-based centers focuses on PWIs, the work is applicable to large university public systems that are not PWI. For undocumented students, citizenship status is an identity that is just as salient as racial/ethnic identity. For those who identify as undocumented, students undergo a process of “coming out” to address their status (Gonzales, Suarez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013). This process parallels those who identify as LGBT where race/ethnicity becomes almost secondary to gender and sexual identity. The movement for LGBT rights parallels the immigration and undocumented movement in many facets. Examining research on LGBT centers can provide a foundational knowledge of how to examine DRCs.

LGBT resource centers. LGBT resource centers have a similar history to racial/ethnic centers in that they have also existed for over 40 years. Yet, scholarship about these centers is still in its infancy. One of the earliest writings on LGBT centers is by Sanlo (2002) *Our Place on Campus: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Services and Programs in Higher Education*, and is a seminal work that documents not just the positive benefits of a culture center but also the political climate on campus pertaining to LGBT students. Similar to earlier studies of BCCs, Sanlo centers anecdotal and analytical dialogue about LGBT services at the university. Sanlo delves into the historical and social context of resource center creation, positing that the campus centers are also a direct reaction to the socio-political context outside of the university. Some prominent themes undergirding Sanlo’s study were how resource centers addressed) negative campus climate, b) student affairs practice of hiring effective directors and staff members, and c) an outlining of relevant programs embedded within the center including Safe Zone Training and

Lavender graduations. From this study came a stream of projects led by Rankin (2005) examining the campus climate for the LGBT community. This line of research includes national research reports (Rankin, 2010) which ultimately informed the popular LGBT climate analysis tool prominently used across the country by a diverse range of institutions both public and private.

After Sanlo (2002) and Rankin's (2005) seminal LGBT campus climate work, there was a gap in comprehensive projects furthering the perspective of LGBT centers until Marine's 2011 study. Connecting off campus social movements with on campus program development, Marine argues that the center should not operate in a silo and must tie to national discourse and wider social activism. Marine points to Stonewall (Marine, 2011) as an impetus for the LGBT movement and a precursor to LGBT centers. Perhaps most relevant in Marine's writing is the underscoring of four major functions of LGBT centers including a) assessment and evaluation, b) counseling and support, c) education, and d) advocacy. Concerning assessment and evaluation, Marin builds upon Hurtado (2004) and Rankin's (2005) work around campus climate where LGBT centers are key in addressing the negative campus environment towards LGBT students. Furthermore, Marine emphasizes the important role of student affairs professionals as overseers of LGBT centers and student guides through the campus environment. Thus, student affairs professionals work in a politically charged space, especially as most center administrators themselves identify as LGBT. These theoretical frames are directly applicable to this study on DRCs within the larger institutional context.

The Need to Examine DRCs

The existing research shows that experiences of marginalized students matter and that practices and policies were created to foster student success in higher education. Yet, because

DRCs are fairly new, empirical evidence is lacking to understand the true nature of DRCs and its alignment with institutional philosophy. Due to the exclusionary practices of federal and state law and xenophobic tendencies of campus actors (Jones & Nichols, 2017; Wang, 2018), many institutions created safe spaces for undocumented student success. Although the literature highlights individual resiliency of undocumented students (Enriquez, 2011; L. D. Garcia, 2013; Perez et al., 2010), resiliency can also be a function of the positive structural practices instituted by universities (Solorzano et al., 2000). On higher education campuses, the creation of front-line student affairs professionals and a DRC can be the institution's primary solution to support its students (Chen, 2013; Heckenberg, 2016; Sanchez & So, 2015). Front-line staff members as institutional agents navigate university policy, support students directly, and help build the undocumented and DACAmented student competency (Nienhusser & Espino, 2017) of professionals on campus. Yet, much is to be researched about the specific role of a center and how it furthers institutional commitment to undocumented students.

Given such expectations, researchers are challenged to evaluate how DRCs attempt to provide educational equity to undocumented students. There are two perspectives of the purpose of DRCs: a) to increase the numbers of undocumented students coming into the university and b) to retain current students at the university. In a dissertation study by Lovgren (2016), there was no direct correlation between the existence of institutional staff or DRCs and a noticeable increase in AB-540 or undocumented students. However, one of the limitations to this study was that the DRCs are still too new to assess the impact. A different view comes from Sanchez and So (2015), who conducted an insider's ethnography on the Undocumented Student Program at Berkeley highlighting firsthand narratives of undocumented students and the effective practices that they benefit from. In their work of serving over 380 Dreamers, the researchers found that

models of success incorporated holistic support including personal, multi-identity, and solution-focused service. In the Berkeley model, students met with counselors who strategized with students to deal with personal/family challenges while also navigating their academic success. Other useful elements for students' success in this study included a book lending program, an emergency loan assistance program, and a wide variety of workshops specifically for undocumented students, and free legal consultation. Although these researchers provided important perspectives on DRCs, the question of how the institution at large benefits from DRCs remains.

Early studies on DRCs highlight positive benefits to the campus as a whole, yet more research is needed to assess the true impact of these centers on the campus. Rather, studies focus on either center programs or institutional actors that serve the population, such as counselors (Perez, 2010). Although counselors are important in the scheme of supporting undocumented students, new research focuses on student affairs professionals who oversee undocumented student programs. Chen (2013) found that institutional agents were central to supporting undocumented students at a major university. These agents worked in two domains: the first was to provide direct services to individual undocumented students. This practice, although helpful in the short term, did not shift the entire culture of the university to be undocufriendly. The second domain of shifting institutional culture to become more undocufriendly proved to be the most challenging because of a culture comprised of administrators, institutional history and practices, and in some cases, institutional actors who are not supportive of undocumented students.

This project examined how DRCs shape institutions of higher education and enact institutional commitment. Institutional transformation is defined as deeper cultural and structural change for the university which requires long-term commitment on behalf of staff members and

resources on behalf of the university (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992). The next section covers how qualitative methodologies guided this project through the lived experiences of DRC front-line staff members, administrators, faculty and staff allies and their perspectives on the value of DRCs.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

My research aimed to understand the role of the Dream Resource Center (DRC) within a California State University (CSU). I used qualitative methods to capture how campus professionals make meaning of the DRC and its context within the campus movement to support undocumented students. In this chapter, I detail the study's research design and rationale. Then, I provide an overview of the strategies of inquiry. I follow with a section on the type of data analysis methods used. Finally, I discuss the ethical issues, credibility and trustworthiness associated with this study design.

Recent scholarship focuses on how undocumented students face unique institutional barriers in their higher education experience, affecting both academic success and self-efficacy (Chen, 2013; Nienhusser & Espino, 2017; Teranishi et al., 2011). As noted in Chapter 1, Passel ((Passel, 2011) found that of the 65,000 undocumented students who graduate from high school each year nationally, only about 10% actually matriculate into a university. Given the difficulty that undocumented students experience in their education, institutional interventions may prove invaluable in supporting undocumented students. One such intervention is the DRC, which is a hub for services, resources, and/or a space where students and staff coalesce. This study examined how institutions developed their support for undocumented students and how DRCs support the equitable inclusion of undocumented students in higher education. Three main research questions guide this study:

1. What factors led to the creation of the Dream Resource Center?
2. What Dream Resource Center programs, policies, practices, and structures meet the needs of undocumented students?

3. What role does the Dream Resource Center play in enacting institutional commitment to undocumented students?

Research Design & Rationale

Institutions of higher education are not a monolithic entity and have various sub-cultures that exist and work within the structure of the university. Professionals dedicating time to support undocumented students are a small but growing trend that is highlighted within this study. Using Freire's (2000) framework on humanizing spaces, the qualitative design is a tool to understand the narratives of student affairs professional who support the DRC and undocumented students. This section focuses on how Critical Race Theory (CRT) informs this methodology and underscores the benefits of this qualitative design. Next, this section discusses the how interviews, specifically semi-structured interviews, elicited the best responses for this study. Finally, this section concludes with a description of observation and document analysis as part of this study's design.

CRT as applied to education has five core tenets that inform this study's methods: a) the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of oppression, b) the challenge to dominant ideology, c) the commitment to social justice, d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and e) a transdisciplinary perspective (Daniel G. Solorzano, 1998; Yosso, 2005). Applying these tenets to this study, CRT asserts that undocumented students of color are marginalized by educational policies and practices that uphold white supremacy and elitism. Further, this dominant ideology is upheld through the erasure of the immigrant justice history. Chapter 4, in particular illuminates participants' narratives in the style of a *testimonio* (L. P. Huber, 2009) which disrupts the narrowly defined knowledge production through counter-stories of institutional allies of color navigating the university. Furthermore, this project draws upon studies applying CRT

methodology to the examination of undocumented students' racialized experiences in higher education (Buenavista, 2012, 2016; Pérez Huber, 2015). The methodology in this study is used to show how immigration status and racial/ethnic identity serve as marginalizing factors in their educational and lived experiences.

Qualitative design was the chosen method used for this study. Qualitative design uncovers how phenomena are shaped by many things, including action, experiences, and social conditions (Carspecken, 1996). Through qualitative research, meaning in how undocumented identity intersects with race and shapes the lived experiences of undocumented individuals and allies in the movement is uncovered. Creswell (2010) explains how qualitative methods examine the lived experiences of oppressed groups through the format of narrative storytelling. This experiential knowledge as described by Solorzano (1998) provides a counter-narrative that institutions and movements are not monolithic but rather comprised of people who are agents of social change. Ultimately, this study underscores the value of social justice as advocates detail how they navigate and shape the institution to be more pro-immigrant.

Interview methods were utilized to collect in-depth narratives from higher education affairs professionals. Here, institutional allies were humanized through their involvement in the movement to support undocumented students. In person interviewing allowed for honest and truthful data through follow-up questions and subsequent on-the-spot clarification. This format provided the best insight into how people shape the center and its philosophies.

The semi-structured interview yielded the best information for this study. Each interviewee has their own unique trajectory and perspective. Probing these experiences requires a qualitative approach to understand how systems of oppression play out (Solorzano et al., 2000). Semi-structured interviews, for the purposes of this study, is defined as a middle ground between

more structured and less structured questions that are flexibly worded (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through semi-structured interviews, I allowed participants to elaborate on certain topics not covered in the protocol while providing enough structure to stay within the topic. In this sense, the interview functioned like a guided conversation. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility for subjects to delve into related topics that may arise that were not explicitly part of the interview protocol.

The document analysis uncovers meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to understand historical accounts of CSU DRCs. Triangulation is a cross-validation of data through the verification of multiple sources (Bowen, 2009). Documents serve as a point for triangulation in this study as they complemented the thick descriptions of interviews. Observations as a qualitative method provide a basis of truth when a researcher enters the world of individuals and organizations and earns trust to capture and record visual and auditory information (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Carspecken, 1996).

Strategies of Inquiry

Site and Population

The broad site selected for this study are public 4-year institutions of higher education in California. This project analyzed how these institutions support undocumented students, specifically through DRCs, since this is where front-line staffers physically reside. For this study, I define a DRC as a physical space where undocumented students and allies can congregate and where a full-time staffer is physically housed. The fundamental selection criterion for the site was having a mission to serve undocumented students through programs. Additional criteria included being in existence for more than one full year to allow for stability in program operation, which can include educational programs, one-on-one counseling, and legal clinics.

Site universe: California State University. As the largest public 4-year system of higher education in the country, the CSU system represents a large swath of underserved communities, including undocumented students. The CSU has almost 38% of the entire undocumented student/AB-540 population in California colleges whereas the University of California has approximately only 8% (“Undocumented Student Statistics – Statistic Brain,” 2017). The CSU system serves the top 33% of the California graduating high school class and a high percentage of first generation college students (“Institutional Research & Analytical Studies - Demographics,” 2017). In fact, several CSUs are also Hispanic Serving Institutions and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions. The Minority Serving Institution designation is relevant because it shows that a university espouses support for underrepresented populations. CSUs in the Southern California region are proximal to Los Angeles, a city significant in the national immigration movement (Nicholls & Fiorito, 2015). Given the types of students that the CSUs serve and the CSU’s proximity to immigration activism, many of the first DRCs in the country opened through the CSU systems (CSU Fullerton, CSU Los Angeles, and CSU Long Beach).

The DRCs in the CSU system were primarily created from a bottom-up infrastructure, meaning that there was no clear directive from the centralized CSU Chancellor’s office to create, sustain, or standardize the practices across the system. Conversely, the UC system has a centralized infrastructure where resources and best practices are shared from a top-down model. The model of the CSU may be more relevant to institutions of higher education that exist in a decentralized model. There were 15 DRCs across the CSU system as of spring 2018.

Specific site: CSU. After reviewing the various CSUs in the system, one CSU was chosen as the ideal site for this study because it met all of the aforementioned criteria: being in

existence for several years, serving a significant population of undocumented students, and having a cross-section of services supporting undocumented students. Moreover, this site has a mission to support underrepresented student community having the designation as a Hispanic Serving Institute since 2004 and also having the designation of an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution. In this dissertation, the site will be referred to simply as a “CSU.” CSU ranks among the top four of CSUs for the number of undocumented/AB-540 students in attendance with greater than 800 students. Further, CSU, located in a traditionally conservative county with changing demographics, can mirror the political juxtapositions between university and community for many universities nationally. This study site can also point to the intersections of how higher education is informed by or is in tension with local community politics. Most notably, CSU was one of the first CSUs to open a DRC. As a pioneering site, much can be learned about the process of its creation. This DRC is housed within a diversity programs cluster, focusing on supporting students of color through cultural and ethnic identity programming.

In addition to its unique characteristics, however, this DRC also embodies characteristics similar to other centers. As with many DRCs, the scope of the DRC is multi-faceted. Also, this DRC, along with several others, has ties to the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) on campus that cater to underrepresented students, including undocumented students. Additionally, this particular DRC is housed within the division of student affairs and has one-full time staff person with part-time graduate and undergraduate student workers. The DRC at CSU serves the wide-ranging needs of its students by hosting legal clinics, financial aid workshops, academic development mentoring, and in-depth dialogue about the social justice issues of immigration. In

this sense, studying the DRC also provided insight to the various services provided through the DRCs in the CSU system.

The key elements associated with the CSU DRC include the student group IDEAS⁷, the AB-540 Coalition, DREAM Empowerment Conference, and an involvement with the new university president. These groups and historical moments shapes the story of the development of the DRC within the larger movement as detailed in later chapters. The following table illustrates key moments within CSU’s history of supporting undocumented students.

Table 3.

Timeline of Significant Points at the CSU for Supporting Undocumented Students

Date	Event
1980s	Formation of Leticia A. Network
2000s	Forming of CSU IDEAS Student Organization
2000s	Institutionalization of CSU AB-540 Coalition
2012	AB-540 Empowerment Conference
2012	University President Transition
2014	Founding of CSU DRC

Participants

This study included campus staff, administrators, and allies who speak to the DRC as a unit of analysis. Because CRT emphasizes experiential knowledge as a core strategy to challenge dominant ideology (M. C. Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Solorzano, 1998), this study highlighted participants who have been actively involved in shifting the institutional culture at CSU both past and present. This population of individuals were either formally associated with the DRC or had an informal connection through supporting or advocating for the DRC. DRC front-line staff have

⁷ IDEAS is a pseudonym for the student organization referred to this study.

an intimate knowledge of running the DRC both as a physical space and overseeing its associated programs. Collectively, the front-line staff of the DRC provided a perspective from a dual approach of both the day-to-day operations and the strategic perspective of how programs operate within the institutional landscape. Administrators provided institutional leadership insight on how the DRC operates within the division of student affairs and beyond. Key campus allies both past and present who helped found the DRC were also included for historical context. These campus allies had long-time ties in building the DRC on either the academic and student affairs side. Students who frequented the DRC were not participants since this study aims to understand the role of the DRC from the professionals' perspectives.

Access. As a DRC administrator, I have direct access to California's DRC administrators who are informally organize through the group called the DRC Coalition (DRCC). This coalition was created less than five years ago and consists of individuals who are leads on their campuses (Community College, CSU, UC, and private) around supporting undocumented students. These leaders are involved in many other local and national immigrants' rights organizations including the Undocumented Students and Allies Knowledge Group as part of National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), United We Dream, The Coalition for Humane Immigrants' Rights (CHIRLA) Los Angeles, and the Immigrant Youth Coalition to name a few. As a former nonprofit staff member at Asian Americans Advancing Justice, Los Angeles for nearly 5 years, I built professional relationships with many immigrant focused non-profits in the Los Angeles area including the National Immigration Legal Center (NILC) and CHIRLA. My insider status me insight about how the DRC can fit within the larger immigrant justice movement.

Recruitment. Participants were recruited through a snowball sampling technique (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) that leveraged my insider networks of those working in the DRC. This study did not focus on the lived experiences of undocumented students who are a “hard-to-reach” (Marpsat & Razafindratsima, 2010) population. Rather, my insider knowledge was used to assemble the final population of subjects who consisted mostly of student and academic affairs professionals. Again, my own experiences as an insider having worked for many years as an advocate for immigrant justice, initially through the non-profit sector, then within student affairs was valuable for gaining connections to this CSU DRC. I used my standing as a CSU DRC administrator to initially connect with the DRC front-line staff at this DRC. As a DRC administrator, I possess a level of insight where I understand the daily happenings of the DRC in general. Over the past several years, I built relationships with the CSU DRC community for shared professional development and learning.

Through DRC front-line staff persons, I recruited managers or directors who oversee either directly or indirectly the CSU DRC. Through my initial connections with front-line staff members, I gained access to campus allies both past and present who worked closely with DRC staff members on current programs or served in an advisory role.

Data Collection Methods

This project utilized multiple data collection methods including document analysis, interviews, and observations. Interviews with CSU professionals yielded data on the DRC and its role within the institution. Observations provided insight into the lives of administrators, community members, and the physical space of the DRC. Document analysis provided a triangulation of data about the timelines, purpose of the DRC, and interviews conducted on institutional leaders.

Interviews

Interviews provided key data about participants' perceptions around the DRC and the movement to support undocumented students at CSU. I conducted 14 interviews (see Table 4) over the span of four months. The interview protocol (see appendix) was constructed with the intention of addressing three main research questions guided by the core theoretical concepts including interest convergence and campus climate. The protocol included general questions about the DRC's origin and its operating philosophy, the practices of the DRC, and the institutional commitment to undocumented students over time. Participants were asked about the creation of the center and its context within the institution. These types of questions incited stories and reflections best suited for a conversational atmosphere. Finally, the interview protocol captured how and why the participants became involved in the movement to support undocumented students at CSU. The interview protocol was tested for flow with institutional allies in similar roles at another CSU institution.

The interviews took place at spaces where the respondents felt most comfortable such as the DRC or professional offices. For some participants, interviews took place over the phone due to constraints of time and physical distance. During each interview, the informed consent process happened at the beginning of the interview in order to get buy-in and obtain clarity and commitment from participants. The informed consent process consisted of a description of the study, the risks and rewards provided as participants, and the steps taken to protect participants' identities. Once participants felt comfortable with the interview, they signed-off on the consent form. The interviews took anywhere from 35 to 75 minutes. As the interview facilitator, I recorded the interviews on a digital recorder and took interview notes. A paid student

transcriptionist transcribed the interviews and then I reviewed the transcription over the span of four months.

Table 4.

Number of Interview Participants by Category

Participant Category	Total No. of Interviewees
Faculty	2
Dream Resource Center front line staff members	2
Student affairs professionals	4
Student affairs middle managers	3
Student affairs upper level administration	3
Total	14

Observations

Data collection also involved in-depth observational field notes from site visits to DRC events throughout the semester. Attention was paid to the physical layout of the center: visibility of the center to students and guests, layout, and material resources such as printers, storage units, couches, and the availability of food. These physical cues provided me with insight about the amount of resources and utilization of the center. I visited two events for my site visits. The first program was a meet and greet at the beginning of the semester and the second event was an educational workshop about the power of language for immigrant communities. I gained insight into how DRC front-line staff contextualize the purpose of their work and the DRC as a whole.

Document Analysis

For the document analysis process, I collected articles from campus websites and local city, county, and regional newspapers. I accessed public documents for the CSU DRC proposal that include the intended purpose of the DRC and resources envisioned for the space. Finally, the DRC website provided an overview of the history, functions, and purpose of the DRC.

Data Analysis Methods

After interview transcription, data was entered into a data analysis program called Quirkos. During this process, I relied on an iterative process where I searched for initial themes, took notes, and then revisited that data for deeper analysis. The iterative process allows for meaning making between each sweep of data (Maxwell, 2013). Qualitative researchers use this iterative process to allow for deeper meaning making with emerging themes. Through this process, I adjusted and re-adjusted themes based off an increased understanding of the data. This overall process took three iterations of data coding.

Taking into account the theoretical frameworks employed in this study (CRT, campus climate, interest convergence), imported the data in Quirkos and did an initial read of the data looking for quotes that spoke these themes. The preliminary themes that emerged within the data loosely aligned with these themes and consisted of student experiences, DRC services or institutional support, and data about the intentions of the institution or president to open up a DRC. I found these preliminary themes to be common across participants. During the second round of data analysis, codes were grouped and then categorized into general themes around the main research questions. I conducted a similar data analyses on the documents collected and observations based off these initial themes I gathered from the interview process. Next, after triangulating the data that I gather from the themes, I finalized the themes that were present across all points of data. From within the three main themes which loosely related to a) the movement to support undocumented students, b) the call for educational equity, and c) interest convergence, I then selected groups of quotes that best represented these overarching findings.

Ethical Issues

A key ethical issue with this project was my own position as an insider as a DRC administrator. I introduced this project to some colleagues in the DRCC as a tool that may ultimately benefit the field as a whole. I took into account my positionality as a researcher and ensured my research accomplished the first task of benefiting the work of student affairs professionals doing similar work in California and across the country. By providing the results of this study to DRCC members, student affairs professionals, and community members as a whole, I ensure that practitioners, community members, and ultimately undocumented students benefit from this study.

One important ethical issue I considered was my own privilege as a U.S. citizen who conducts work with undocumented students. In order to combat this threat, I was up-front about my own privilege and divulged my intent not to exploit those who are being studied, but rather to uplift and create further dialogue on how to support undocumented students in higher education. Although this study explored several aspects of the DRCs, I did not want to over-emphasize practices deemed unsuccessful by informants or politics that can demean or taint the work of DRCs. The status of being undocumented is already politically charged for students in higher education and I did not want to cause further negative attention than what is already given. Ultimately, I protected the identities of those I interviewed from external forces such as campus police department or Immigration and Customs Enforcement by providing pseudonyms and destroying (deleting) data after the study. I protected the identities of respondents by creating an interview protocol designed to focus on the benefits of the center and not focus too much on the critiques of the space—although critiques did naturally arise.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

In order to reduce respondent bias and risk of chance associations, I utilized the method of data triangulation (Maxwell, 2013) where data is corroborated across multiple sources for consistency. This also aligns with CRTs intentions of providing counter-narratives to the stereotypical, homogenous portrayal of undocumented students and the immigrant justice movement. Understanding that being undocumented is not just Latinx as it is typically framed; I included an ethnic/racial diversity of professionals within the participant pool. I also included a range of professionals from front-line staff to higher-level administrators to demonstrate the types of support within the hierarchal structure of the institution.

One of my other challenges as part of this study was reactivity or the phenomenon that participants change the way they interact with the data collection due to multiple factors (Maxwell, 2013). Because of my personal relationships with the DRC staff, I may have only received the “best” answers from participants because they knew my status as a DRC administrator. Thus, I worked to gain trust with my respondents, especially the front line staff members through building relationships over time and being forthright about my intentions for this project.

Summary

In this chapter, I covered how qualitative designs are beneficial to highlight the narratives of institutional allies and elicit meaning behind the DRC in the context of the university. In addition, this chapter detailed the methods of interviews, document analysis, and site observations. This study focused on CSU as one of the earliest CSUs that supports undocumented students. The following chapters include two findings chapters: chapter 4 provides the narratives of three institutional leaders and Chapter 5 details the themes that were

present across all data points. Chapter 6 covers the utility of this study and its implications on research, practice, and policy.

CHAPTER 4: NARRATIVES OF LEADERSHIP

At California State University (CSU), the campus movement to support undocumented students has been in existence for more than thirty decades. Participants shared that institutional agents within this larger movement to support undocumented students were key to creating the foundation of the DRC. The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate the efforts of three individuals (Hazel, Pam, and Paul) in building this campus movement in different ways.

CSU serves the local community and is comprised of a majority of students of color. This campus, along with many other CSU campuses espouse a mission of serving students from local neighborhoods. The Dream Resource Center (DRC) at CSU is a spacious venue. Located in the center of campus, the DRC has a sign in front inviting students and visitors alike. The following quote was posted at the front of the Center when I visited during Winter 2018:

*First, they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Socialist.
Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—
and there was no one left to speak for me. – Niemöller*

I felt overwhelmed with emotion upon reading the quote and seeing just how beautiful the space was. Adjacent to the quote was a history wall displaying moments within the campus's history of supporting undocumented students. The DRC stands as a testament and symbol in many ways to the history of how CSU and its people supported undocumented students, reflecting a growing trend in higher education to institutionalize support for undocumented students.

The Campus Movement to Support Undocumented Students

In this chapter, I discuss the lives of Hazel, Pam, and Paul whose stories form a deeper understanding of how those in the larger campus movement created the foundation for the DRC. The informants in this section discuss how the campus movement was a collaborative effort that spanned several generations and how it was always student centered. Many institutional agents came together to frame the DRC as a response for the unequitable treatment towards undocumented students. I use the term institutional agents to highlight how professionals and students on campus displayed agency to create organizational change. These individuals were also allies to undocumented students. I use these terms interchangeably. These three individual stories were chosen because they highlight three of the main stakeholders involved in the movement. The following section features a story of an administrator, Hazel, who has uplifted others during his entire time at CSU. Hazel's story explains how building a coalition of advocates is a necessary element to the movement. Next, Pam represents the voice of students within the movement. Pam is currently a professional who worked at CSU but has a long involvement with IDEAS, the CSU student organization that first fought for the rights and visibility of undocumented students on campus. Finally, Paul became part of the movement because of his own trajectory as an undocumented individual, which gave her a unique perspective on supporting undocumented students as a professional.

Hazel

Hazel's story is an example of how the movement was a collaborative effort through intentional partnerships between faculty, staff, students, and community over many years. A CSU product through and through, Hazel came from a low-income neighborhood in California and was the first person in her family to attend college. As a Chicana self-identified person, she

was active in the Chicano Latino Faculty Staff Association. Hazel was a benefactor of many campus programs including the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). She was also proud of her roots in EOP and believes that without the program, her life would be “a lot different today.” Through this program, Hazel became empowered to advocate for students who are overlooked and underserved. Hazel was a triple alumnus from CSU having graduated with dual bachelor’s degrees and a master’s degree.

Participants shared how Hazel was one of the core individuals who led advocacy efforts for undocumented students at CSU. She was seen as an authority off-campus as well, having connected with different institutions in California supporting undocumented students. Hazel has built an extensive portfolio of advocating for undocumented students in the region and has served as a keynote speaker at AB-540/undocumented student centered conferences on multiple occasions.

The day I visited CSU to speak with Hazel was a day bustling with students walking to and from classes. I had to find my way to Hazel’s office, tucked away in a building towards the edge of the university. Upon entering the department, I checked in at the front door and let the front desk person know that I was there to see Hazel. As I waited a few minutes, I noticed that the department felt more like a corporate office with cubicles and florescent lighting. It was an office with no windows to the outside world. After a few minutes passed, Hazel came in to greet me and I followed her to her office where we began the interview.

Hazel’s office was a stark contrast to the cold surroundings of the department. She had warm colored lamps and her office was adorned with keepsakes. Her space was home to hundreds of stories. There were old certificates, gifts from students, art pieces and paintings from her favorite artists. It was apparent that Hazel was a well-connected person and she seemed very

relatable. She was a proud historian of the campus and it showed in the way she spoke. As someone who has been at the institution for almost 28 years (both as a student and professional), I was excited to hear her story.

As a longtime advocate for undocumented students at CSU, Hazel first became involved because of her faith in social justice. She also had a personal connection to the issue, as her own partner was a Leticia A.⁸ student during the same time she was on campus. When she was a student, the undocumented movement was still “very underground.” She claimed that the Leticia A. students were “very different” from the undocumented students today; the Leticia A. students were “protected” under the Leticia A. decision. Undocumented students had access to state financial aid, driver’s licenses, and they hardly mentioned that they were undocumented. According to Hazel, “it was unheard of for someone to say they were undocumented during that time.” Nonetheless, as a student Hazel found mentorship from professionals who supported undocumented students.

When Hazel began speaking about her mentors, she became sentimental and spoke with pride and excitement. It was the people in the Leticia A. Network who nurtured her as a student activist. Thus, she held this group of people in the highest regard. According to Hazel, her mentors were “trailblazers” on campus and across the system because they were doing critical work that many people were not: “these are people that were there when AB-540 was signed into law. I was mentored by these badass folks, so I am standing on the shoulders of Giants.”

⁸ Leticia A. refers to the decision made in 1985 that allowed undocumented students to classify for residency status. The decision was then overturned in with the Bradford ruling in which the CSU incorporated in spring of 1995.

“Students were being treated unfairly because they were undocumented”

Hazel testified how the work of supporting undocumented students became an institutional equity issue. Hazel embodied this role of change-maker and ensured undocumented students were receiving treatment that met their unique needs. Hazel gave an exemplar of a moment when she advocated for a policy change. One day, a student walked into her office and told her that they would not be able to attend CSU because of the \$250 deposit required to attend the university before starting. Hazel highlighted the central role that institutional agents take in changing campus policy when she shared her own experience working with campus leaders:

I emailed the financial aid director and asked, “Why can't we offer this [\$250 fee waiver] to the dreamers. They have the Dream Act and they have a zero Expected Family Contribution [EFC]. Why are they being treated differently?” So the Financial Aid director contacted Admissions and we asked if there was a possible way for us to waive that deposit fee and the answer was yes. Therefore, if our students have an EFC of zero, they don't have to pay the \$250. That was based off a student who came and told me, “I want to come here but I don't have the money.” I looked up her financial aid and her EFC stated zero, and within two hours, it was changed forever. Nobody is going to know that, but that student who was sitting where you are now, the student's life was forever changed because she was able to come here and all it took was to ask the question. Just to see [the change] on email, the transformation, I sat and cried. Because no one is going to know that. But, it's not about us doing it for attention, it's about doing what's right. It's about all students being treated fairly regardless if you are undocumented.

The larger movement on campus to support undocumented students was developed through incremental changes such as this. Multiple informants spoke to how they made incremental changes within their own scope of work. Ultimately, these changes lead to shifting campus climate where new policies and procedures provide for experience that are more equitable for undocumented students. In speaking with Hazel, I had a sense that she was proud of her work on the front lines. She believed in the value of recognizing these advocacy efforts within the overall history of the movement to support undocumented students.

“We’ve always had an informal underground network”

Hazel asserted that the movement to support undocumented students had been in existence for several decades. She said that prior to the establishment of the DRC and the AB-540 Coalition, it was the campus Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) that was the “safe haven” to many undocumented students and allies. EOP was the anchor for many; students and professionals in the EOP program were active in building networks across campus. These cross-campus partnerships proved to be critical resources for undocumented students who faced institutional barriers. Hazel reflected on how she was mentored by those early architects of these campus networks. The system of relationships was expansive and included EOP, university outreach, admissions and records, financial services, and faculty support.

The EOP at its core was designed to serve low-income, under-represented students as a way to provide equitable educational opportunities (Clauss-Ehlers & Wibrowski, 2007). To Hazel, this philosophy was essential to understanding why undocumented students saw EOP as a “safe haven.” EOP’s mission of educational equity was fostered by its staff and it emanated throughout the program. Hazel reminded, “if you look at the history of all EOP programs, it was born out of this civil rights movement, so it's a natural fit and folks who will fight for civil rights will be through EOP.” Thus, at CSU, there was already a built in network of advocates when the Leticia A. decision was made and institutional allies had to organize themselves through these EOP networks.

As the years went on, allies in the Leticia A. Network planned their own leadership succession and were looking for newcomers to take up the cause. Hazel was one of those people to take the movement into the next generation. Hazel remembers that CSU actually designated a percentage of a staffer’s time to be a point of contact to support undocumented students. This

point person was on the verge of retiring when she chose Hazel as the person to succeed her. It was through strategic transitioning and training that the momentum to support undocumented students continued. Hazel shared about the times she recruited others to join her in the cause:

She came to me and said “you’re going to have to take over, ‘cause we are going to need to send the students to somebody. Since you’ve been training under me, you’re the best person because you’re well connected.” Right after that, I recruited five of my colleagues who I felt would fight for this population.

This narrative shows how institutional allies are essential in not only keeping momentum within the movement but also growing the movement through gaining buy-in from others on campus. Hazel saw this transition as an opportunity to become a more visible leader at CSU. She leveraged her own campus contacts and enlisted colleagues to be part of the next generation of leaders to support undocumented students. Hazel and other allies worked to ensure that the movement continued and that there were even more individuals who became invested in the work. They conducted campus wide trainings to ensure that people across the university were aware of the issues.

For many years, student leaders, staff, and I trained colleagues who also had similar values. They became advocates and became part of the new network. Since some of the other folks retired, we took on the torch.

While Hazel recruited her colleagues to continue the movement, she knew that she had to involve students within the process for creating change. Hazel strategized ways to involve others as she became one of the new leaders of the movement. Around the mid-2000s, the national undocumented and unafraid movement reached campus. CSU became a hotbed for student activism and many undocumented students became more vocal and started to demand greater educational equity.

“Students were integral in creating the center...they were tired of being in the shadows”

Hazel understood that undocumented students were at the center of the movement. To this end, she always had a strong relationship with undocumented student leaders. She recalled the time during the mid-2000s when undocumented students started to become more vocal and expressed themselves in a “socially conscious and politically empowered manner” and how they were tired of being “in the shadows.” This group of students branched off from the campus’ MEChA chapter. Students formally organized the CSU IDEAS group during the mid-2000s and Hazel mentored its organizational leaders. She pointed to that first generation of student activists in IDEAS as the core group that caught the attention of administration.

Hazel remembered how it was the undocumented student group who demanded that the informal network becomes formally institutionalized. Students knew that the university president wanted to show unity between academic and student affairs and so they called for a formal coalition that was cross divisional:

It was the students who pushed the meeting with the Provost and the Vice President of Student Affairs. The students were the ones who were very vocal, and they had lots of concerns and power. Then we got called in and they said we want you to be one of the co-chairs. So, it was a relationship between academic affairs and student affairs. So they put two of us in charge...that's how the task force was born.

The cross-divisional aspect was key as it demonstrates the strategy of creating campus-wide partnerships to support undocumented students. It was apparent that Hazel was a social justice advocate who deeply cared about her students. One of Hazel’s core values as a leader was keeping the undocumented student voice at the center of the dialogue. She was proud that she built rapport with those she mentored.

It's something that I will take to my grave. We were able to honor the students and also create a partnerships with the students. It wasn't just faculty and administration, it was students, staff, and community members who were all part of the social justice movement on campus. Because I think that's where the committee was very integral to make sure

that the voices were heard, so we had the students reps. Students need to always be invited to the table and I think we did a great job of keeping that integrity and process during my time.

This quote highlights the important collaboration that existed between the institutional agents and the students in creating change at CSU. Both Hazel's and Pam's narrative in the next section, underscore the work of both these groups to create bottom-up change at CSU. The AB-540 Coalition was the vehicle that brought together faculty, staff, and student allies across campus. It also was a vehicle for students to voice their concerns at the highest levels of the institution. Hazel and the committee tried to ensure that, even though the Coalition and the work was being institutionalized from the bottom-up, people knew that it was the institution's responsibility as a whole to support undocumented students.

“The philosophy of our group was to make everyone responsible”

Those involved in the informal network sought buy-in from others on campus. It took a group of institutional agents as well as student leaders to change the environment on campus. Hazel spoke to the value of the informal network and the ensuing AB-540 Coalition to bring the campus to a point of consciousness to open a DRC. Although Hazel was one of the main leaders of the movement, she reiterates that the responsibility should be an institutional responsibility. She believed the initiative and interest to support undocumented students should be part of everyone's agenda and she stated:

Everybody needs to have those skills and regardless of what your opinion is on immigration, you need to know who you're serving. We are not asking you how you feel about immigration; we are providing a service to all students regardless of immigration status. We need everyone to have those specialized skills. That was our philosophy. We do not care how folks felt about immigration, all we were asking was for employees to know how to provide support services to undocumented students so they can do their job better while serving the student population. We want to empower you with the knowledge so you can provide the support services.

To Hazel, the purpose of the group was to begin a pro-immigrant dialogue no matter where people were on the political spectrum with the ultimate goal of creating an undocufriendly campus. By framing the issue as an educational equity issue, Hazel and her colleagues sought initial buy-in from potential campus allies by framing it as a means to be a better professional to support all students on campus.

Hazel also wanted the campus to understand the history of the undocumented movement that took place throughout the years. The DRC was born out of the hard work of students, faculty, staff, administrators, community members, and allies. To her, the history needed to be told completely and the DRC needs to ensure that history is honored. Many people fought hard and demanded for the creation of a DRC and understanding the journey of both the struggles and wins is crucial for advocating for greater resources. She was adamant about the hard work it took to make the campus a more undocufriendly place and that no one on the Coalition did the work for the glory nor the recognition; they did the work because they were invested in change. Nothing was handed to the allies who fought for the DRC, it was through teamwork, collaborations, and passion for doing the right thing to bring about change. Similar to the earliest days when the work was grounded in civil rights within EOP, the Coalition and the institutional allies carried on the legacy of providing servant leadership to the campus community.

Everything we went through all those years we fought and fought and the groundwork [laid by Leticia A Network leaders as well as on campus faculty, staff, administrators, and students]...I've been fortunate to have been close to all of them. We learned that it started with them and they taught us, and we never lost momentum. You would never think CSU would be one of the safest campus out of the 23 [CSU] campuses. It took a lot of hard work, and a lot of folks standing up and doing the right thing. It wasn't about making a name for oneself back then. It was about getting these students through and helping them navigate, empowering them.

Hazel highlights how the movement to support undocumented students at CSU took many institutional agents who had a shared interest in the cause. This commitment was apparent

even outside of one's job description. Those who were involved in the effort were intrinsically motivated to create change at CSU and went beyond what they were expected to do. One of the many outcomes of this foundational work was that the students ultimately benefitted. I learned that there were many players within the movement and some who are still involved in supporting undocumented students as of the writing of this project. The next section highlights Pam's story and how undocumented students were one of the key stakeholders at the forefront of the movement.

Pam

Pam's story highlights the central role that students had in calling for educational equity for undocumented students. Pam is a current professional who worked at CSU around the time of the founding of the DRC, she had a personal investment as a CSU IDEAS alumna who was heavily involved during her time as an undergrad during the mid-2000s. CSU IDEAS was the primary student organization formed to advocate for undocumented students. As an alumna, she reflected fondly on her experience and it was apparent that her current passion to serve was shaped by her student activism. While at CSU, she majored in Human Services because she wanted to work in education and give back to her community. While Pam testified that she was not undocumented, she explained that she was upfront about her positionality throughout her time as a student organizer. Her classmates who led the charge inspired her. Pam was part of the core group of students who held campus administrators accountable through their demands for greater resources.

After a few initial attempts to setup an interview, my meeting with Pam took place over the phone. Because our meeting took almost a month to organize, I got the sense that Pam was a very busy person. She warmly greeted me and thanked me for my interest in the DRC and CSU

in general. She seemed courteous and agreed to share her perspectives. Her story illuminated the central role that students played in making the issue more visible on campus. This cohort of students was involved in different ways, including serving on the formal AB-540 Coalition and leading the IDEAS organization.

Pam built a legacy of advocacy work and created tangible changes on campus. CSU became one of the more undocufriendly campuses in the system because of the groundbreaking work of the IDEAS students. She explained why she and her classmates were invested in the organization. They ultimately wanted to “do their part” within the campus movement and the following quote illuminates the intentions for students to contribute to the larger movement:

We didn't get paid for this. It's advocacy work, and they [my co-organizers] sacrificed a lot. It's because it was important. They [undocumented students] were experiencing that personal struggle and others weren't—they were just allies. Even though I was not undocumented, I was a permanent resident. I was able to receive financial aid and everything, but I wanted to do my part. You cannot leave out the students and what we did to establish a change.

Pam knew that she had to graduate and transition out of the student leader role despite her many years of advocating as a student. After Pam graduated from CSU, she positioned herself to work on campus and maintained connections to the movement. Although her job required her to be off-campus for long periods, she still supported IDEAS by offering to be their staff advisor. The more she became occupied by her professional role, the less time she had to invest in IDEAS. Her professional commitments in combination with her belief that IDEAS should be a student-led organization led her to re-examine her role as an advisor. After much contemplation, Pam decided that it was best for her and IDEAS that she advocated from a distance. This was a difficult decision for her, but nonetheless it was a decision she felt benefitted all parties:

I was the advisor for the student org, then after one or two years I let someone else take over. I was in a very unique situation because I knew the work that was done prior with the previous generation of student leaders. With IDEAS, my role was for the students to

lead the movement and not the staff. So I was going back and forth between, “I shouldn’t be doing all this work...the students need to lead it.” I was struggling there for a bit, so that’s why I decided to discontinue being the advisor. The amount of work was a factor. Also, the student org was going to another direction with different student leaders and everything.

Pam recognized that there was also a generational shift taking place at the institution with new leadership both on the staff and student leadership. She alluded to the fact that the newer generations of undocumented students became less politicized after programs such as DACA were implemented to support undocumented students. Nonetheless, Pam remained proud of her time within the organization and recalled how inspired she was to be with her co-organizers as she shared about all the changes and her transition from the IDEAS organization.

“We were not just dreaming...we were taking action. We were doers.”

IDEAS students were the change agents pushing for equity for undocumented students. Pam remembers that her counterparts in IDEAS never really identified with the dreamer narrative because it insinuated a passive approach to activism. She recalled how her friends saw themselves as “doers” because they took action instead of waiting. In the late 2000s, IDEAS created a resource manual about its history (from the mid-2000s) and Pam was listed on the manual as one of its leaders. The manual contained information on the laws that affect undocumented students, the current issues, and most relevant resources available both on and off campus. During her years associated with IDEAS, Pam was involved in creating a student-led Dreamers Ally Training for faculty and staff—one of the first in the state to do that type of training. Pam was part of the same group that Hazel mentioned who were “activists” and were vocal about their needs. IDEAS during this time was seen as more radical era of student leaders.

The students knew that they were the ones leading campus change. Pam’s story illuminated the significant role that the student advocates played in supporting fellow students

and demanding the institutionalization of services including the AB-540 Coalition and the DRC. Pam believed that all the institutionalized supports existing today were a direct result of student activism. Through advocacy, students institutionalized the Dreamers Ally Training, the AB-540 Coalition, and ultimately the DRC.

Pam believed that IDEAS was the catalyst for the entire movement at CSU. Students during her era were marginalized because professionals did not understand the experiences of undocumented students. One example was when students were admitted to the university and interacted with professionals in admissions.

The narrative of undocumented students was they would go to the front desk of admissions, and the staff were really rude to them. They were turned away and that's why this training needed to happen. Students, on their own accord, were being turned off by the university because they were treated so poorly and disrespected.

Because of this mistreatment at the hands of university professionals, Pam and IDEAS strategically decided to create the Dreamer Ally Training for campus professionals to not only understand the experiences of undocumented students but to change the way they treated students. The trainings were student led and supported by staff members and community leaders. Building from the momentum from developing the resource manual and the Dreamer Ally Trainings, IDEAS had bigger demands for the campus administration to take a leadership role in institutionalizing resources. The students turned their attention to strategically advocating for a more formal coalition and ultimately a DRC.

The organization built a foundation with regards to establishing and getting the Coalition created with other members on campus. There were a lot of key players here. But, the one I would say kept the movement and the push for the DRC to really be established and for the task force to be established to be able to meet the needs of the students was IDEAS.

Pam alludes to the importance of student voice within any decision making process. She recalls that from the very beginning, it was the students who were pushing for a center even though

some of the staff and faculty did not always agree. The biggest counter-argument was that a DRC would cause unwanted visibility and violence towards undocumented students on campus. Regardless, Pam believed this was always the goal and students had the will to make their goals a reality when she shared how students made changes at CSU:

IDEAS was the founding student organization that advocated for the rights and the resources for undocumented students. We were able to establish the AB-540 Dreamer Ally Sticker. The resource guide was developed by us. We would do trainings with different departments at CSU. Also, a great piece to it was the communication with administration during that time in regards to what were the needs of AB-540 students. With knowing of the needs and the constant struggles and the barriers that students were facing, there was big push to establish a place and a center that they would be able to receive services and resources. They wanted to have something of their own, to be able to call, not home, but an extension of home at their university.

Towards the end of our interview, Pam reflected on IDEAS's place within the history of the DRC. She warned that the history should not only encapsulate the most recent efforts to create the center but also the work of previous generations. Giving out an exasperated sigh, Pam hoped the voices of the student organizers would never be overshadowed. As we concluded our interview, Pam felt comforted in remembering the timeline displayed in the DRC included the history of the students. Nonetheless, Pam was adamant that the history and struggle of students should always be at the forefront.

It's this organic dedicated passionate group of staff and faculty... these centers, programs were created because of what students were voicing. If it was only staff led, I don't think CSU would be one of the first ones. I think it really takes a group of passionate individuals that are really striving to create change within their university.

In the previous section, Hazel spoke to the importance of institutional agents at the staff and faculty level to incite change at CSU. In combination with Pam's story about the student involvement, it is apparent that the collaboration between the people were essential to creating change at CSU. The students who voiced concerns about the barriers they were facing at CSU were at the forefront of this effort. Pam's story helps us better understand the role of students

within the larger movement to shift the culture at CSU to be more undocufriendly. While student leaders were key to the movement, professionals who had a personal connection to the issue represented another essential stakeholder group.

Paul

Paul's story illustrates how professionals may have a personal stake in supporting undocumented students. Paul was one of the few participants in this study who identified as an undocumented person. Having immigrated to the U.S. as a child, he understood the barriers that many undocumented students experience at CSU because he went through it during the early 2010s. Growing up in California, he chose CSU as a closer option to home. While initially feeling disconnected from the university as an undergraduate, he found his calling as a leader in student government. This sparked his interest for advocacy and his love for higher education.

After graduating from CSU, he pursued graduate education in student affairs, which would enable him to work at a university and continue his passion to support students. He had a yearning to return to California after attaining her master's degree out of town and found an opportunity for an internship back at CSU. Once back on campus, Paul sought full-time work and found his current position as a student affairs professional who worked directly with undocumented students. Paul was in his current role for several years and enjoyed supporting undocumented students in different ways.

Paul welcomed me into his office during the latter part of the workday. Our interview took place a little later than originally scheduled because he came from a departmental function that ran long. I gathered that Paul was balancing multiple commitments to his department, to his colleagues, and to his students. His office was a bit messy with piles of paperwork stacked across the desks. It was winter break, and class had not been in session for several weeks and yet, Paul

was still highly occupied. It was apparent that Paul was still inundated with closing all of the previous semester's activities even before he got to planning the spring.

Paul had a quirky sense of humor that was sarcastic in nature. However, despite seeming busy, he was calm, collected and quite welcoming. As Paul began to tell the story of his involvement with CSU, it was clear that despite an easy-going persona, he was very serious about his work and supporting undocumented students.

Paul was up front about how his own identity as an undocumented person shaped his work with undocumented students. Although Paul professionally supported undocumented students on campus, he had an intimate understanding of the barriers that undocumented students face. Through his first-hand experience of being an undocumented student at CSU before the DRC was established, he picked up the tips and tricks on how to locate and fill out necessary paperwork including the AB-540 residency tuition affidavit and the on-line California Dream Act application.

When I was an undocumented student going through college, I had a good sense of where the scholarships were that didn't require citizenship or residency. I knew the form that folks had to get, how to get it and where to take it to in order to get in-state tuition. So, while I was student, I was going through the experience of a lot of other undocumented students.

Although Paul knew the steps and processes for success as an undocumented student, his parents trained him "not to discuss his undocumented identity" to anybody. This theme of silence was found across scholarship on undocumented college students (L. Huber & Malagon, 2007; Perez, 2010). In fact, in his silence, he chose to keep his status to himself and not share his status with faculty or staff members. He mentioned that he did not know anything about the Leticia A. Network and was ambivalent about IDEAS. The entire time Paul was a student at CSU, he was not open about his identity and he had to learn how to navigate the institution on his own.

I grew up as undocumented and came up through school here. I wasn't really open about that to my peers or to faculty members, because I just didn't really feel safe. I don't know why that was the case. I just think all my life I was told by my parents to not disclose that so I brought that here with me because I felt like I could figure out things on my own. For the most part, I did figure things out on my own, like with scholarships, applying for the AB-540. My perception of the support that was here was something I didn't critically think about how supportive this campus is.

Although Paul recognized that he wasn't out due to personal reasons, he also alludes to the fact that the university was not openly undocufriendly and perpetuated a culture of silence. In other words, there was not an institutional culture for him to outwardly share his identity to others on campus.

On campus, Paul was not as comfortable with his identity, but at home, it was the complete opposite. He felt comfortable supporting his closest friends and family and shared his story with many of them. Paul's experiences supporting undocumented immigrants added to his skillset as a professional in higher education:

I had family and friends going through the same situation and challenges, so I would support them in their pursuit of a college education. I would find out about a family friend or a friend that disclosed and I heard they couldn't go to college because they wanted to work or they didn't value education. Those were signs that there was something else going on. Whenever I had a friend who would go down that road, I would share my experience of being an undocumented student, feeling that they were going through the same experience. But, they didn't want to share that they were undocumented. By sharing first, it made them see that they were not the only ones going that experience and then it opened up a conversation where they were able to disclose. I was able to provide that help for them.

Paul felt empowered to work with undocumented students on campus because of his personal and professional knowledge of those identities. His unique skillset had been "valued by the university" and publicly highlighted by CSU on a number of occasions. Paul brought a unique philosophy about supporting the unique needs of undocumented students and he believed that undocumented individuals understand their identity because they have been "living it all their lives." According to him, their challenges emanate from the barriers "imposed on them by the

law and not so much other people's perceptions about them." Thus, it is Paul's imperative that other institutional agents understand and try to provide a welcoming environment for students.

"We need to ensure our students are welcomed and embraced"

CSU staff members worked to create a welcoming environment specifically for undocumented students. According to Paul, undocumented identity has been salient for most of the students' lives and because of this, it becomes much more imperative to build community with the students rather than focus solely on identity development. Paul knew that relationships were crucial in empowering students to open up. In this sense, Paul created the campus experience that he did not have:

I don't get the chance to speak to every undocumented student on this campus...but I trust the DRC team to help to be the first folks who undocumented students meet and greet, engage with them, build relationships makes them feel comfortable.

According to this quote, building lasting relationships was a key element in making students feel safe and part of the campus. The role of the DRC was to create a welcoming environment for students.

Paul shared his passion in empowering undocumented students, to become much more than they could envision. To him, education did not just mean academic success, but personal success as well. Paul believes that investing in students ultimately means that the investment goes back to local communities.

Paul worked diligently to create an environment where undocumented students can thrive. He insisted that those on campus have to take their roles very seriously. He was aware of his own influence to support undocumented students because his "leadership has helped undocumented students strive for equity too." Paul and his colleagues felt like it is their

responsibility to continue pushing the envelope to be as innovative as possible because CSU has been on the forefront of supporting undocumented students in the CSU system.

From the beginning, I have instilled this idea that we are one of the first and we have a duty to our undocumented students. If we want to continue to serve them, we need to be perceived as professionals and we need to ensure that our students are being welcomed and embraced. So, [there's] this pursuit of excellence so that we continue to be viewed as a school that continues to be innovative...it's a responsibility.

This responsibility that Paul speaks to is a concept that was also mentioned through Hazel and Pam's notion of a Dreamer Ally Training program. As part of creating an undocufriendly culture, campus professional must not only understand the experiences of undocumented students but consider it their own responsibility to create change.

Many undocumented students became more comfortable at CSU because of Paul's leadership. Yet, he reiterated that the deeper purpose of education is not only to support the academic success of students but also their communities. The coming of the DRC provided a space for students to build community with one another and to be even more engaged in local issues than ever before. He said that through the center, students were able "to be active members of the communities that they are part of and be civically engaged." Civic engagement was at the core of student empowerment in his eyes and this furthered the mission of CSU overall. This mission guided the work of the DRC and all those supporting the work:

I have felt for a long time that this campus is not an ivory tower and our undocumented students have a civic duty to the community at large and students not only learn it in the classroom, but take what they've learned, apply it and do good in the communities that we serve.

Paul had developed a philosophy that the work needed to be relational and centered on trust. Because of his own experiences with his family members and his friends, Paul thought that undocumented students at CSU should be equipped to support and uplift those within the community. He said that being one of the first to go to college in a family comes with "a

responsibility to bring people up with you.” Paired with Hazel’s and Pam’s stories, the trio of narratives highlighted in this chapter underscore the strategic relationships, student activism, and the personal connections that laid the foundation for the DRC.

Conclusion

This chapter illuminated the lives of three advocates who were a part of the larger movement to support undocumented students at CSU. As campus allies began to understand the needs of undocumented students in the 1980s, they developed informal partnerships strategically comprised of professionals across departments. These institutional allies ensured that undocumented students did not just get equal treatment, but equitable treatment and resources from the university that met their unique needs.

The underground network formerly known as the Leticia A. Network was institutionalized into the AB-540 Coalition around the time when the immigrant debate was nationally popularized in the early 2000s. Through IDEAS and the Coalition, students and allies invested greater efforts to open a DRC. Coalition members ensured that students remained central to the movement. The Coalition strategically implemented trainings, created a report of recommendations, and organized a DREAM Empowerment Conference. By the time the new university administration arrived in the early 2010s, the environment was primed for the opening of a DRC.

Building on these individual stories, Chapter 5 underscores the major themes that are common across the documents collected, in depth interviews, and the site visits. Through an examination of these common themes, there is a better understanding of the research questions as stated here once again:

1. What factors led to the creation of the Dream Resource Center?

2. What Dream Resource Center programs, policies, practices, and structures meet the needs of undocumented students?
3. What role does the Dream Resource Center play in enacting institutional commitment to undocumented students?

The overarching theme of interest convergence will be covered as it helps to frame the role of a DRC at a CSU.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

After many years of fighting for equitable resources for undocumented students, it was finally through interest convergence where the Dream Resource Center (DRC) was created. In Chapter 4, I focused on the people involved in the movement leading up to the founding of the DRC. I begin this chapter by providing context on the opening day of the DRC and the vision for the establishment of the center. The core of this chapter details how interest convergence plays a vital role in the creation of the DRC and how it furthers stakeholder interests. Here, I outline how students, staff, and faculty had their own interests to advance educational equity for undocumented students at CSU. Finally, I cover how the institution benefitted from the DRC by operationalizing its agenda for diversity and inclusion. This chapter refers to interview participants whose pseudonyms and roles are provided in Table 5.

Table 5.

List of Participants and Roles

Participant	Pseudonym	Role
1	Caleb	Staff
2	Cathy	Administrator
3	Hazel	Staff
4	Heather	Administrator
5	Janice	Administrator
6	Marco	Administrator
7	Miriam	Staff
8	Mylene	Faculty
9	Olivia	Administrator
10	Pamela	Staff
11	Paul	Staff
12	Sarita	Administrator
13	Sophia	Faculty
14	Veronica	Staff

The Dream Became Reality

The DRC is a unique practice created to support undocumented students and it accomplishes multiple goals set forth by institutional leaders. After many years of advocacy, in 2014, California State University (CSU) made history as one of the first state universities in California to open a DRC. The space was touted as a symbol of the university's commitment to undocumented students. During the opening of the center, a university vice president expressed how CSU was "dedicated to the cultural competence on the campus on a level that is unmeasured...this is only the beginning". The reality was that the DRC was going to be a new space that consolidated previous services. One former administrator recounted that when the DRC first opened, many believed that it "brought validation to the undocumented student experience of being marginalized and excluded." While creating safe and validating spaces was a core element of this DRC, the administrator, Janice, added that the DRC was going to be a hub of on-going programs and services to educate students and the campus community:

We were very clear when we opened the center, while it was absolutely intended to be a gathering space, it would be a learning space. Every piece of furniture was to be on wheels and movable. There was going to be A/V in that room that was advanced so we would host lecture series and workshops in a way that would make the DRC a space for everyone to learn. - Janice

Olivia, another administrator, explained how the center was unique because it functioned more like student service centers (such as the Veterans Resource Center) because of its prioritization on basic needs and intersectional identities.

In the African resource center, you're talking about black diaspora, race and the ethnicity. That's very different from the Veterans Resource Center: they are talking about challenges with PTSD, dealing with coming back to civilian life. In the DRC you're talking about how to handle legal aspects of becoming a citizen, filing your DACA paperwork. The content is going to be different, but there's intersectionality. [At the DRC] We can have a veteran who is undocumented. We can have an undocumented student who identifies from an Asian community. - Olivia

Before the DRC even existed, institutional agents redefined how CSU operationalized “diversity.” Instead of espousing diversity through numerical representation of students, allies pushed for “true diversity” (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006) in practice and they strategized to make this concept to a reality. True diversity is not just including students on campus but also actively working to create empowering environment for students of color and marginalized students to become more successful. Providing equitable resources to succeed is one facet of providing true diversity. Through this effort of advancing educational equity, both the students and the university as a whole benefited from the creation of the DRC.

Interest Convergence

As reviewed in Chapter 2, Critical Race Theory (CRT) centers race/racism in intersection with other forms of oppression (Solorzano et al., 2000). CRT is a tool to illuminate the everyday lived experiences of people of color and marginalized communities through counter-stories. CRT frames how undocumented immigrants contend with a system of inequity created to marginalize and dehumanize. In this vein, the DRC in higher education is only a small part of a broader context of achieving immigrant justice for undocumented communities.

Bell (1980) developed the notion of interest convergence to explain how educational policy (such as *Brown v. Board*) was created to serve “white mainstream interests.” In other words, educational policies uphold the status quo rather than providing social justice. Whiteness pervades every aspect of higher education such as informing campus climate to support only “traditional” or white students and also problematically skewing perceptions of meritocracy without recognizing how minoritized students must overcome systemic barriers Cabrera (Cabrera, Franklin, & S. Watson, 2016). Students of color are impacted by a whiteness in higher education through hostile campus climates, which has a negative effect on sense of belonging on

campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Systems of education can uphold whiteness with the policies and practices implemented that do not properly support marginalized students.

Researchers used interest convergence to analyze policies within sectors of education including public high school and higher education (Park & Liu, 2014; Stovall, 2013; T. J. Yosso, 2005). For the context of the DRC, interest convergence analyzes not the interests of individuals, but rather individuals' interest as they represent the white dominant power structure. In other words, even though institutional leaders may identify as people of color, they represent the institution, which is historically and predominantly white. The following chart lays out the interests of different groups including staff/faculty, students, leaders, and the institutions and how those interests manifest within the context of the DRC.

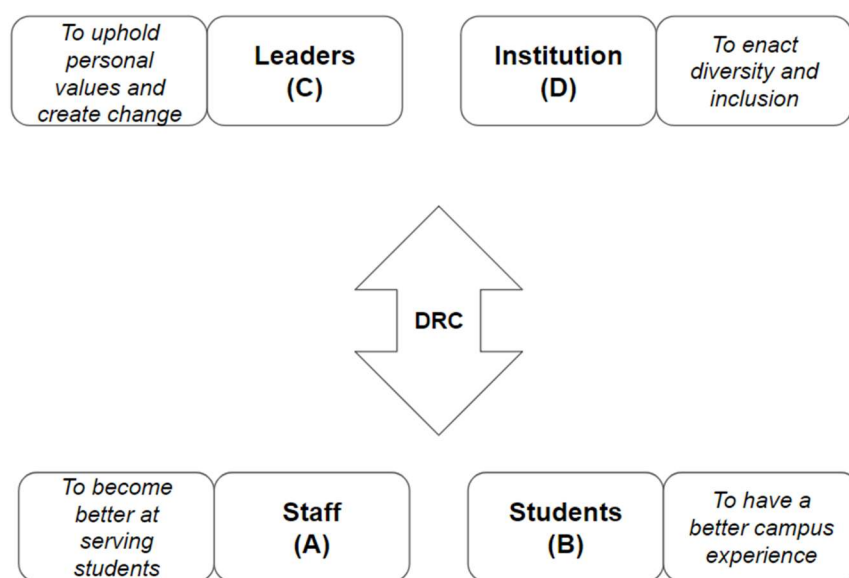


Figure 1. Stakeholder Interests.

Shifting Campus Climate: The Interests of Institutional Agents

As detailed in Chapter 4, the institutional agents comprising of faculty, staff, and students, spent several decades demanding equitable resources. Through the lens of interest convergence, the needs of oppressed groups are central to any change. The Coalition members

needed to understand the institutional impediments that students faced in order to understand how to achieve educational equity. Next, Coalition members created the Dreamers Ally Training and DREAM Empowerment Conference because they recognized that faculty and staff were lacking in their knowledge of undocumented students and could benefit from becoming better professional to serve their own students. Finally, Coalition members recognized that there needed to be buy-in from higher-level administration. At the same time the national dreamers movement took to the stage and its popularization validated the narratives of undocumented students at CSU.

Identifying Institutional Barriers

Institutional agents worked to establish a DRC by putting the needs of students first. The Coalition (comprising of faculty, staff, and students) strategized to understand the institutional barriers that students faced. One barrier they found was how CSU marginalized undocumented students by requiring a California identification card for general requests. They learned that students were facing issues with identification at different departments including checking out a laptop at the university library and picking up medicine at the health center.

Sarita elaborated on how they addressed this issue:

A student said to us, “There is a library check out program and you can check out laptops to use but you have to give them a driver’s license. We did not have one so we could not use that program.” So the administrators said that's not right. So I talked to the library, the librarians were embarrassed and horrified, and that it had not occurred to them that undocumented students could not use the service. They immediately changed their policy to just requiring a student ID and then that barrier was removed. – Sarita

Four participants discussed how the Coalition had to conduct multiple trainings to educate many departments including the police on how their practices were problematic. Cathy agreed that the issue of identification was problematic even in academic departments. For some majors, employers were requiring a form of ID for their internships. Cathy believed it was an academic

success issue. She stated that those on the Coalition wondered, if they did not have access to mandatory internships, “How are they supposed to complete their graduation requirements?” She mentioned that the Coalition found a solution by advocating to the department and employers about alternative identification practices.

Undocumented students in the STEM fields faced major barriers according to participants. Some STEM employers required extensive background checks because of hosts’ federal funding limitations. Because of these restrictions, undocumented students could not find paid work or internships. Pam explained that the Coalition had to find other forms of funding to support students’ internship aspirations.

It was the connections and resources that different departments were providing and the staff trainings that were taking place because of the awareness that was happening and how to better service AB-540 students and undocumented students. Even in regards to being able to complete an internship...especially for nursing majors. I remember the STEM majors had a tough time. In the coalition, another thing we accomplished was being able to provide students with a work-study stipend, or a stipend for them to work on campus. - Pam

Cathy elaborated on how those on the Coalition worked with financial aid to find a solution. They found an answer by providing alternative scholarships to undocumented students who were doing work experiences in their majors.

I don't know if it was called a stipend or a scholarship but they were provided the compensation. It rose to the level of conversations with the financial aid office, with admissions, with whomever it was that needed to talk about how we meet our state guidelines and rules, and this was by the book. It started on the ground level with staff going up to administrators saying these are the needs of AB-540 students, these are students who have just as much to give, how do we provide equity here? - Cathy

The Coalition members found that the most significant barriers occurred within financial aid and residency classifications. Pam elaborates on the difficulty in the process for undocumented students. Some students had trouble with finding the form and then filling out the form correctly. Those who did not fill out the form correctly were charged out-of-state fees,

which were almost double. Pam shared how the students let allies know that they “were being treated poorly and disrespected” by student affairs professionals when they approached the front desk at admissions. Because of these issues, the Coalition decided to conduct a training for the admissions staff to educate them about undocumented students’ negative experiences.

In the early stages of the Coalition and admission process of AB-540, the affidavit was a big thing that students had to complete and weren’t filling out correctly. I remember that training with admissions. It was a humongous training on creating awareness, on the student population, what’s the ins and outs of what they could provide when they are applying to CSU, and what can we ask from them. So really eliminating those barriers of their admission process was a big one. - Pam

One of the pressing issues at CSU was ensuring undocumented students qualify for AB-540. Interviewees shared how critical it was to gain support from colleagues and other allies. While some spoke positively about these cross campus connections, others mentioned the difficult work needed to educate colleagues around the issue. Thus, the committee used the tactic of writing a formal report to detail the key issues on campus and pair that with their recommendations. Through this strategy, the committee became the primary educators for professionals across campus. Building off an existing Dreamer Ally Training template that was led by IDEAS, the committee of staff and students implemented a new training and held multiple sessions.

Going Visible through Campus Wide Trainings

One goal of the Dreamers Ally Training was to arm faculty and staff with the knowledge to become better professionals to support undocumented students. Sarita shared how the Dreamer Ally Training was to meet the Coalition’s goal of creating an undocufriendly environment for students by empowering staff, faculty, and key allies to better support undocumented students. Thus, the Dreamers Ally Training was groundbreaking because it met

the interests of many campus professionals. The theme of how the training was beneficial for participants was apparent when Hazel shared the Coalition's philosophy behind the training:

Everybody needs to have those skills regardless of what your opinion is on immigration. You need to know who you're serving and your student population. – Hazel

One participant argued that the training to create safe space was meant to counter the "racist" attitudes prevalent amongst staff members who were unaware of the issue. Organizers believed that the training would be a primary tool to shift campus climate by shifting individual attitudes.

I think from the faculty side, they are not really trying to work with undocumented students and training tends to shift how you look at these students. Like I said, we have a lot racist attitudes...one of the influences [of the training] is that it forces people to be more tolerant at least out in the open. So, people watch what they say because you don't know who's a dreamer and who's not. - Sophia

Awareness was a main purpose for the training. Organizers felt that once staff members understood the issue, they would be less inclined to treat undocumented students unfairly.

The Dreamers Ally Trainings were an on-going effort on behalf of students, faculty, and staff who were invested in making change. Four participants who were involved in these trainings shared how the strategy played an important role in the movement in the early 2000s. Ultimately, the Coalition decided to create a larger, more visible event to educate a larger swath of the community. Talks of a larger conference began to shape during the late 2000s and early 2010s.

DREAM Empowerment Conference

The DREAM Empowerment Conference was a point of interest convergence for many stakeholders. Fall 2012 was a watershed moment for CSU as Coalition members organized one of the first conferences geared towards supporting AB-540 students in the system. According to participants, this was a major strategy making the issue more palpable to campus professionals. Miriam, the co-chairperson of the conference, remembers that there was about 600-700 attendees

and the many of the sessions were “standing room only.” The conference was touted as a way to help educate not only the campus community, but also outside community members about AB-540 and the undocumented student population. Yet the main purpose of the conference was “intended for college students, faculty, or staff members since many people are unaware that being an AB-540 or what an ‘undocumented student’ meant.” Miriam discussed that the efforts the Coalition put into the conference paid off because now the issue became more known across campus.

I would like to say it was apparent, it definitely showed the passion for those individuals that were involved. Putting a conference together was no easy task and I was lucky the team of individuals I got to collaborate with were all in this boat because we wanted to help our students. For us it was about bringing more awareness and how can we do that, even if it does take sleepless hours. My main focus was educating others and seeing that there are ways that an institution, a staff member, or faculty can help; how various individuals can partake and provide that advocacy to our students. - Miriam

According to one of the faculty allies, even though the conference was a “success,” it was only the start of gaining visible more institutionalized forms of support. Miriam discussed how the Dream Center was the next biggest strategy on the list and the Coalition was set on achieving that goal.

The task force met regularly, had developed certain objectives, to definitely meet those goals of us educating the community which entail putting together an ally training, and DREAM Empowerment Conference. After the conference, there were more initiatives and efforts to open the Dream Center. In one way or another, I wasn't able to get involved and there were other individuals who kind of started the foundation and framework and really being instrumental getting the DRC started here. - Miriam

Hazel, a staff ally, provided another perspective on the conference and how it elevated CSU's profile in the community. CSU was starting to build an outward reputation as a leader in the system to support undocumented students. Hazel also underscored how, even though institutional allies and those on the committee helped to organize the conference, the students provided the impetus to realize the conference:

I think CSU started to be a leader and all these sister campuses began to look at us especially when we had that successful DREAM Empowerment conference. I mean it was like standing room only and the fact that it was free, it was phenomenal. It's something that I will take to my grave, that we able to honor the students and also create a partnership with the students, it wasn't faculty and administration dictating because I think that's where the committee was very integral to make sure that the students' voices were heard. - Hazel

Finally, one staff spoke in depth about how the conference espoused a CSU culture supportive of undocumented students. This culture attracted Veronica to come to work at CSU. Veronica adds to how in the early 2000s, CSU started to build an external reputation for supporting undocumented students over the many years.

From the outside from a visibility standpoint, it seemed like the institution supported it and so from outside looking in I could see that there was some progress being made for undocumented students all in relative to my experience from [another institution]. - Veronica

After many years of work in shifting campus climate, one of the last items that the Coalition detailed in their recommendation report was creating a DRC. Leaders of the Coalition knew they needed buy-in from the institutional leaders to make it happen. Twelve of the fourteen of participants brought up how the changing of the university president was the on-campus political impetus for the DRC. Just before the time of the DREAM Empowerment Conference, both the Vice President of Student Affairs and the President of the university announced their retirement. All participants noted that the leadership transition galvanized a positive energy around campus to support undocumented students.

Validation through Political Alignment

Leaders on campus validated their support of undocumented students once the issue became nationally popular. Most participants pointed out that the movement at CSU was underground until about the early to mid-2000s. Sarita explains how CSU leaders took notice as the national and, especially, the state climate began to shift:

I would say that the tone in California, in the country, and in the higher ed community, people were really starting to pay attention to these group of students and they were becoming legitimized as a subpopulation. As an identity group, their experiences and issues were being brought forward through national organizations such as American College Personnel Administration (ACPA) and Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA). Things just converged to where they [the President and Vice President of Student Affairs] said we need to establish this center. - Sarita

Olivia mentions how President Obama's call for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was a turning point in this ideology shift. According to Olivia, the program popularized the issue by providing temporary reprieve to eligible undocumented immigrants. DACA provided a benefit that undocumented people, such as herself, could not have benefitted from.

I myself, a long time ago was a pre-dreamer when there wasn't a DREAM Act. So, we didn't talk about it. It wasn't something you said to anybody. I think society changed when California changed perspective about our dreamers and President Obama took executive action in creating DACA. A lot of us felt comfortable coming out and self-identifying and saying: "hey this is what we need." For us, a way to respond was to create a center. We felt that we had enough students on our campus that it warranted having someone to provide education around undocumented issues. - Olivia

Here, Olivia discussed how the undocumented student community was underground and DACA was the platform for many to go visible. Sophia agreed that undocumented students were less visible from the mid-1980s until about the AB-540 era (2001). In general, participants shared how as the students became more vocal, the more institutional barriers they combatted.

For many years, they went invisible. They went unnoticed and nobody shared. From the time I started in 1987 to the early 2000s, they were an invisible population. Some of them probably shared with just the professors they felt were open, who were the allies. As an institution, I don't think it was even brought up or addressed. It started becoming more and more to afford a college tuition, so many of the students began to meet with faculty and staff, and looking at what administration could do to support these students. I think it's changed because the students wanted the change. - Sophia

Hazel adds that students became inspired from other social movements around the country. The 2010 Ethnic Studies ban in Arizona created a national climate that was "just so

heated” that students at CSU felt compelled to “become more active.” At CSU, students became inspired and came out as undocumented and unafraid.

These external factors around the country coincided with CSU going through its own university presidential transition in the early 2010s. Eleven of the fourteen participants shared that the transition from the former university President to the new President, paired with the growing political consciousness of the students and allies, provided the impetus for change. Sarita explained that these two independent phenomena created a “window of opportunity” where the Center became a realistic goal.

Truly, what was part of it was the societal shift. For example if I was in [the previous university President’s] office in 2002 saying we should consider a center, they were not that interested in talking about that—partly because there wasn’t the societal consciousness that we need to do this. It’s fascinating to me how that just flipped around in 2012/2013. While we are re-organizing everything, I think there was an awareness that [CSU] was a little bit ahead of the curve, but to me that is [the university President]. They were willing to step out to every other CSU and say we are going to have a center.
- Sarita

The call to open a DRC had to be both top-down and bottom-up. Through the collective efforts of the students and the institutional actors, the campus climate could not be where it was.

Prior to AB-540, there wasn’t support. We had support in place for a lot of other populations but we didn’t even have the consciousness of that group as a subpopulation until the Coalition began, and the students came aboard and told their story. The change wasn’t that this group got something special; it’s that this group got what everybody else got. - Sarita

Mylene explains how much effort was invested to build political capital throughout the years.

Although it was the president who made the final call, the people had the political will to change CSU.

Building the political capital that these students need to ensure that services are provided, to connect with community organizations and policies that are needed to make these uncertainties go away. Bringing permanent reform to things like immigration reform, financial aid and building partnerships at the college level and that requires a lot of

political capital. I believe that only students and only support of faculty and staff are going to bring that. That's the way, historically, we have gotten things done. - Mylene

Because of the national climate shift paralleling the student advocacy, institutional allies took notice and formally organized around the issue.

Momentum to create a DRC developed by validating the campus movement through the national climate. This concept of "validation" served the interest of those in power because the idea of supporting undocumented students became politically viable. Thus, when the new President came on board, the environment was aligned for the creation of the DRC.

A New Chapter: The Interests of Institutional Leadership

Although the movement to support undocumented students took many years, it was through interest convergence between the university president and the Coalition that proved to be the final push. The outgoing university president identified as a person of color, and the incoming university president identified as a person of color as well *and* had roots in advocacy work around supporting students and communities of color. The incoming president displayed an individual interest to support undocumented students; yet, it is necessary to understand that in their role as university president, individuals ultimately represent the interests of the institution which is still couched in the white dominant power structure (Gillborn, 2013).

Leadership Change Opportunity

At CSU, many respondents agreed that the incoming university president entered an environment that was ripe for change. The president recognized that there was already momentum and they had the political acumen to capitalize on the momentum. A former administrator, Sarita, shared that the multiple factors of a) the federal climate, b) the work of institutional allies and students in the movement, and c) the leadership transition provided a prime opportunity for creating a DRC:

I think if we had tried to open a center ten years earlier, we would have got more pushback. I don't think enough people heard of the dreamers' stories because what I'm hearing as soon as people hear dreamers' stories and primarily that they were brought here as children, then they are like "oh yeah, they are like citizens." It took a while for our country to hear our story, but there was nice convergence there and the leadership took advantage of it in a positive way. - Sarita

A staffer also emphasized how the university was in the midst of a renewed energy when the new president arrived. The energy was channeled directly into opening the DRC; it was only a matter of time before it happened.

It was like this beautiful dance saying we are here to support you, and tell us what you need to be supported, and let's make it happen. I think if we had not received the new leadership that our campus received prior to [that year], I don't know if there would have been that energy to create the center in such a short amount of time. - Paul

Mylene remarked that once the push to open up the DRC came from the President, the entire university fell in line and "there wasn't a lot of struggle from that point on to get things in place."

The president arrived during a period of transition within CSU's Division of Student Affairs. With the coming of a new university President and Vice President of Student Affairs, the vision of this new administration was to create greater emphasis on high-impact practices through multi-ethnic and multicultural work. According to university documents, a new strategic plan incorporated goals to support underrepresented, low-income, minorities. As part of this plan, several initiatives were to be institutionalized including a Men of Color Initiative and a support center for undocumented/AB-540 students.

The multiple factors of the Coalition members' efforts, the new leadership, and the students culminated to a moment that was ripe to open the DRC. Veronica said that it was almost like the stars aligning when "the collective effort people pushing and the timeliness of newer generation and leadership coming in." Furthermore, both Sarita and Cathy, said that the political climate provided a background where it was a politically "easier" to create the DRC.

In California and in the country, people were really starting to pay attention to these group of students and they were becoming legitimized as a subpopulation, an identity group. Their experiences were being brought forward through [national] organizations such as ACPA and NASPA so things just kind of converged to where the president and vice president said we do need to establish this center. - Sarita

The next section will uncover the investment and interests of the president in opening a center. The narrative of the president sheds light on how interests converged in this particular moment to advance the interests of the community.

The President's Agenda

When the university president came to campus, they immediately opened up as an ally to undocumented students. Informants spoke about how it was a rare opportunity to have a university president have such a strong desire to support undocumented students. As an individual, the president was highly praised for their personal passion to support undocumented students. As a university leader, however, the president represents both their personal interest but most importantly the interests of CSU. Hazel provides an example of how institutional agents knew that the president had a personal investment to support undocumented students when she said:

They came from an underserved background so this was one of the populations they really cared about when they got here. Other institutions get outside donations and outside funding, but it means a lot when the president gives institutional resources to the Dream Center. The president came in and tasked the associate vice president with creating the center and the center was opened a year later. - Hazel

This quote shows how the president also represents institutional interests and how they enact the philosophy of the institution by providing tangible resources. Other participants believed that opening a center aligned the president's personal agenda with the institutional agenda for the positive messaging of supporting all students. Veronica discusses the opening the center as a powerful symbolism to other institutions of higher education in the region.

I know there is room to grow here [at CSU] since I came from a place where our leadership was not very clear about supporting undocumented students. I think seeing that type of leadership here at CSU makes a difference to students. - Veronica

Veronica points to the power of the president to shift the campus climate to be more undocufriendly. Twelve participants praised the leadership of the president in their commitment to support undocumented students and open a DRC. Four participants agreed that although this would be a win for the community, the opening was also a “win” for the president and the institution. Because the previous president had been in the role for such a long time, the incoming president strategized on signaling a new direction. The DRC was symbolic of that change.

The president’s goal was to create change at CSU. Mind you, it was stagnant during [the previous president’s] tenure. They wanted to create change because it’s part of their personality and I because it also makes them look good. If you read articles on that president, they’re about creating change, and I think the undocumented students felt a kinship with them. So the establishment of a center makes the president look good because it’s one of the first in the state and the CSU. It makes the students happy to have a place of their own and it attracts other students. - Sophia

Olivia agreed that the leadership and buy-in from the president was one of the most important factors in a series of strategic steps for creating the DRC. The president’s institutional agency and leadership contributed to a renewed energy around campus:

There was this need particularly around dreamers that perhaps that wasn’t the case before [during previous CSU administration] because they didn’t know where to go and they themselves reflected that it just didn’t seem as open and welcoming to them. This president said we need to do something, and that is to create a space for our dreamers, to feel a sense of belonging and have that opportunity to come together and educate our campus community on issues about dreamers. What made it very successful was that there was no pushback. Faculty and staff gathered around it and said what can we do to help? And we started a fund for scholarships for dreamers to pay for legal fees. It pointed right to the president’s leadership—they sold people on why it’s important and people knew intrinsically that it was important. In California, it is a little more out in the open that there are many folks that are undocumented. People were really open to it. - Olivia

This narrative shows how the university president displayed the political will in convincing other leaders about the necessity of a center. As noted in Chapter 3, the CSU system espouses values to support first-generation students of color, and an investment in supporting undocumented students seemed in line with this vision.

Janice recalled a moment when the president's personal passion was visibly apparent when they went up and shared a community message during the opening of the DRC. They recalled how the president was so overjoyed about the moment that it visibly showed on their face when giving a speech. This emphasized the how high-level allies can be deeply invested in the issue.

I remember the president getting up to speak and couldn't have been more than two feet from the first row of people because it was that packed. The president was shaking. I leaned over and I said I've never seen them so nervous. They said they weren't nervous, they were so deeply moved at the symbolism of this space that the emotion came through. It was so overwhelming. It was so clear to me the difference leadership makes. - Janice

Participants recalled how the president took a leading effort in the movement and was a shining example of the undocufriendly leadership and values. A couple participants suggested the president's investment sent ripples and made CSU become one of the leading figures in supporting undocumented students in the country.

The university president proved to be one of the central allies for undocumented students at CSU. Participants emphasized the critical role the president played in pushing the advocacy forward. At the same time, many participants shared how the movement of the students and the Coalition was equally as important and the president was able to capitalize on that foundation. Ultimately, the students benefitted from the work of IDEAS, the AB-540 Coalition, and administration. This section highlighted the critical role that the university president plays in supporting "undocufriendly" initiatives. The next section will detail the role of the DRC in

expanding high-impact practices and furthering the development of institutional mission to support undocumented students.

Organizational Change: The Interests of the Institution

I have spoken or written about the CSU's and my personal commitment to inclusive excellence, underscoring its traditional values, especially the tenets of engaging and welcoming a rich diversity of people, voices, and ideas. – CSU Chancellor

This final section covers how the DRC at CSU influences the institution to be more “undocufriendly” and how this converges with and expands the CSU mission for diversity and success as explained by the CSU Chancellor through the above statement. With an emphasis on first-generation, students of color, the University advances its mission through supporting undocumented students, and undocumented students certainly benefit from the myriad of services provided by the DRC. This new student affairs practice has bred innovation and expanded previous methods of supporting marginalized students.

DRC as a Tool for Retention

The DRC provided structural change through its various practices to retain students. In 2018, CSU developed a list of high-impact practices that drive both academic and student affairs practice. According to the CSU website, “high-impact practices” are defined as the transformational learning opportunities inside and outside of the classroom that provide:

- Performance expectations at appropriately high levels
- Significant student engagement by investment of time and effort
- Meaningful and substantive learning interactions with faculty, staff, students, or external entities
- Experiences with diversity, complexity, and change
- Frequent and meaningful feedback
- Reflective and integrated learning
- Experiential learning

These high-impact practices provide the opportunities for students to navigate the university while also addressing their specific needs such as providing referrals to campus

mental health services, direct access to legal consultation, and financial aid support. The staff in the center play a crucial role in assessing student need and referring students to appropriate resources across campus:

If student success work is about removing barriers and uncovering encouragers and trying to promote more on the part of faculty and staff, as far as I can see, that's what the DRC is about. I know [the DRC staff] very well. They are action oriented people, so if a student or a group of students comes in and says this is happening to us and it's not positive, they are going to investigate to try and remove that barrier. Or in their work with students spot encouragers, they are going to find a way to support those encouragers. - Sarita

More than half of the respondents pointed to how the DRC not only houses many resources and is the home base for advocacy efforts, but it is also the first reference point for many. The referral aspect of the DRC was a recurring theme throughout this study as participants shared how the DRC is a hub for a wide array of networks across campus. In this way, the DRC and its staff connect campus retention resources. Cathy shared how students can potentially connect with “multiple departments” such financial aid, admissions, and even meet with a graduate mentor for academic assistance. This type of referral system as described by Cathy becomes a critical piece of retention at CSU. The next section builds upon the idea of the types of practices used by the DRC and how this is framed within CSU’s model of creating high-impact practices.

One of the key services provided in the DRC are mental health referrals. As noted in Chapter 2, undocumented students experience symptoms of poor mental health due to constant surveillance. Participants attest to how these services support retention since students may be on the verge of dropping out of school due to these impediments. Heather elaborates how many students were on the verge of dropping out due to “emotional, psychological, financial issues, trauma” and how the DRC prevented several students from dropping out because of these

meaningful “connections.” Mental health services is a highly demanded referral service within the DRC.

Legal services. One of the barriers that undocumented students overcome is being able to navigate federal and educational benefits provided by the federal DACA, California AB-540, and the California Dream Act programs. Paul, a student affairs professional, considers the high-impact practices of the DRC unique because they are so closely linked to policy at the federal and state levels. This makes the work much more nuanced than any other type of practice on campus.

The DRC was different in that we are constantly pivoting our services based on federal law and what’s happening at the federal level. The DRC is not only about helping our undocumented students identify their identity and feel empowered by it, it’s also about providing very essential needs that must be met in order for them to be successful. - Paul

Paul continued to elaborate on the notion that identity work is not as central as providing legal services to help navigate the liminal state.

Our students know what it means to be undocumented and they’ve been living it all their lives. It’s the challenges and barriers they see every day and are imposed on them by the law. And it’s not so much people’s perceptions about them but things that they face because of congress’s inability to pass comprehensive immigration reform. And so we do our best in providing our students with resources related to financial aid, related to their need to know their rights and also defend their rights and I think we have an administration right now that doesn’t care too much about people knowing their rights. - Paul

Paul argues that the practices within the DRC focus on addressing students’ needs rather than focusing internally on identity and consciousness development. While these services certainly provide support for the most immediate needs, there is an opportunity here to cultivate a greater understanding of systemic issues and interweave a fostering of the ethnic and undocumented identity within the legal services component.

Cathy provided context to how the AB-540 Coalition proposed to include DRC's legal services within the menu of high-impact practices. When the allies came together to plan the functions of the DRC, Cathy said that the committee included the processing and access to the AB-540 law for undocumented students in order to classify as California residents for tuition purposes. One of the recommendations from the committee was to "develop a defined process for AB-540 students to access and complete their required AB 540 affidavit. Establish an appeal process for students who are denied AB-540 status." According to the CSU website (California State University, 2017c), universities in the system collaborate with local organizations to provide legal services, which is a different model from the UC who provides internal and centralized legal services through the extended UC Immigrant Legal Services (UC Davis, 2017). While the CSU model of providing services with external partners is generally positive, this model nonetheless diverts responsibility from the institution to provide legal resources to undocumented students. Still, Cathy spoke highly of the impact of the legal services at the CSU campus since they are not typically accessible to undocumented students:

One huge thing that we talked a lot about on the planning committee was providing appropriate professional legal advice, like we need an immigration clinic, [they] made that happen so that students can get one-on-one consultation with a good licensed immigration attorney. We didn't have that, we got it, so that was huge. Cathy

Providing legal services was one of the core high-impact practices provided by the DRC. Moreover, according to participants, this is what made the DRC unique compared to any other centers on campus. After a thorough analysis of the websites of all the cultural and service centers at CSU, the DRC was the only one that provided legal services as part of their high-impact practices.

Financial aid. At CSU, access to equitable finances is a major barrier to academic success for undocumented students. As cited in Chapter 2, most students who attend CSU are of

low-income, and undocumented students are certainly impacted by the inability to afford college. In addition to providing legal services, most respondents agreed that offering financial services was another critical high-impact practice that leads to retaining students. Paul shared how, in addition to legal services, the DRC also becomes a place where students can address financial aid concerns. This type of service is different from those in the cultural centers who do not necessarily support students through the high-impact practice of financial aid counseling.

When we have a [U.S. citizen] black student who did not get financial aid or is having challenges with getting financial aid, they are probably going to go to the financial aid office, when we have an undocumented student who is having challenges with financial aid, they often come here [to the DRC] first. - Paul

Paul alludes to how students do not feel comfortable in going to the financial aid office, conversely trust the staff at the DRC, and feel comfortable coming into the space. Veronica sheds light on how financial issues for undocumented students become compounded because they must not only support themselves but also support their family members: “The financial aspect is relevant for to students. They have to provide, so the financial aspect impacts not just them, but their families too.”

The undocumented student community’s need for financial aid is closely tied to the previous sub-theme of accessing federal benefits and understanding federal and state law. Another campus ally, Caleb, suggested that “the ability to pay for school...is impacted by students’ eligibility for the California Dream Act or if they don’t qualify for DACA.” These two high-impact practices of addressing legal need and financial aid can be two independent services that can be offered but oftentimes are intertwined in more complicated ways than it seems.

Safe space. Respondents spoke to the physical space of the DRC as a high-impact practice on its own since the center is a refuge from the national and campus climate. Safe space is a physical location designed to be free of anti-immigrant rhetoric and filled with affirming and

pro-immigrant culture where undocumented students can be themselves without intended recourse due to status. Due to the closeted nature of undocumented identity, the DRC serves as a safe space on campus where students can feel comfortably out with their identities. Critical Race Theorists (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004) assert that critical “counter-spaces” are beneficial for students to feel connected to their larger campuses. Seven out of fourteen participants pointed to how the federal and campus environment as a whole was not undocufriendly. Heather says that their students “were under attack” and they believed that the DRC was as a response to the threats experienced by students. Many agreed that the situation was exacerbated with the election of President Trump in 2016 as exemplified when Veronica said that “when Trump got elected, the students were thankful for the DRC and that they could come here [the DRC], and for some it was new place for them to go...and have certain dialogue.” Even a staff ally knew that undocumented students did not feel safe on campus and understood why undocumented students frequented the DRC.

One of the things that stood out to me about the student population is that often times, they just felt like they didn't fit anywhere, some, not all. So definitely creating a safe space that we can provide and meets their needs and network with each other, it makes more ease with them in disclosing their status with someone else that has gone through the same. - Miriam

According to several interviewees, the safe space was not the only aspect that attracted students, but it was also the community aspect that keeps them involved. Pam, a former student turned staff, elaborated on this sentiment:

Having the DRC was having a space that students could go to and meet other undocumented students and dreamers that could relate to and not feel like they have to explain themselves on how it feels to be an AB540 student. So being able to go to a space with somebody and create more access for them. - Pam

May, a former administrator, shared how the space was not only beneficial to students, but also to professional allies who frequented DRC events to support students. She added that

students felt like the DRC brought comfort to students because they knew that they could find professional allies who “they can talk to about the help that they need.” This co-mingling between fellow students, staff and faculty allies who cared about the students provided a friendly and safe environment for undocumented students at CSU. These staff and faculty relationships with students is an example of a high-impact practice that contributes to the overall success of undocumented students.

A theme covered in this section was the high-impact practice of the DRC and how these practices contribute to new/improved interventions in student affairs. According to participants, the DRC was part of a larger movement supporting undocumented students and must be considered within the greater history of the movement at CSU. The next section covers how the DRC serves as a symbol for the undocufriendliness of the campus and meets institutional goals.

External Utility of DRC

This section focuses on the DRC’s utility as a symbol that serves the interests of the institution. The DRC at CSU was both a product of and the means for greater organizational change. Some argue that the DRC plays a symbolic role within the institution to those within and to those outside the community as it challenges traditional notions of diversity.

When discussing the larger role of the DRC, it is important to unpack the operational philosophies that drive high-impact practices at CSU. One of the core philosophies at CSU is to “Go Further.” This was one of the themes that cut across all the participants’ responses. In this sense, the president tied in the philosophy of the institution with the opening of the DRC and claims that all students should “Go Further” at CSU. By including undocumented students in this framework, the president and the institution espouses support for all students regardless of background or circumstance.

I was very keen that my president at the time was highly inspirational. When the president says, “go further,” they are not joking. So I wanted to meet up to the president’s standard and when I found out we could potentially be one of the first in the CSU...I knew if I could deliver this in a way that could give the president that distinction, they wouldn’t shy away from that. The president would grab a hold of that because they were unapologetic about supporting students and I have to tell you, to a point where I have never seen any other president. We would be one of the first in the CSU, which was a demonstration of the inclusive values of this administration and institution. - Janice

Administrator, Janice elaborates by saying how the President backed up their philosophy of “going further” by taking action of creating a plan and supporting that plan with funding.

So [the President] showed up, so I didn’t really know what their platform was going to be. What I did hear immediately was, everyone on this campus is an educator, we will allot our resources to reflect that and every student on this campus deserves to be supported. So when you hear those values and shortly thereafter you hear things around supporting multi-ethnic centers because they are important spaces for belonging, and then the budget starts to come to you—and you have six new positions and one-time money to open a center you’re like—that makes sense. - Janice

To Janice, it was key to show that the investment in supporting undocumented students was not just an idea but also there were tangible resources allocated to the population. Participants shared that the DRC was being framed as a symbol to exemplify the overall mission of the University.

Recruitment. The DRC was a symbolic tool that achieved the goal of recruitment. Participants mentioned how the DRC was being used as a vehicle for recruitment and as an example to let students know how CSU supports *all* students. Sarita recognized that the work of the students and the committee was powerful; however, the DRC as a physical space shifted the narrative across the university.

Some of it is the fact that it exists, AB-540 was a game changer, the creation of the Coalition and committee was a game changer but certainly opening of the center was very symbolic to undocumented students and community. - Sarita

Hazel adds, “There’s just something very symbolic when there’s a dream center and when the work in that center is geared towards undocumented students.” Through these two narratives, the

role of the DRC on the campus community is much larger than just the services and programs housed within it.

As the prominence of the DRC expanded its role to serve the outside community.

Another key element in being one of the first DRC's to open in the country was the additional expectation to be a role model to other institutions and communities attempting to serve undocumented immigrants.

I think it has helped the campus become a shining light in the community as a resource advocacy tool for the undocumented community and brought a lot of pride to the campus. I think because of the convergence of the readiness of the organization and building up the capacity to open a center, along with what happened with our society, where people were ready to provide that level support...I think it's brought the campus positive branding. People in the country see CSU as a leader in serving undocumented students and many more centers have opened since that center opened. It's still seen as a model. - Sarita

The DRC has a central role in serving undocumented students at CSU. Yet, through the decade's long advocacy and the on-going conversations tied into the DRC, participants shared how the DRC has influenced the university to think beyond its original mission of academic "success."

In addition to playing a symbolic role within the institution, the DRC also plays a role in shifting the way diversity and inclusion is enacted. Participants shared that the movement and the DRC inspired institutional leaders to expand their concepts of diversity and how students are supported at the institution. The university has shifted from considering numerical diversity towards a more holistic framework of student empowerment.

DRC creates a sense of belonging. A common thread shared across most of the participants was how the DRC plays a role in reshaping student success to include social and political involvement as a means to creating a sense of belonging at CSU. Hazel and Paul agreed that families and local communities also benefit from the existence of the DRC. Staff and allies operated under the philosophy that if a student is empowered, then they are better equipped to, in

turn, empower their families and the communities they come from. Paul said that students advance the mission of the university as they bring this “knowledge out” into the world. Hazel agreed on this point when he stated:

By getting info out, empowering the students, their parents; you’re educating a whole system. You take on that student, you take on the whole family. - Hazel

Caleb adds how the DRC and its staff have a cumulative empowering effect as it supports generations of students. As outlined in Chapter 2, Astin (1999) argues that the more students are involved on their campuses, the more networks they create. Thus, the DRC being a physical space where students can build community, they are ultimately more likely to succeed in the classroom.

Community aspect plays a huge part since it builds a network. Getting these new transfer students connected with the center gets them into our departments. There are studies out there that show that when students are not only academically involved but also socially involved through student orgs, they tend to succeed. The social impact is just as important as attending a DACA informational workshop. - Caleb

Finally, one of the more tangible aspects of the DRC was that it created a visible location for allies to build their own sense of belonging along with students. Although these types of partnerships occurred before, the DRC makes these connections much more accessible. Faculty and staff members can take the initiative and visit the space or attend a number of programs happening in the space. Once a staff member reflects on their own immigration trajectory, they become more invested in supporting undocumented students. Caleb provided an example of how he found his own sense of belonging within the movement to support undocumented students:

The center reminds us of many of our own experiences of immigration. Thinking back to the foundations of this country and why it was created in the first place, it reminds us of where our country is in terms of immigration and the work that needs to be done. But overall, there is a message of hope, that we as different centers, specifically the DRC is where most of our students might call a home away from home. A sense of belonging is built and that is important to us as human beings. - Caleb

As Chapter 4 focused directly on the types of services provided by the DRC, this chapter explored how the DRC enacts institutional commitment through empowering members of the campus. The DRC in essence does not just provide a space for undocumented students; it is an empowering space in its own right. Another sub-theme that emerged through participant interviews was how the DRC redefines “diversity” at CSU. The CSU and CSU specifically espouse a mission to support the diverse population on their campus. Thus, supporting undocumented students certainly contributes to this mission and expands the criteria of “diversity.”

Challenging notions of institutional diversity. Centering undocumented students benefits both the students and the institution. Similar to other programs, such as the Veteran’s Resource Center, the founding of the DRC signifies an institutionalization, not only of the practice of supporting students but also the ideology to support undocumented students. Janice shared that the DRC “normalized” the conversation for the entire campus community and welcome those who do not identify as undocumented (allies) into the fray: “providing space for people who know nothing about that community to feel welcomed there and go to a workshop.” Cathy agreed that the diversity work at CSU engages the campus community to think more deeply about what “diversity” means. Caleb added how the institution needed to go beyond older definitions of diversity that only consider “skin color but not necessarily the experiences.”

Participants explained how diversity work at CSU is not just about recognizing race/ethnicity but also the systemic oppression such as racism or classism. In this vein, Cathy argues that intersectionality takes “us beyond the surface level” to understand the dynamics of how the power structure can oppress undocumented students. Cathy says that for undocumented students, this oppression manifests in ways in which policies and practices exclude students:

I want to acknowledge that race is as an institutional oppression that exists across the board. The level of oppression because of legal status that affects this community is the distinguishing factor. You can still submit a FAFSA if you identify as a LGBT, you have access to legal benefits. There is that buzzword for many years, “intersection,” so you can be part of the DRC and these other communities and that just adds to the intensity of the oppression. These students experience many things and on top of that, they are told they are aliens, illegal, and they don't belong. They are demonized in a way that is very different from other groups. - Cathy

Caleb echoed this sentiment and elaborated how the work is not just about diversity, but also it is about “inclusion and empowerment.” A university can be diverse numerically, but it does not mean that its students “feel included.” Both Janice and Caleb explain that at CSU, the DRC ensures that students are present and feel included.

We call it D and I work, its diversity and inclusion work. I think it’s an important part of the value of the institution because diversity often can be just sort of stripped down to a construct of number and demographics. - Janice

When you have administrators checking in on you, when that’s coming from higher up, that’s impactful because they are not just making a diversity statement, they acknowledge diversity and inclusion. They are actually putting words into action. - Caleb

As shared by several participants, the DRC operationalizes diversity at CSU by empowering students. As covered in this chapter, the institution has invested in “true” diversity by investing resources in the center, changing its high-impact practices, and enacting public value statements that support undocumented students. These changes from the policies and practices to the operating philosophy of the institution transformed CSU as a more undocufriendly campus. The DRC and the movement played a crucial role in this institutional transformation.

Conclusion

I think the existence of the center and the work of those in the center has sent a message to the institution both CSU and the CSU system that undocumented students are our responsibility and they are a part of who we serve. Sometimes, faculty and staff may question why we are doing this. I always say if your campus has admitted a student who is undocumented, they are your student and they are your responsibility to make sure they are successful. - Sarita

A participant, Sarita, emphasized how the DRC has external utility through institutional messaging of its commitment to supporting undocumented students. Institutional allies, institutional leaders, and students alike have a stake in this purpose. The founding of the DRC was a form of true institutional transformation, which galvanized students, campus professionals, institutional leaders, and the CSU as a whole.

Campus allies shared how the federal climate for undocumented immigrants inspired a change on campus. CSU professionals needed to fully comprehend the federal immigrant justice discourse before understanding the importance of opening a DRC on campus. The DRC at CSU is a product of institutional agents' advocacy since the 1980's. Furthermore, participants understood how its institutional culture and leaders who invested in its existence also shape the DRC. Ultimately, the students played a central role in shaping the center and its philosophy to support undocumented students.

The last theme covered in this chapter is the utilization of the DRC as both a retention and outreach tool. The DRC challenges previous surface level notions of "diversity" and extends the University mission to *include* and *empower* undocumented students. The DRC institutionalizes or "normalizes" conversations to support undocumented students, as they become active members of the university. This framing supports undocumented students both on-campus and those off-campus. Ultimately, undocumented students who are more empowered and socially/politically conscious benefit their families and in their own communities.

The final chapter concludes this research project with an overview on the meaning behind data presented in the final two chapters. With interest convergence as a key theme within the creation of the DRC, Chapter 6 details the role of institutions in creating large-scale change that challenges existing power structures. This change can happen through a call for comprehensive

immigration reform and policies for educational equity. With the liminal state of undocumented students within the national, state, and educational systems, DRCs have a fundamental role in providing safe spaces and pushing institutions to be supportive of undocumented students without the danger of co-optation through interest convergence. Next, the role of DRC is analyzed concerning the tension of providing basic needs support versus leadership advocacy. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes with implications for research, policy, and practice for those wanting to build upon this research in creative and innovative ways.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how a Dream Resource Center (DRC) plays a role in operationalizing a higher education institution's mission to support undocumented students. This project demonstrated the importance of a collaborative movement to create the DRC and the role of institutional agents in calling for equity for undocumented students. Ultimately, this project shows how equity (in the form of a DRC) was ultimately advanced through interest convergence. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What factors led to the creation of the Dream Resource Center?
2. What Dream Resource Center programs, policies, practices, and structures meet the needs of undocumented students?
3. What role does the Dream Resource Center play in enacting institutional commitment to undocumented students?

I began this study in Chapter 1 with an overview of the problem around the marginalization of undocumented students within education. In Chapter 2, I discussed the key literature that frames this study. In Chapter 3, I described the qualitative design I utilized in order to understand the role of the DRC at CSU. Chapter 4 illustrated the lives of institutional agents as they collaborated to advance educational equity for undocumented students. In Chapter 5, I outlined how the DRC was created through interest convergence. The purpose here was not to critique individuals but rather to highlight an exemplar of Critical Race Theory and how systems of race/racism and citizenship transpire within institutions of higher education.

In this chapter, the core concept of educational equity for undocumented students is highlighted in the first section of this chapter. Next, I situate the study's findings reported in Chapter 5 within the context of scholarship, examining its contribution to literature. Then, this

chapter discusses implications for further research, policy, and practices that can contribute to DRCs in higher education. Finally, this chapter details recommendations for student affairs professionals who support undocumented students.

Advancing Educational Equity for Undocumented Students

DRCs advance educational equity for undocumented students. Critical Race Theory frames how the everyday lived experiences of students of color and undocumented students are influenced by larger systems of race and racism. Bell (1980) argues that educational equity can be achieved if policies and practices seek to address racial and systemic inequities. For this study, I define educational equity as the higher educational practices and resources sought to address the unique systemic barriers faced by undocumented students. At CSU, Institutional agents and students worked to educate the campus community about these unique needs and advocated for resources to meet these needs. By demonstrating how the DRC was achieved through interest convergence, I place the findings into three niches of literature: (a) interest convergence and interest divergence, (b) the role of institutional agents, and (c) the role of higher education in advancing educational equity.

Data from this research corroborated previous scholarship (Heckenberg, 2016; Sanchez & So, 2015) that the higher education practices (financial aid, admissions, counseling, mental health) were uniquely modified to support the particular needs of undocumented students. The research provided here offers examples of how the DRC became a new form of intervention to support undocumented students as it consolidates many types of services geared towards these basic academic needs.

This study also reaffirms that DRCs share some similarities with cultural centers because they provide a safe space for undocumented students amidst a negative campus climate. Further,

educational and social justice programs are part of the menu of services. These programs address racial and systemic inequities. Therefore, the services provided by the DRC address the personal barriers faced by undocumented students through academic counseling, referrals to mental health services, and direct legal support through off-campus partners; at the same time, DRCs counter racial injustices experienced by undocumented students through immigrant justice education and space for student advocacy both at the institutional and civic levels.

However, what separates the multi-faceted DRC from other centers are (a) the reaction and tie to the ever-changing landscape of federal policy and (b) the primacy of service-based needs instead of solely identity and social justice education. Although other centers do provide basic needs and information on benefits that students can utilize, the DRC and its staff must be constantly up to speed with federal policy. Social justice and identity formation is certainly part of the role of the DRC, yet addressing basic needs is the DRC's primary service. In this manner, DRCs function more similarly to EOP or Veterans Resource Centers because they provide direct social services. The three main takeaways from this study are as follows: (a) the DRC was part of a larger movement to support undocumented students, (b) institutional agents are central to advancing equity for undocumented students, and (c) the DRC was created through interest convergence.

DRC as Part of a Larger Movement

One surprising finding that emerged was the idea that the DRC was considered a small part of a larger campus movement to support undocumented students that existed since the 1980s. This finding aligns with the first research question about the founding of the DRC. This campus movement was connected to off-campus social movements for immigrant justice and comprehensive immigration reform. In this vein, the DRC was a vehicle that strengthened

campus partnerships to support undocumented students and politicized students towards the ultimate goal of activism. One of the study participants discussed how the ultimate role of the DRC was to connect to this broader framework of immigrant justice through activism when they stated,

Ideally, the center should be political hubs of activism. It should have insurgent activities that insure political activism. I want to see the building of political capital that students need to ensure that services are provided. I want to see students connect with community organizations and call for policies that needed to make these uncertainties go away, to bringing permanent immigration reform. - Mylene

Around the concept of politicizing students, several informants mentioned how the DRC also politicizes professional allies on campus as well as they must continually stay up to date regarding the dynamic federal immigration policies. Cathy echoes this point when she says,

It provokes all of us to stay abreast of national policies. We have to pay attention to the national stage. We have to pay attention to the dialogue or the monologue. Otherwise, we are just pretending everything is okay. We can't just say we opened the center and everything is okay. It's not. This is just the beginning. – Cathy

Cathy makes a point that the larger campus movement must continue in order to provide even more resources for undocumented students on campus and be a conduit for community advocacy.

Calderon (2011) theorizes how pedagogical tools in the classroom help to instill concepts of democracy and build the skills of civic participation to build a better democracy. Furthermore, Banks (2017) built on the notion that education has a role in developing transformative citizens who advocate for social justice and human rights. Banks does not use the term “citizen” on a literal sense but rather in the context of an individual taking action to counteract systems of oppression. While the work of the DRC is a co-curricular space, the DRC provides critical skills that empower undocumented students to become change makers in their own rights.

This study's findings concerning the role of higher education substantiates previous research that universities can be highly responsive to local and national social issues. Burton's (1998) research concerning the purpose of higher education underscores how "entrepreneurial institutions" take a dynamic approach to the external environment and embrace an ethos of change. Combined with scholarship by Marine (2011) and Sanlo (Sanlo et al., 2002) who studied how the queer rights movement spawned LGBT centers, institutions of higher education are sites that incorporate the discourse of social movements. Institutions of higher education are not monolithic and sub-cultures and communities of people within the institution can be supportive of undocumented students even if the university at large has yet to adopt the framework, as in the case of the Leticia A. Network.

DRCs are only a small part of the larger movement for immigrant justice that has been in existence for generations. Therefore, institutions of higher education have a key role to play with regards to navigating the systemic liminal and carceral state for undocumented immigrants. With the unclear policy at the federal and state levels, institutions of higher education and DRC's will need to address the impact of these policies in order to provide environments that foster undocumented student success. Furthermore, the carceral state of detention and deportation is a mechanism that can be destructive to the psyche and overall success of undocumented students. Institutions of higher education can play a role in not only providing "sanctuary" from these systems of oppression but play an active role in deconstructing these systems all together. These three main takeaways as they relate to the literature undergird the ensuing implications and recommendation sections.

Institutional Agents Advance Equity for Undocumented Students

Institutional agents have a key role in ensuring educational equity for undocumented students. Aligning with the second research question (what Dream Resource Center programs, policies, practices, and structures meet the needs of undocumented students), the policies and practices supporting undocumented students at CSU are couched within an educational equity framework. Previous literature highlights the role of institutional agents to create systemic change in higher education (Chen, 2013) and the role of agents to empower campus professionals to better support undocumented students (Nienhusser & Espino, 2017). Concerning the DRC, institutional agents were key in navigating the political environment within higher education to improve the experience of undocumented students.

Bolman and Deal (2008) posit how organizations can function like political battlegrounds with many stakeholders at play. This environment consists of key leaders who have the power to allocate resources. Participants shared how institutional agents developed key strategies and political capital to bring greater attention and resources to undocumented students at CSU. This study shows how institutional agents ensured students were at the core of their movement.

Outside of advocating for macro level changes at the institution, institutional allies can play an essential role in creating undocufriendly climates within their own spheres of professional influence. Nienhusser & Espino (2017) researched how undocumented/DACAmented status competency (UDSC) can create a positive campus climate supportive of undocumented students. Dreamers Ally Training is a form of UDSC. As campus professionals learn about undocumented students, they can better advocate for the welfare of undocumented students on their campuses.

The findings in my study confirm how undocumented students have difficulty navigating a liminal political state within an educational institution. Undocumented students navigate a political landscape where institutions of higher education may be ambivalent or sometimes hostile to undocumented students. Scholarship highlights how institutional practitioners can even be inconsistent in their interpretations and knowledge of state laws that benefit undocumented students. Consequently, DRCs and front-line staff members play a central role in clarifying existing policies for students and providing necessary resources that enable students to succeed at the university (Wang, 2018). While undocumented students confront barriers due to their status, universities have an espoused goal to support all students regardless of status and provide equitable resources to students.

DRC Was Created Through Interest Convergence

Relating to the third research question about the DRC enacting institutional commitment, a major finding in this study was that the DRC was an investment for institutional transformation. While the DRC was created through the interest convergence of the people and the institution to support undocumented students, interest divergence frames how the DRC may contradict the long-term interests of those involved. The findings in Chapter 5 uphold the notion that race and racism plays an integral role in the context of the DRC. Study participants discussed how undocumented students are marginalized in their educational experience at CSU. This data corroborates previous literature that undocumented students face institutional barriers to their academic success and personal welfare (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Although progress to support undocumented students was achieved through interest convergence, a danger is present when the needs of those oppressed can only be achieved by also serving the interests of white dominant society. This poses a tension between equity for oppressed groups

(undocumented students and allies) and the interests of the oppressor (educational institutions). This tension between competing interests can manifest through co-optation of the movement for undocumented students. In other words, the interests of the institution can overtake the needs of undocumented students.

Interest divergence can also manifest in the compartmentalization of the DRC. Although one of the benefits of creating a DRC is to consolidate services, there becomes a danger that these services compartmentalize the needs for undocumented students. This study highlights that the barriers faced by undocumented students can be addressed through basic needs (short-term) and a call for immigration reform at both the state and federal levels (long-term). Participants in this study highlighted the importance of providing basic needs services to undocumented students. However, these types of services are only a reaction to the institutional and systemic impediments that face undocumented communities. For example, mental health referrals address the negative psychosocial impacts of the oppressive systems of a liminal and carceral state for undocumented communities. Yet true equity would dismantle the oppressive systems causing the psychosocial impacts.

This study aligns with previous literature about the varying needs of undocumented students and the role of undocumented student programs and institutional allies to meet these needs. In contrast to Bell's discussion of *Brown v. Board* as interest convergence, scholars (Gillborn, 2013; Guinier, 2004) detailed how the *Brown v. Board* decision and other seemingly progressive reforms was a matter of interest divergence because they go against the long-term interests of the black community. *Brown v. Board* provided a vehicle for dominant whites to espouse racial equity, keeping the power in the oppressor's hands. In the context of the DRC, the short-term interests (basic needs) must be met in tandem with the long-term interests (student

empowerment and comprehensive immigration reform) in order to counter interest divergence. Institutional allies must be ever knowledgeable about the multifaceted institutional and societal barriers undocumented students face. Through interest convergence, only piecemeal concessions are created, barely moving the needle toward racial equity. Therefore, institutions have a central role in ensuring the equity agenda is achieved without compromise.

Implications for Research

This study has implications for further research to deepen the understanding of how institutional allies create undocufriendly campus climates. One surprising finding was that there was a group of individuals who were initially committed to supporting undocumented students before the modern campus movement began. The Leticia A. Network laid the foundation for much of the cross campus connections discussed in this study. Research on this precursor group would provide insight on the initial institutional barriers that these individuals had to navigate that led to the modern movement. Additionally, much can be learned with how current institutional agents developed undocumented/DACA student competency through the Dreamers Ally Training program. The purpose of these trainings is to not only create the faculty/staff awareness but also develop their advocacy to achieve the long-term goal of an undocufriendly campus climate or culture. Similar to the LGBTQ Safe-Zone Trainings, future research studies can create measurements to assess the impact of trainings on the development of campus allies. This proposed research on Dreamers Ally Training would help to illuminate how specific mechanisms could shift campus climate through institutional agents' advocacy, through the work of the DRC, and through campus-wide trainings.

A salient finding in this study was how interest convergence played a role in the creation of the DRC. One of the roles of the DRC is to further the institutional mission of student success

through retention and graduation rates. The DRC seeks to achieve this mission through its programs and thus a study on the program effectiveness would be beneficial in understanding the direct correlation between the DRC and student success. This study showed that the federal and campus climate could shift at any given moment; therefore, a longitudinal study can better illuminate how these programs support students throughout these changes. Longitudinal studies can provide an understanding of not only the types of DRC high-impact practices such as legal services, counseling, and other developing practices, but learn how these practices correlate to student success. Metrics for academic success can include GPA and graduation rate and an analysis across groups of students, particularly by examining the impacts of larger societal barriers including the current political climate of the Trump Administration. This can inform current studies on the mental health and wellness of undocumented students (Sudhinaraset et al., 2017) as well.

The short-term needs of undocumented students themselves were met through interest convergence. Informants spoke to the role of DRCs to empower individual students to achieve long-term goals of immigrant justice. Connecting to the notion that higher education is a space for politicization, longitudinal data can illuminate how undocumented students become politicized through the DRC. Additionally, longitudinal data can show how undocumented students themselves can act as agents of change not only within their institution but also in their own communities. Proposed studies may focus more on the individual students and their identity formation, political and civic engagement, and grassroots organizing as a developmental skill.

Implications for Practice

First, the research presented in this study provides evidence for the importance of higher education institutions in general and CSUs in particular to have a DRC. As covered in the

previous chapter, DRCs benefit the university by (a) influencing the university to become undocufriendly, (b) expanding institutional missions that include diversity statements, and (c) supporting undocumented students through high-impact practices. At the time of this study, only 14 of the 23 CSU campuses have a DRC and therefore nine campuses have an opportunity to institutionalize resources.

Findings from this study highlight how shared governance drove the creation of a DRC. The first element for creating a DRC is self-empowered students who can name the institutional barriers they face within the given educational context. Secondly, a network of staff and faculty must also organize their support and navigate the institutional politics. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, individuals who have a personal connection to the issue, although not necessary, can be crucial to the formation of this professional network. The network of staff and faculty must be cross division and cross-departmental to demonstrate broad interests across stakeholders. Finally, buy-in from university leadership, most notably the president, must exist for the resources to be institutionalized. Details around institutional leadership will be discussed in the recommendations section of this chapter.

Informants in this study revealed how they had to educate the institution at large that supporting undocumented students also meant supporting the mission of the institution. CSU raised visibility of the issue through the AB-540 report, which detailed institutional barriers students face at CSU, and the DREAM Empowerment conference, which educated those on and off-campus about the issues and resources to support undocumented students. The report and ensuing conference detailed data about the explicit institutional barriers that students face and how the campus can work to counter institutional barriers. It is key that higher educational practitioners remain keen on the unique needs at their own campus. Each CSU campus and

institution in general has its own unique challenges and demographics that pose certain barriers that are different from those presented here at CSU.

Finally, DRC practitioners and professionals working directly with undocumented communities can benefit from understanding how to support both the immediate (basic-needs) and long-term interest of students. Practitioners must understand the limits of meeting only the basic needs of students. As detailed in Chapter 5, some high-impact practices certainly address the immediate concerns of students; however, the long-term interest of countering systemic oppression such as advocating for comprehensive immigration reform is a much more protracted form of engagement. In this vein, the DRC can be utilized as a praxis for liberation where practitioners are not only addressing institutional barriers but systems of oppression as well.

Implications for Policymakers

California State University Responsibility

With the large numbers of undocumented students entering public 2- and 4-year institutions, educational decision makers in the California College system (CCC, CSU, and UC) can also be institutional agents to become proactive in advocating for undocufriendly campuses. Educational policymakers at the CSU system level are focusing on graduate initiatives that prioritize the 4-year graduation rate and the elimination of the achievement gap between minoritized students of color and the dominant white majority of students. As detailed in this study, educational policymakers must consider the holistic needs of undocumented students to reach these graduation targets. The various mental health, legal, and financial barriers pose an additional threat to the success of undocumented students beyond those of other students. Therefore, it is essential for policymakers to consider how to also broaden their definition of diversity and students “success” as it relates to the growing undocumented student population.

By understanding the needs of undocumented students, policymakers can be better equipped to allocate equitable resources to undocumented students within this shifting and liminal political landscape.

Government Policymakers

The findings in this study have implications for policymakers to consider the role that institutions of higher education have to address the liminal and carceral state, which marginalizes undocumented students. As covered earlier in the study, systems of higher education took a stance in supporting DACA during the threat of the program being phased out during 2017-2018. Furthermore, institutions of higher education sought to provide “sanctuary” for undocumented students through the sanctuary campus movement (Redden, 2016). Some institutions have even declared their own campuses as sanctuary campuses. Finally, informants shed light on the role of the DRC to impact students and their local communities. Being that institutions of higher education are part of the communities in which they physically reside, they also act within the context of state, county, and city politics. Currently, cities are debating whether their police department should cooperate with Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE). For example, there are cities in the Inland Empire such as Upland who will join the federal lawsuit against California’s sanctuary state policy to not cooperate with ICE (Emerson, 2018). DRCs can play a central role in the local politics of the city and surrounding communities to counteract this anti-immigrant sentiment.

Policymakers at the state level should consider statewide resources allocated to DRCs in higher education and specifically the CSU system. As covered in Chapter 2, the CSU system has one of the largest populations of low-income, underrepresented minoritized students and undocumented students. Proposed in spring of 2018 in California’s legislature, the AB-1622 bill

would provide additional resources to DRCs at the CSU level. Through creating statewide funding for DRCs independent of the general university budget, institutions would have less pressure to seek funding both internally (through student affairs allocations) and externally (through grants and fellowships). Easing the pressure of front-line staff and administration to sustain DRCs themselves frees up more time and efforts to be allocated toward directly supporting undocumented students and to the development of innovative programs that address institutional barriers.

Federal policy allowing undocumented immigrants in all states to attend institutions of public higher education would alleviate the burden from students and professional to navigate the liminal state of policy. Some states, such as California, allow and support undocumented students within their systems of higher education and yet other states are not as open to accepting undocumented students in higher education. Comprehensive reform on the educational attainment of undocumented students in all states would ease the burden on the few states that do accept undocumented students in their higher education systems. This can also alleviate the issues as previously mentioned about undocumented student transfers and the unequal and liminal support. Furthermore, a consistent educational access policy would send a positive messaging that institutions of education across the country are supportive of diversity and inclusion for all groups of students.

Finally, federal comprehensive immigration reform providing a clear pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants would be beneficial to our nation by means of workforce and innovation. Although issues of immigrant and undocumented students will always be present, comprehensive immigration reform can help address the ways in which communities navigate life barriers as presented by the current system of immigration policy. Currently, the

instability of DACA has caused fear and concern for undocumented students in the CSU system. A plan to institutionalize DACA would give undocumented students and allies a plan of action until comprehensive immigration reform is achieved.

Recommendations: Core Values and Action Items

Based off the findings within this study, I outline recommendations that institutions of higher education must consider when pursuing undocumented student educational equity. Understanding that interest convergence may compromise the equity agenda, institutions must be guided by three core values to further educational equity: (a) prioritize undocumented student interests, (b) build coalitions to strengthen partnerships, and (c) utilize an immigrant justice approach. To this end, I recommend that institutions of higher education create DRCs as a vehicle to operationalize these values. If no option to create a DRC exists, then a full-time person, designee, or committee would be useful as well. Ultimately, the goal would be for undocumented students to feel welcome, supported, and have equitable experiences. The DRC would make these goals actionable; however, the purpose of the DRC is to push the institution to strive for educational equity. The following section outlines recommended action items for institutions to advance education equity for undocumented students.

In this section, I suggest action items that, when implemented, can operationalize educational equity in higher education. When advancing educational equity, it is essential to prioritize the interests of undocumented students.

Prioritize Undocumented Students' Interests

Oppressed communities must always be at the center of any social change work. This framework furthers the concept of being “student centered” through the practice of institutional agents proactively and truly understanding the institutional barriers that students face in their

educational experiences. Certainly, institutional politics and the scarcity of resources are a factor to any decision-making process, yet institutional agents can take proactive steps in prioritizing student interests through collecting data that captures student needs both qualitatively and quantitatively. In addition, institutional agents must ensure that students are represented and leading any decision-making process.

Collect student driven data. One concrete way for institutional agents and decision makers to uphold the interests of the students is to collect data directly from undocumented students concerning how to navigate the institutional barriers they face. To do this, practitioners can collect qualitative data by organizing a student listening session or attending student organization functions and events to meet the students where they are. By doing so, practitioners can learn directly from students on how to provide resources that support their success. Being conscious of students' concerns with surveillance, I recommend that institutional agents capture quantitative data by ensuring practitioners that a wider sample of undocumented student stakeholders are represented in any decision-making process or programs. Quantitative data can be captured through surveys disseminated across campus or through trusted DRC staff members or allies.

Ensure student representation. Ensuring student representation through committees or having students in a formal voting role gives students both a seat and a voice at the table. Although the DRC is a way to consolidate services, it adds another hierarchal layer between the students and key institutional leaders including the university president and other high-level administrators. This suggested direct communication between students and institutional leaders can occur regularly once per quarter or semester and organized through the DRC or partner entities. Additionally, students can be formally represented or have a voting role in any

committee or decision-making body at the university. This not only shows that the undocumented student voice is represented, but also that undocumented students are provided the opportunities to guide decisions.

Build Coalitions to Strengthen Partnerships

Although the DRC is an innovative way to consolidate many high-impact practices, I recommend that DRCs are only a vehicle for transformational institutional change. This means that it is the entire institution's responsibility to support undocumented students, not just the DRC or its staff persons. Compartmentalization may serve the interest of the institution as it provides a symbol of support but does not translate this support into transformational institutional change. To this end, I recommend a number of action items that can achieve this goal of transformational change as a means for educational equity.

Enact Dreamers Ally Training. As covered in the preceding chapters, institutional allies have a stake in shifting institutional culture at the university. Dreamers Ally Trainings or similar programs have been in existence for more than two decades. Elena Macias, a retired higher educational professional has consulted with many DRCs across the country and has developed a strong template that is replicable in any given educational context (Macias, 2016). Institutional agents can benefit from institutionalizing a Dreamers Ally Training and having a listserv of those interested in joining an ally network. Those considering creating and/or growing their Dreamer Ally Training program can benefit from bringing in off-campus consultants who can serve as content experts and help facilitate said trainings. On-campus institutional allies can serve as co-facilitators to provide the institutional context.

Dreamers Ally Training programs can be used as a vehicle to educate the campus and to develop lasting partnerships. Institutional agents can develop partnerships by asking departments

and colleges to host trainings and recruit participants. Thus, the onus of the training is not entirely on the DRC but rather it is a collective effort from off-campus and cross-campus partners.

Aligning with the findings from this study, the Dreamers Ally Training programs can utilize a shared governance model that is student centered. Students should be active creators of and participants of these trainings. Furthermore, the training lesson plan should also include students who either facilitate or provide their own insight on how to support undocumented students at the institution, tying back to the initial principle of prioritizing students' needs.

Maintain an active committee. Although the DRC is a new and innovative space that consolidates a number of programs that support undocumented students, I recommend maintaining an active network, committee, or coalition of institutional allies that represents multiple divisions, departments, and colleges to serve as advocates for undocumented students. These individuals must meet on a regular basis in order to stay up to date with the dynamic political landscape and must advocate for greater institutional resources to support undocumented students. This committee can serve in an advisory role to the DRC and/or the full-time staff members in charge of the DRC or in lieu of a DRC. As with any recommendation in this section, the committee must include students to educate members about the institutional barriers.

Maintaining a committee can have multiple benefits for the institution, the DRC and the undocumented students as a whole. First, maintaining an active committee can provide a venue for institutional agents to put their allyship into action. By serving as a working committee, advocates can use their different resources to solve complex and inequitable barriers facing undocumented students. Second, students can see members of this committee as other supporters

in addition to the DRC and its staff. Third, the maintenance of a committee would highlight that institutional support is not just compartmentalized (a running theme in this study) to the DRC alone, but rather it is a responsibility that everyone on campus should support undocumented students. Finally, from an organizing perspective, a broad committee that consists of faculty, staff, and higher-level administration can better navigate institutional politics and find institutional resources for undocumented students more so than one staff person in the DRC can.

Develop student and academic affairs partnerships. Understanding that undocumented students can benefit from holistic services that address both immediate and long-term challenges, I recommend framing the work to support undocumented students as a collective effort between student and academic affairs. To achieve this goal, institutions can benefit by having an undocumented student course and even faculty liaisons from each academic department.

Implement undocumented student courses. I recommend that institutions of education can better integrate the philosophy and practices of the DRC into academic affairs. Since the DRC can be organizationally placed within student affairs, its daily practices are received as co-curricular. The benefit of integrating the DRC into academic affairs would be twofold. The first is to serve a greater number of students who would not typically or have time to access the DRC or the programs hosted by the DRC. By having the DRC or “undocumented students” as a course topic, then students can use the credit and experiences and apply it to their graduation requirements. Furthermore, institutionalizing a class would deepen the intellectual stimulation of undocumented students and allies involved in the DRC program. This addresses a value of student leadership development for liberation, which I will allude to later on in the chapter. The possibilities of creating a course on undocumented students are endless with topics that can

include the history of immigration, film and media studies, contemporary social movements, and Critical Race Theory and undocumented status.

The second purpose of integrating the work to support undocumented students into the academic affairs realm is to have another vehicle to build partnerships with potential institutional agents and partners on the academic side. For instance, if the class were housed within an ethnic studies department, a professor would be a partner to help address institutional barriers faced by students. Pedagogically, the class can be a co-teaching endeavor with community members; other faculty from outside of social sciences (STEM, humanities) can serve as partners in the class. This class would address the holistic development of not only students but also faculty/staff community partners who may be involved in supporting the class. It can also be a venue for campus allies to put allyship into practice as a facilitator for a class section or a mentor to a student in the class.

Develop faculty liaisons. Faculty members have a large influence on the educational experience of students. I recommend that faculty liaisons who exhibit undocumented student competency can serve as college or department liaisons or mentors to undocumented students. This is beneficial because it provides additional point people to engage with undocumented students, thus lessening the load on the DRC and its staff members. Secondly, it shows that support for undocumented students exists in the classroom. Finally, academic courses are a vehicle for meeting greater amounts of students. Ultimately, faculty liaisons can engage with students who do not typically engage with DRCs or undocumented student organizations.

Utilize an Immigrant Justice Approach

The equity agenda strives for policies and practices that seek to address oppression at the systemic level. Although addressing institutional barriers can be beneficial for undocumented

students in the short-term, I recommend that practitioners incorporate an immigrant justice approach for policies and programs to support undocumented students' long-term needs.

Invest in the undocumented student pipeline. Because a student's development extends beyond the time they are enrolled in a four-year institution, students should be supported through the entirety of their pathway in education. This may include students matriculating from high school to CCC/CSU or students in the CCC transferring to CSU or UC. In addition, practitioners can benefit from investing in the long-term growth of students into graduate school. The role of systems of education should be a vehicle for social mobility and social empowerment. Despite current data showing an increasing number of community college transfers, there is little or no institutionalized efforts to support the undocumented students transfer pipeline. Practical steps recommended to support the undocumented students transfer pipeline includes incorporating undocumented students in existing transfer centers and programs at the CSU. However, incorporating undocumented student competency into existing transfer programs is not enough.

To complement existing transfer programs, I recommend that a transfer receptive culture be developed within the DRCs themselves. This can look like the DRCs four-year institutions creating warm hand-offs between the CCC DRC to the CSU or UC DRC. The DRCs can also work in tandem from the high school level to the CCC or four-year level. This recommendation speaks to the underlying notion that equitable practices should occur uninterrupted between systems of education. In order to achieve this goal, systems of education must be in constant communication in order to invest in the long-term growth of students.

Utilize higher education for social change. Systems of higher education can take their support of immigrant communities even further by providing resources to address both the

immediate and long-term success of undocumented communities. Currently, the CSU is increasing its drive for social services to support the basic needs of students through food and housing initiatives. In this sense, the CSU is supplementing and complementing county and citywide initiatives to address homelessness and food deserts to low-income communities of color. Systems of higher education can institutionalize these same supports for undocumented communities and address the liminal state through legal services and the carceral state through mental health referrals as detailed in this study. Finally, as these food and housing initiatives were created to react to the systemic issues of capitalism and homelessness, systems of higher education can develop ways to better understand and eradicate the complex issues of immigration.

Institutions can serve as a vehicle for comprehensive immigration reform. To this end, I recommend practitioners utilize curriculum and pedagogy that speaks to the systemic barriers of race and racism with the ultimate goal of empowering students and professionals to call for comprehensive immigration reform. The ultimate goal here is to understand how education barriers and systemic oppression is a direct result of an immigration system meant to dehumanize and disempower undocumented communities of color. Thus, institutions of higher education should do their part to develop critical leaders that will call for and enact change through federal policy, local activism, and social justice.

Conclusion

Undocumented students are attending higher education in great numbers and institutions of higher education have a responsibility to provide educational equity for undocumented students. This study was an exploration on the role of the DRC at a CSU. The interviews in this study captured the perspectives of front-line staff members, allies, and upper level administrators

who worked on creating and/or supporting the DRC at the institution. Participants reflected on the creation of the DRC, practices that the DRC conducts to engage and support undocumented students, and the role of the DRC within the institutional mission to support undocumented students. The aim of this study was to get a composite understanding of administration and institutional decision makers through the narrative of those involved at varying levels and times.

It was apparent that the movement to support undocumented students existed for many generations but the DRC was not institutionalized until there was interest convergence. I learned that there were many stakeholders who advocated for social change. These stakeholders represent two broad interests: those of the oppressed (undocumented students) and those of the oppressor (white dominant institutions of education). What nuances this perspective is that institutional allies and leaders, although identifying as people of color, may represent the interest of either or both of these groups. This study highlights the critical role that institutional allies, institutional leaders, and the DRC play in achieving greater educational equity for undocumented students by combating institutional barriers. Thus, with students, institutional agents, and institutions taking a more visible stance to support undocumented students, this collective is a prominent force that contributes to the national immigration climate.

Institutions of higher education and particularly the CSU played a key role in leading the country on how to support undocumented students. With the uncertainty and lack of leadership around federal immigration reform, institutions of higher education have an opportunity to shape our country's discourse around supporting undocumented communities. Many of the participants shared how policies and practices learned from the DRC at CSU were replicated at other CSUs and institutions across the country. Ultimately, this study illuminated the need for all institutions

of higher education with undocumented students to have a DRC as a means to advance their educational equity.

APPENDIX

Interview Protocol

Background: This first set of questions is geared to understand you and your role.

1. What is your current position and please explain your role/history with the Dream Resource Center (DRC) and supporting undocumented students at the university.
[Background]

Needs & History: This next set of questions I'll ask is to understand more about undocumented students and institutional history at California State University (CSU).

2. What do you think are the most salient needs of undocumented students at CSU? *[RQ#2, RQ#3]*
3. From your perspective, how has the institution supported undocumented students throughout its history? *[RQ#1, RQ#2]*
 - a. How do you think the institutional support has evolved in the past 5-10 years?
4. Why do you think the DRC was founded? *[RQ#1, RQ#3]*
5. What were the most important factors that led to the creation of the DRC? *[RQ#1]*
 - a. What were the environmental (federal climate, campus climate) factors?
 - b. Were there campus opportunities (leadership, funding, student activism) that might have lead to the creation of the DRC?

Practices and Structures: This next set of questions is about the institutional response to student needs.

6. Earlier you talked about the needs of undocumented students. How do you think DRC programs and practices meet those needs of undocumented students? *[RQ#2, RQ#1]*
7. What do you perceive are barriers to addressing students' needs? *[RQ#2, RQ#3]*
 - a. Are there any structural limitations? Provide examples if they don't understand (finances, resources, policies)
 - b. Has the DRC influenced these structures? If so, how?
8. Do you see any needs that are not being met by the DRC? *[RQ#2, RQ#3]*
 - a. Why do you think those needs may not be met?
 - b. What additional resources can the DRC benefit from?

Mission: For these last set of questions will be addressing the bigger picture.

9. What do think distinguishes the DRC from other centers on campus (i.e. ethnic/cultural centers)? *[RQ#3, RQ#2]*
 - a. Are there differences in funding/resources?
 - b. Are there differences in institutional attention and support?

10. CSU's mission espouses student diversity and student success. What do you know about how the DRC operationalizes the university mission? [RQ#3, RQ#2]
- a. CSU has a service goal which reads: *Through experiences in and out of the classroom, students strengthen relationships to their communities and contribute productively to society.* How do you think the DRC carries out this segment of the mission?
 - b. CSU has an academic goal to *Improve student persistence, increase graduation rates Universitywide, and narrow the achievement gap for underrepresented students.* How do you think the DRC carries out this segment of the mission?
11. Do you have any last comments about how the DRC influences the campus as a whole?
[RQ#3, RQ#2, RQ#1]

Close

12. Is there anything that you would change or improve about the DRC (structurally or daily practice)? [Closing]
13. Is there anything else you'd like to share about the DRC? [Closing]

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