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Undocumented College Students' Career-Related Communication with their Parents and the
Vocational Anticipatory Socialization Model of Structural Limitations

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Communication

by

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June 2024

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ABSTRACT

Undocumented College Students' Career-Related Communication with their Parents and the Vocational Anticipatory Socialization Model of Structural Limitations

By

Kyungin Kim

Using social cognitive career theory as a guiding framework, this thesis explored memorable vocational anticipatory socialization messages that undocumented college students reported receiving from their parents and how those messages related to students' career outlooks and choices. From semi-structured interviews with 40 undocumented students, nine kinds of messages were found and categorized into three larger types: (a) *value messages*, (b) *instructional messages*, and (c) *trust/support messages*, with some differences in messages, depending on students' DACA status, racial/ethnic backgrounds (Latina/o/x/e and Asian/Pacific Islander), and gender. Using thematic co-occurrence analysis, relationships between the three kinds of messages and students' career outlooks, choices, and/or their career-related engagement with their parents and nonparental figures were observed. From the findings, this thesis proposed the Vocational Anticipatory Socialization Model of Structural Limitations and critical family career discourse, which, together, elucidate how structural factors shape parent-child career-related conversations within marginalized families.

Undocumented College Students' Career-Related Communication with their Parents and the Vocational Anticipatory Socialization Model of Structural Limitations

In the United States, undocumented college students encounter significant barriers that can impede their career opportunities (Chavarria et al., 2021). For example, undocumented students who are ineligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)¹ – over half of the undocumented college student population – do not have a work permit or a social security number (Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, 2023). Often, they have to sacrifice their career aspirations and settle for low-paying, unstable, unauthorized employment with a high risk of exploitation (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). Although students with DACA can obtain a work permit, they experience chronic uncertainty regarding DACA's permanency, given the ongoing threats to the DACA program (Andrade, 2021). Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is currently not processing new DACA applications; therefore, the number of undocumented students with DACA is decreasing (Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, 2021; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2022).

With DACA and DACA-ineligible students experiencing significant uncertainty regarding their ability to remain in the United States and their ability to secure a promising career post-graduation, it is imperative to consider how undocumented students develop their post-graduation career trajectories. Although past research (e.g., Morales Hernandez & Enriquez, 2021) has identified career barriers that undocumented students face while pursuing higher education, we know little about how they communicate with family and

¹ DACA refers to an executive order that Former President Barack Obama signed in 2012 that authorizes some undocumented immigrants to temporarily reside, obtain a social security number, and work in the United States (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2022).

others about such topics. Filling this knowledge gap is important because past research has found that undocumented students can experience hopelessness, depressive symptoms, suicide ideation, and school dropout because of their perceived limited career options (Gonzales et al., 2013). One resource that might help undocumented students manage their career options is *Vocational Anticipatory Socialization* (VAS) – intentional and unintentional, explicit and implicit communication that shapes people’s expectations and beliefs about work occupations; their occupational options, choices, and plans; and their communication and behaviors in work settings (Jablin, 2001; Powers & Myers, 2017). Prior research has considered VAS among college students and first-generation college students (Powers & Myers, 2017), but undocumented students’ unique legal barriers to career self-determination warrant consideration as to how – through communication – parents help students develop career outlooks and choices.

This study uses Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994) and memorable messages (Knapp et al., 1981) to explore parental VAS messages that have made a lasting impression on undocumented students’ memory and perspectives. Semi-structured interviews with Latina/o/x/e ($n = 30$) and Asian and Pacific Islander (API) ($n = 10$) undocumented students were conducted to explore: (a) what kinds of parental VAS messages they receive, (b) how these messages may vary, if at all, by students’ DACA status, by Latina/o/x/e or API students, and by their gender², and (c) how students respond to these messages and how that relates to their career outlooks and choices. Based on our interview data, the VAS Model of Structural Limitations is introduced to elucidate the communication and psychological

² Latina/o/x/e and API undocumented students are not members of homogenous racial/ethnic groups; however, they represent two of the largest undocumented student populations in the United States (Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, 2021).

processes by which people navigate career planning, particularly when they experience structural barriers (e.g., policies and practices that systematically disadvantage them) (Sørensen, 1996). Studying the career barriers and VAS messages that undocumented students face can not only provide insights into how communication enables parents and children to co-construct the meaning of career, but also offers a critical perspective recognizing how structural factors can drive the VAS process within families. The findings can also help identify support gaps within and outside of undocumented families that can be addressed through interventions and increased resources.

Social Cognitive Career Theory and the Process of Developing Career Goals

Although this study later introduces the VAS Model of Structural Limitations based on the interview data, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994) was initially a guiding framework. SCCT explains how people develop career interests and goals, particularly when facing significant barriers that hinder self-efficacy and require them to adjust their career plans (Lent et al., 2008). SCCT suggests that the more people believe they can carry out the behaviors required for a particular career (i.e., self-efficacy), the more likely they will anticipate positive consequences from pursuing that career option (i.e., outcome expectations; Lent et al., 1994). When people develop self-efficacy and positive outcome expectations, they are more likely to develop interests in that career, and in turn, pursue that career (i.e., goals; Ali & Menke, 2014). SCCT, however, also recognizes that personal (i.e., internal within the individual) and environmental and contextual (i.e., external to the individual) factors can strengthen or impede the development of career goals (Lent, 2013). Consistent with SCCT's assumption that barriers can hinder people's self-efficacy and career goals (Lent et al., 1994), past research has reported incidents where undocumented students

were denied internship and employment opportunities because employers required U.S. citizenship or permanent residence or because some employers were unfamiliar with DACA (Morales Hernandez & Enriquez, 2021).

In addition, SCCT points to the significance of social support from others as a source of encouragement and as a source for accessing resources (Lent et al., 2008). Undocumented students in Morales Hernandez and Enriquez (2021) emphasized the importance of accessing career resources through their network, such that undocumented students with greater campus-based social capital (e.g., friends, staff, professors) and DACA fared better than students with limited social capital and no DACA. Yet, SCCT acknowledges that one's social network can also become social barriers that inhibit career goals, such as the case where family or others pressure students to alter their career plans (Lent et al., 2008). Past research has uncovered different career barriers that DACA and DACA-ineligible students experience and campus-based social capital and resources (Morales Hernandez & Enriquez, 2021), but less is known about the role of family communication in shaping undocumented students' career outlooks and choices.

Parental Vocational Anticipatory Socialization and Memorable Messages

For undocumented students, parents continue to play an important role from early childhood through adulthood (Enriquez, 2011). To keep their family safe, undocumented parents often discourage their children from discussing their undocumented status with non-family members for fear of discrimination and deportation (Scranton et al., 2016).

Furthermore, although undocumented students are emerging adults and some may no longer live with their parents, many undocumented students and their parents continue to be highly interdependent, providing important support to each other (Enriquez, 2011). Thus, this thesis

turns to vocational anticipatory socialization (VAS) and memorable messages to understand how parents help undocumented students think about their career options – through communication – and how their communicative exchanges are related to students’ career outlooks and choices.

Different Types of VAS Messages

VAS messages have been categorized into different kinds – depending on their content. Myers et al. (2011), in their study exploring VAS messages that influence adolescents’ interests in STEM occupations, first coined five kinds of VAS messages: *description, prescription, opportunity, expectation, and value*. Subsequently, Jahn and Myers (2014) refined value, expectation, and description messages (leaving prescription and opportunity messages as they are) and extended research on VAS by creating two broad message types with subcategories under each: (a) *personal fulfillment messages*, which encourage prioritizing well-being in career choices based on interests (*self-actualization*), financial security (*self-sufficiency*), and strengths (*prescription*), and (b) *career detail messages*, which provide specific information pertaining to the labor or racial/ethnic diversity demands (*opportunity*) or environments (*career environment*) of certain STEM jobs. Powers and Myers (2017) later added a third broad type of message in their study called *general directives/advice*, which guide receivers to pursue or refrain from a specific career without a clear justification. According to the VAS Model of STEM (Myers et al., 2011), such VAS messages (along with other factors such as personal factors and experience – which are dependent on one’s gender, culture, and socioeconomic status), are said to affect students’ academic pursuits, which then influences their career interests in STEM.

Past studies on VAS have been conducted with various populations such as first-generation college students (Powers & Myers, 2017), racially/ethnically minoritized samples (Jahn & Myers, 2014; McWhirter et al., 2013), individuals with intellectual disabilities (Dailey et al., 2020), and non-U.S. samples (Shenoy, 2009), providing a strong foundation for examining how communication is related to career planning in different contexts. Yet, past research assumes that people have the ability to pursue a desired career. With DACA-ineligible students, for example, personal fulfillment may not be possible when they do not have a work permit. DACA students might have more flexibility in pursuing a fulfilling career, but their parents, many of whom may come from severe poverty, limited education, and low-paying unstable employment, may emphasize other career aspects. Thus, this thesis extends past research that has identified career barriers that undocumented students face, as well as VAS research more broadly, by systematically considering parental VAS messages in an unexplored context of undocumented immigrants who are stripped away of their rights to career self-determination.

A Memorable Messages Approach

To uncover the VAS messages that undocumented students receive from parents, this study uses a memorable messages approach. Memorable messages are interpersonal messages that make a lasting impression on the recipients – and thus remembered for long periods of time – and are likely to have a significant influence on the behavior, attitude, and beliefs throughout the course of their life (Knapp et al., 1981). Medved et al. (2006) suggest that using memorable messages as a focal point for analysis allows for research deeply rooted in Communication and that the approach is especially suited to studying socialization processes. Asking participants to recall memorable career-related (verbal and nonverbal)

messages from their parents can help us identify VAS messages that are significant for undocumented students' career trajectories (Stohl, 1986). Considering that parental VAS messages may assist (or hinder) undocumented students in navigating their challenging circumstances, the first research question was posed.

RQ1: What kinds of VAS messages do undocumented students receive from parents?

The Diverse and Intersectional Experiences of Undocumented Students

Although all undocumented students experience uncertainty regarding their career options and planning, Enriquez (2017) urges scholars serving undocumented communities to account for the intersection of immigration status with other social locations, including DACA status, race/ethnicity, and gender. Such experiences can explain differences in VAS messages.

DACA Status

Besides having the authorization to work, DACA students have a social security number that eases internship or job application processes (Autin et al., 2018). However, DACA holders still face distinct challenges as discussed by Morales Hernandez and Enriquez (2021). These include limited social connections, prejudice and societal bias, and anxiety about the potential loss of their employment eligibility due to the uncertain nature of their legal status in the present political environment. Nevertheless, no existing study, to our knowledge, has explored how undocumented students' VAS messages from their parents may differ by DACA status and how that might be related to their career outlooks and choices.

Racialized Illegality

In addition to DACA status, whether parental VAS messages differ for Latina/o/x/e and Asian and Pacific Islander (API) undocumented students was considered. Undocumented Latina/o/x/e immigrants often are portrayed as the prototypical “illegal aliens” in mass media and literature (De Genova, 2004; Ngai, 2014), leading to constant fear of surveillance and deportation and slow upward mobility (Enriquez, 2019). Although API undocumented immigrants are more easily able to “pass as legal” (due to the model minority myth portraying them to be silent and law-abiding), they are the fastest-growing undocumented racial group in the United States and also encounter career barriers (Kim & Yellow Horse, 2018; Sudhinaraset et al., 2017). Much remains unexplored regarding how career barriers, VAS messages, and career outlooks and choices differ, if at all, among Latina/o/x/e and API undocumented students.

Gender

In addition to race/ethnicity and DACA status, existing studies on VAS discuss the gendered nature of VAS messages. For example, one study found that women were more likely than men to receive family socializing messages that encourage them to find jobs that allow them to prioritize family obligations and stop work when they have children (Medved et al., 2006). Our study seeks to uncover how undocumented students of different gender identities may receive varying VAS messages from their parents, and how the differences may be related to their career outlooks and choices. Considering the variation in experiences of illegality among undocumented students, particularly across different ethnic-racial backgrounds, DACA eligibility, and gender, this thesis aligns with Enriquez’s (2017) suggestion for scholars working with undocumented community members to build “within-

group comparisons into the sampling design to clearly establish how their social locations are at work” (p. 1539). Hence, the following research question was posed:

RQ2: How do parental VAS messages differ, if at all, by DACA status, Latina/o/x/e and API students, and gender?

Lastly, drawing from SCCT, which asserts that environmental influences including, “the sorts of messages the individual receives from his or her support system,” can directly shape people’s career choices and goals (Lent, 2013, p. 110), as well as the VAS Model of STEM which points to VAS messages as one of the factors that influence one’s career interests in STEM (Myers et al., 2011), this study explores how undocumented students responded to parental VAS messages and how students’ responses are related to their career outlooks and choices. This leads to the third and last research question.

RQ3: How do undocumented students respond to the VAS messages they receive from their parents, and how is that, if at all, related to their career outlooks and choices?

Methods

For this study, students of any gender identity and Asian and Pacific Islander or Latin American nationality who (a) self-identified as an undocumented immigrant, (b) were 18 or older, and (c) were attending a two- or four-year college or university in the United States at the time of recruitment were eligible to participate. The initial goal was to recruit 30 Latina/o/x/e undocumented students and 30 API undocumented students, and several steps were taken to recruit participants.

Recruitment

Upon receiving university Institutional Review Board approval, recruitment flyers were first emailed to 102 undocumented students attending a University of California campus who had participated in the research team’s previous study (one that focused on accessing campus mental health services) and had agreed to be contacted if any future research participation opportunities arose. The directors of Undocumented Student Services (USS) across other two- and four-year colleges and universities located in California, Texas, and Washington were also contacted to request the distribution of the flyer. Snowball sampling was also used.

On the flyers, there was a QR code and a link that allowed students to fill out an online form to sign up for the study. The targeted sample of 30 Latina/o/x/e undocumented students was quickly met; however, only 10 API undocumented students were recruited. API-specific flyers were distributed to more USS and student-led organizations in higher educational institutions as well as immigration-related legal and community-based organizations across the United States.

Participants

Because of the hard-to-reach sample, recruitment took place between April 2023 to April 2024, resulting in a total of 30 Latina/o/x/e students and 10 API students (see Table 1 for demographics). Great efforts were taken to obtain the targeted sample size of API students; however, after one year of recruitment, only 10 API students were recruited.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Demographic characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Racial/ethnic backgrounds		
Latina/o/x/e	30	75
Asian/Pacific Islander	10	25
Country of origin		

Mexico	27	67.5
Guatemala	1	2.5
Honduras	1	2.5
Nicaragua	1	2.5
Philippines	3	7.5
Korea	2	5.0
Bangladesh	1	2.5
China	1	2.5
India	1	2.5
Japan	1	2.5
Tonga	1	2.5
Immigration status		
DACA-recipient	14	35.0
No current legal status (e.g., undocumented, non-DACA, expired visa, unauthorized)	26	65.0
Gender		
Cisgender woman	31	77.5
Cisgender man	6	15.0
Gender nonconforming	1	2.5
Chose “Not Listed – please specify”, no specification	1	2.5
No answer	1	2.5
Mother’s highest level of completed education ^a		
Primary (grades 1-6)	6	15.0
Secondary (grades 7-9)	11	27.5
Preparatory (grades 10-12)	17	42.5
University (undergraduate)	6	15.0
Father’s highest level of completed education ^a		
No schooling	2	5.0
Primary (grades 1-6)	8	20.0
Secondary (grades 7-9)	6	15.0
Preparatory (grades 10-12)	14	35.0
University (undergraduate)	6	15.0
Trade school	1	2.5
Chose “Others”, wrote “Don’t know”	1	2.5
No answer	2	5.0

Note. $N = 40$. Though not included in the demographic survey, students often voluntarily shared their parents’ occupations during the interviews, which they often described to be “hard labor” and “self-employed” jobs in the fields of construction, cleaning, cooking, and maintenance/repair.

^a Parents’ highest levels of completed education were reported by the participants.

Data Collection

After students signed up for the study, they were emailed the date and time of the phone interview (scheduled based on the availability they shared in the form), a consent form, and a link to an online 10-minute demographic survey (See Appendix A for demographic survey). At a later date, the interviews were conducted by the author, a Korean

graduate student with multiple family immigration histories, four Latina/o/x/e undergraduate students who self-identify as undocumented students, and one Latina/o/x/e U.S.-born undergraduate student. The research team underwent six weeks of training – of practice interviewing and providing feedback to each other, and brainstorming probing questions – to become familiar with the interview protocol and to grow proficient in semi-structured interview techniques. The ethnic-racial backgrounds of the interviewers and interviewees were matched as much as possible to enhance rapport, but since some mismatching was inevitable (due to scheduling issues), the research team held discussions about readings on racialized illegality to ensure collective awareness of the divergent experiences of undocumented community members dependent on racial/ethnic backgrounds.

On the day of the scheduled interview, a member of the research team called the participant and went over the study details. Afterwards, they began the interview, which included a series of questions concerning participants' post-graduation plans specifically involving work, the kinds of career barriers they have faced, and the extent to which the participants talk about career-related topics with their parents and other family members (e.g., “Can you describe any plans [or even vague ideas] you have for after you graduate from college”, “Have you encountered any work-related issues so far [e.g., when looking for jobs or while working at past/current workplaces] due to your status”, and “What is a memorable conversation or comment your parents had/shared with you about your career goals and plans”) (See Appendix B for interview protocol). Nonverbal messages were accounted for through probing questions that asked what parents have “said or done”. The interviews were conducted in English and ranged from 50 to 90 minutes. Students received a \$40 Amazon e-gift card for participating in the study.

The interviewers wrote reflection memos following each interview – to record any noteworthy feelings or challenges that arose during the interviews. The author reviewed the audio recordings and reflection memos and provided feedback to each team member during the weekly meetings. Interview strategies (e.g., posing appropriate probing questions and fostering a comfortable environment for the interviewees) were workshopped throughout the entirety of the data collection process.

Analysis

The audio recordings of the completed interviews were transcribed verbatim by a separate group of undergraduate research assistants. The research assistants reviewed each transcription to conduct accuracy checks and double-checked all transcriptions to remove any details (proper nouns of people, places, and things) that could potentially be traced back to the participants' identity.

After the transcriptions were completed and verified, the author and one of the research assistants from the interview team began the primary cycle coding phase. They reviewed the transcriptions extensively to derive first-level codes that are relevant to the research questions; these descriptive codes emerged directly from the raw data with minimal interpretation (Tracy, 2013). ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software was used for coding. The coders separately coded four to five transcriptions a week and met weekly to discuss the codes and resolve discrepancies; this continued until all transcriptions were labeled with first-level codes. To avoid “drown[ing] in a self-created sea of primary-cycle codes”, the coders revisited the research questions during every meeting to focus on the goals of the project and created a working codebook (containing the definitions of the codes) to be used as a reference point (Tracy, 2013, p. 200).

Following the primary cycle, the coders proceeded to the secondary-cycle coding phase, systematically grouping first-level codes under hierarchical “umbrella” categories that had conceptual coherence (Tracy, 2013, p. 195). Using the constant-comparative method, “categories [were] developed through an ongoing process of comparing units of data with each other” during this phase (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019, p. 321), and were then refined through condensation into broader themes (or omission, if determined to not have enough supporting data). And, by holding the emergent themes to Owen’s (1984) standards of recurrence (emergence of the same ideas – even in different words), repetition (frequency of the use of the same words and phrases), and forcefulness (emphasis conveyed through “evocative details”) (Scharp, 2021, p. 556), and through discussions between the two coders, a comprehensive codebook containing the themes, definitions, and illustrative quotes was developed.

Once the thematic analysis was completed, the author used thematic co-occurrence analysis (Scharp, 2021) to strengthen the preliminary claims regarding the kinds of messages, the students’ responses to the messages, and their relationships (See Table 2 for an example of the co-occurrence matrix). The matrix consisted of rows representing the participants and a column for each emergent theme. Because there were multiple messages mentioned throughout one interview, a new row was created every time a participant mentioned a new VAS message – resulting in multiple rows per participant. For each row, the author marked X every time a theme emerged in that particular interview and + for forcefulness. This method allowed visual observation of theme recurrence and co-occurrence – enhancing confidence that the themes had sufficient supporting data and that certain kinds of VAS messages (independently or in combination with other types of messages) were related to

certain responses (RQ3). The author then developed the VAS Model of Structural Limitations, which is explicated in the findings section.

Table 2

Co-occurrence matrix

Interview ID	Types of VAS messages								Responses to VAS messages		
	Value messages			Instructional messages			Trust/support messages		Parental knowledge mistrust	Career pressure	xxx
	Work-harder	xxx	xxx	Anti-blue-collar	xxx	xxx	Passive	Active			
1			x						x		
1						x					x
1							x				x
1			x +								x
1			x						x		
2	x									x	
2						x					x
3	x									x	
3				x +					x		

Findings

RQ1 & RQ2: Parental VAS messages and differences by DACA status, Latina/o/x/e and API students, and gender

Nine specific messages emerged and were categorized into three larger types of messages: (a) *value messages*, (b) *instructional messages*, and (c) *trust/support messages* (See Table 3). There were also variations among some of the messages by the students' DACA status, racial/ethnic backgrounds (Latina/o/x/e and API), and gender. The families' immigration backgrounds and socioeconomic status also emerged as factors related to certain kinds of VAS messages. The three main types of messages are represented in the VAS Model of Structural Limitations (see Figure 1) and explicated in the findings for RQ1 and RQ2. The relationships between the messages and students' responses are then discussed in the RQ3 findings section. Pseudonyms are used throughout the findings.

Table 3*Vocational Anticipatory Socialization Message Types and Descriptions*

Categories	Subcategories
<p>Value messages: Parents' broad recommendations on how their children should generally view and approach their career development process</p>	<p>Work-harder messages: Parents told their children the importance of sustaining strong work ethics than others in order to find jobs and succeed</p>
	<p>Prioritize-happiness messages: Parents told their children the importance of prioritizing happiness during their career development process</p>
	<p>Optimistic messages: Parents told their children to remain optimistic about their future careers</p>
<p>Instructional messages: Parents' explicit directives to the children to choose or avoid specific kinds of careers, or on how to pursue those careers</p>	<p>High-paying jobs messages: Parents told their children to aspire for high-income jobs or to avoid low-income jobs</p>
	<p>Anti-blue-collar messages: Parents deterred their children from jobs that required manual labor by instructing them to find white-collar jobs or by sharing and/or showing how exhausting their own blue-collar jobs were</p>
	<p>STEM jobs messages: Parents told their children to get jobs in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math) fields</p>
	<p>Know-how messages: Parents provided specific career-related directives to their children (e.g., what to do to get a job)</p>
<p>Trust/support messages: Parents' encouragement to the children to pursue their chosen career paths (with confidence in their decision-making abilities and without suggesting alternative careers)</p>	<p>Passive trust/support messages: Parents communicated their support for and trust in their children's chosen career paths, but without any involvement or particular reasons</p>
	<p>Active trust/support messages: Parents communicated their support for and trust in their children's chosen career paths and accompanied it with involvement (e.g., collecting and sharing information with or for the children, communicating commitment to make financial investments for</p>

	their future) or with specific reasons (e.g., explaining that they support the chosen path because they are aware of their children’s passion).
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Value Messages

Value messages refer to parents’ broad recommendations for how their children should generally view and approach the career development process. Value messages (Myers et al., 2011) was updated by Jahn and Myers (2014), but this original broad-level name was used for this study as it best encapsulated our findings. In the current study, three kinds surfaced: (a) work-harder messages, (b) prioritize-happiness messages, and (c) optimistic messages. Through *work-harder messages*, students reported their parents telling them the importance of sustaining stronger work ethics than others to find jobs and succeed. Jasmine, a student from Mexico without DACA, said her mother would often tell her, “There are still opportunities out there” for undocumented immigrants, but that they would have to “work a little bit harder compared to others” to attain them. Another participant, Bella, a student from Korea with DACA, shared how her father emphasized the importance of working harder than her peers:

You can’t just give 100%. You have to give 110% from your peers... It’s better to reach higher and hit low than to hit medium and hit lower, right?

Work-harder messages were not found in Jahn and Myers (2014) VAS study with adolescents reflecting on STEM careers, but it is a message that has shown up in immigration research (Nesteruk, 2022). Later in the interview, Bella recognized that work-harder messages may be widely told and received among the broader immigrant community, but that it resonated with her even more deeply because of her status – as it meant that she would have to work harder than others to make up for her status-induced barriers.

Another kind of value message was *prioritize-happiness messages*. Students reported that their parents, rather than providing any specific career instructions, emphasized the importance of making career choices according to what would make the students happy.

Alex, a student from Mexico with DACA, shared an early memory:

I remember in kindergarten, my mom would walk me to school, and we'd see the cross, the person who helps you like cross the road... We'd walked in and she was just like, "Oh, even if that's what you want to do, that guy looks really happy." I remember I was really young, and I was like, "What are you talking about?" But she just was saying you could be a doctor and be really happy, but you could also be a doctor and really hate your job. She was like we'll make sure that when you are older, you have a job that you like.

This exemplar showed that memorable messages can reach back to early childhood, as early as kindergarten. Prioritize-happiness messages are similar to Jahn and Myers' (2014) self-actualization messages, yet different in that adolescents in their study were explicitly told to find careers that maximized their talents or interests.

Lastly, some parents used *optimistic messages*, telling students to remain optimistic about their future careers. Amelia, a student from Mexico without DACA, shared that when she experiences career-related stress, her mother often reminds her of the saying "‘Cuando una puerta se cierra, otra se abre,’ which means that ‘when one door closes, another one opens’". There was a difference in optimistic messages between DACA students and DACA-ineligible students. Some parents of DACA students told their children that DACA should help them keep an optimistic mindset about their careers. Bella (Korea, DACA), who earlier

shared about her father's work-harder message, mentioned that her mother tended to share optimistic messages:

I was like, “how am I gonna become a doctor, like... Going into a spiral. And I think my mom said, “Oh, you're going to be okay (너는 괜찮을 거야)”. But then when I translate this, it's from Korean, the connotations are more like “Not us, but you, are going to be okay” ... I saw how my status was a step wise, above their status, if that makes sense. So being a DACA student, there's like, more you can work legally, you have a social security number, I can drive and all these things. That's a step wise above their completely undocumented status.

This exemplar showed that parents with children who have DACA may relay optimistic messages by juxtaposing their own DACA-ineligible status – highlighting how parental VAS messages vary by both the children and the parent's immigration status.

Instructional Messages

Parents also provided *instructional messages*, which were explicit directives to the students to choose or avoid specific kinds of careers, or telling students how to pursue those careers. They were similar to the expectation messages found in Myers et al. (2011) in that students were told to pursue certain careers with explicit or implicit reasons, but a new name was created because instructional messages contained a new component in which parents explained how children should pursue certain careers. Instructional messages also resembled the prescriptive messages found in Jahn and Myers (2014) by directing students toward specific careers; however, instructional messages were different in that they did not align with the receivers' talents or interests. Four kinds emerged in our study: (a) high-paying jobs messages, (b) anti-blue-collar messages, (c) STEM jobs messages, and (d) know-how

messages. Through *high-paying jobs messages*, parents told students to pursue high-income jobs or to avoid low-income jobs. High-paying jobs messages were similar to self-sufficiency messages (Jahn & Myers, 2014), but were less of a general guidance concerned with the students' well-being, and more so a pointed directive to find a high-salary job. Melissa, a Guatemalan student without DACA, mentioned that her father would often tell her, "do something that is high paying" along with further "hints" such as the following, "sometimes my dad sends me like TikTok about the highest paying majors and stuff. Like a silly Spanish video with things like that". Melissa's father would often directly inform her of the importance of finding a "high paying job", but also relate his message passively through sending her a TikTok video about high-paying jobs, which showed that parents' VAS messages can be direct and/or passive.

There was one difference in high-paying jobs messages by students' racial/ethnic backgrounds. When relaying high-paying jobs messages, Latina/o/x/e undocumented students reported that their parents at times mentioned explicitly that they wanted their children to support the family financially. For example, Valerie, a Mexican student without DACA, shared that her mother's expectations for Valerie were to find a high-income job and "finally buy her [mom] a home, which is like her dream", and Sancha, a Mexican student with DACA, shared that her father hoped that she will get a high-income job with her bachelor's degree and would "alleviate some of their financial stress". Whereas among API students, if parents did mention such expectations, they were expressed passively. Katie, a student from China with DACA, shared how her parents often reminded her that the filial responsibility of being the oldest child was to "look after" her parents and siblings. Such differences seen in the current study's data, though cannot be generalized, showed that

different cultural and racial/ethnic backgrounds may relate to how parents relay similar messages in different ways. Additionally, high-paying jobs messages showed that families' socioeconomic status is connected to parental VAS messages.

Another frequent message that participants recalled receiving from their parents was *anti-blue-collar messages*. Through verbal anti-blue-collar messages, parents deterred their children from jobs that required manual labor by instructing them to find white-collar jobs or telling stories about how exhausting their own blue-collar jobs were. Parents also provided nonverbal anti-blue-collar messages in which they expressed how taxing their manual labor jobs were without even vocalizing it. Kevin, a student from Mexico with DACA, described how his parents often expressed both verbal and nonverbal anti-blue-collar messages:

“If you don’t have a good job, then you’re gonna have to end up having the jobs that we have to have. Which are like, you know, cleaning houses or doing construction work jobs where you don’t really have as much” ... Usually it’ll be from a difficult experience that they’ve had, like that day or recently with their own work. So, if it’s in the summer, and it gets really really hot, and my dad has to obviously work in construction, then he’ll come home from work, and you know, it’s been a long day being up in the sun doing manual labor. It’ll be an example for me from him, “This is how it is for me, so I hope that you can understand so that you can have something better for yourself”.

As seen from this exemplar, parents often degraded their own occupations and social status when relaying anti-blue-collar messages.

Another prominent kind of message was STEM jobs messages in which parents told their children to pursue the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math) fields. When

asked if their parents have certain career aspirations for them, Katie (from China, has DACA) replied, “They did have expectations. Just like any traditional parents would have expectations, like, go out there, become a doctor”. These messages were often paired with high-paying jobs messages, which indicated that parents may suggest STEM jobs because they are perceived to bring financial security. Parents most often told students to pursue jobs in the healthcare fields such as doctors and nurses. There were only two cases in which non-healthcare STEM jobs (accountant and engineer) were mentioned. One way in which the STEM jobs message differed by participants’ gender was that only those who identified as cisgender women received messages to become a nurse. Bella (Korea, DACA) mentioned that her mother specifically wanted her to become a nurse as it would be more suitable for raising children, “My mom, like even with having kids or children, she thought that nursing would be better for future prospects”.

The last type of instructional message was *know-how messages* in which parents provided specific career-related directives to students (e.g., what to do to get a job). Many students mentioned that their parents’ know-how messages often carried the assumption that earning a bachelor’s degree would either easily or automatically lead to a job, as in the case of Melissa (Guatemala, DACA-ineligible) whose parents just told her to “keep studying”. In some cases, parents also provided more specific guidance on how students should network to find jobs. Jack, a student from Mexico without DACA, shared:

My mom was a janitor. She works at a building that is relatively new to Houston... she’s told me multiple times about how I should go there introduce myself to them [her bosses] and tell them that I can have opportunities from them.

Several participants who identified as cisgender women, regardless of their relationship statuses, also reported receiving know-how messages in which they were advised to consider getting married as a solution to overcoming their career barriers – whereas only one participant who identified as a cisgender man and had a long-term partner, reported receiving such message. Additionally, these marriage messages often came solely from mothers, which may indicate that the mothers may have received similar gendered VAS messages that were internalized.

Trust/support Messages

Instead of trying to teach or instruct students about careers, some students reported that their parents provided *trust/support messages* where they encouraged students to pursue their chosen career path with confidence in their decision-making abilities – refraining from suggesting alternative careers. Some of these messages were *passive*, in which parents communicated their support and trust without any involvement or providing particular reasons. Silvia, a student from Mexico with DACA, said, “They just let me pick it and were supportive. They just wanted me to, or they just wanted to know that I had one”. In other cases, parents relayed *active* messages in which they accompanied their trust/support messages with being involved (e.g., collecting and sharing information with or for students, communicating a commitment to make financial investments for their future) or with specific reasons (e.g., explaining that they support the chosen path because they are aware of their children’s passion). For example, Max, a student from the Philippines without DACA who wanted to become a marine biologist, shared that his father often provided active trust/support messages through doing his own research on the field:

Sometimes he has customers who like, “oh, I’m studying marine biology” or “oh, work in environmentally conscious companies,” or who work in aquariums or museums or something. And he gets their information and sends them to me, like, sends me their websites... “Oh, check this out, you know, check this article out. Oh, my, like, one of my customers works here.”

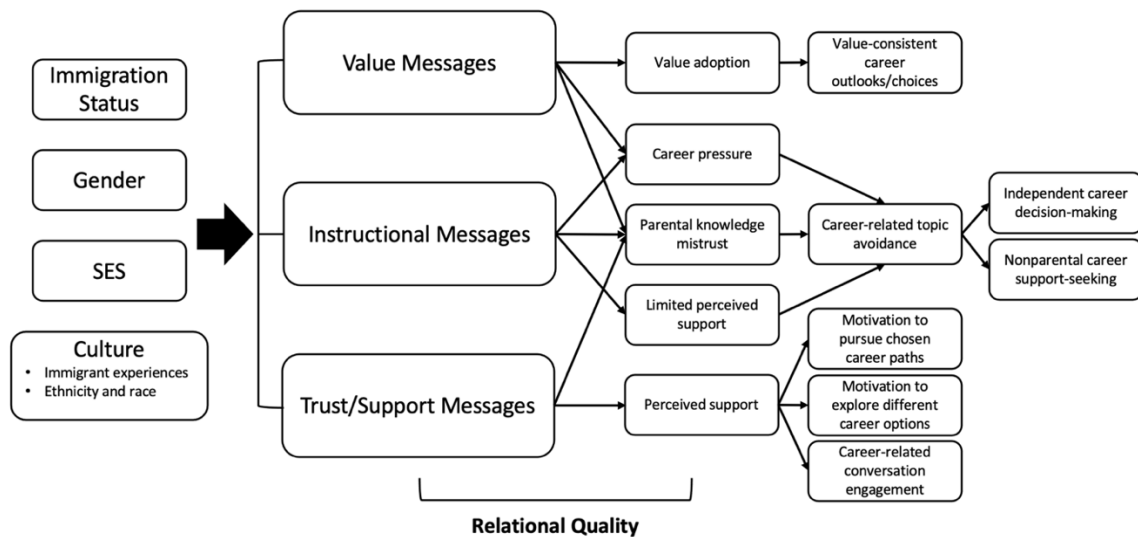
Through his active involvement, Max’s father conveyed his trust in and support for his son’s chosen career path, and also actively tried to foster that interest. In other examples, Lily, a student from Mexico without DACA, described how her mother shared trust/support messages in her chosen career as a personal trainer because she knew it was her daughter’s passion, and Carina, a student from Mexico with DACA, shared that her parents supported her pursuits to become a graduate student because she loved reading books since a young age.

RQ3: Reported Responses to Parental VAS Messages

As represented in the VAS Model of Structural Limitations (see Figure 1), the three kinds of messages (value, instructional, and trust/support) related to varying responses (value adoption, career pressure, parental knowledge mistrust, limited perceived support, perceived support) among students, which then seemed connected to students’ career outlooks and choices (value-consistent career outlooks/choices, motivation to pursue chosen career paths, motivation to explore different career options, independent career-decision making) and/or their career-related engagement with their parents (career-related topic avoidance, career-related topic engagement) and nonparental figures (nonparental support-seeking).

Figure 1

The Vocational Anticipatory Model of Structural Limitations



*Note: Parents may use multiple types of VAS messages at one time, suggesting that messages can weaken or amplify each other's effects.

Responses to Value Messages

In response to parental value messages, students reported adopting the communicated values and made career-related choices that were consistent with their parents' values. For example, Sela, a student from Tonga without DACA, explained how she chose her major:

I think my senior year when I was deciding which majors I would go to, my mom, she definitely sat down and told me... It's more based off of what I enjoy, and not what everyone else wants me to do. I definitely took that into account and took out some of my options of majors, and ultimately, chose to be a bio major.

However, despite the common adoption of the value messages among students, some exhibited negative responses to them. Sometimes, students perceived their parents as having ideal views that were not grounded in the harsh reality of undocumented students and families, with students reporting little confidence in their parents' knowledge and understanding of students' career options (i.e., parental knowledge mistrust). For instance, Sancha (Mexico, DACA), who also reported frequently receiving prioritize-happiness messages from her mother, explained that though she appreciated her mother's concern for

her happiness, she also believed her mother did not comprehend that her career choice to become a lawyer – a challenging job that would not make her necessarily happy but would allow her to support the family.

In some cases, students also reported feeling pressured when they received value message. Vanessa, a student from Honduras without DACA who reported to often receive work-harder messages from her mother, explained this pressure:

My mom always told me that she has raised us alone. And then that, you know, she's worked so hard, so we can work harder. So, she really has instilled in us that we have to be something or like, make something out of ourselves... so it's, it's kind of been a driving force, but at the same time, sometimes it can get a little suffocating to the point where it's like, "what if I can't do that?", but you're expecting me to, and it's just, it feels a little bit like, you don't want to accept failure, but it's kind of hard when you're in between a hard place, you know? ... So I'm kind of trying to push away from what she expects of me, and focus more on what I expect from me and what I know I can do.

This exemplar indicates that value messages, even in cases where they are adopted by the students, may still result in students feeling pressured. This sense of pressure then may discourage students from engaging in future career-related conversations with their parents, as was the case for Vanessa, ultimately engaging in independent career decision-making.

The variations in the valences in students' responses to value messages were also reflected in the case of optimistic messages. While some students adopted their parents' optimism into their career outlooks, some students perceived their parents to have idealized

visions that did not align with reality (parental knowledge mistrust). Kat, a student from Mexico without DACA, provided an example:

It's hard to have these conversations with her because she just tells me, "Oh, everything will work itself out. Everything will be okay." You know, she's just very optimistic about it, which obviously, like, that's not a bad thing. But I think I'm at a point in my life where I'm such a realist, that I'm like, well, no, you don't know that it's gonna work itself out... And so that's another struggle is like, being able to have real realistic conversations with my mom about what I'm going through and what I will be going through.

This exemplar demonstrated that when students perceive optimistic messages as a form of false hope, they may perceive their parents as uninformed, which then may be related to career topic avoidance with their parents. Kat explained that she often resorted to seeking career-related advice from her brothers, whom she felt were more aware of her hardships as they were similar in age and were also undocumented, indicating her desire for nonparental support-seeking.

Responses to Instructional Messages

Students usually reported reacting negatively to instructional messages. As for high-paying jobs messages, students often felt a sense of career pressure and also reported parental knowledge mistrust, believing that their parents had unrealistic aspirations because they were unaware of the challenges faced by undocumented students. To her parents telling her to find a "high-paying job", Melissa (Guatemala, DACA-ineligible) shared:

That would be nice, but, you know, I'm just trying to get a job at this point. I am interested in nursing and stuff. And they're shooting for the stars, and I'm just trying to be a little bit more realistic in my choices. I know what I'm capable of doing.

Melissa explained that she thus resorted to seeking nonparental resources for information and support, such as her friend who was already in a nursing program.

In response to STEM jobs messages, students reported an especially high sense of parental knowledge mistrust. Alejandra, a student from Mexico without DACA, explained that she had originally planned to attend a medical school but quickly realized that this path seemed "impossible" to her because most programs required her to have citizenship to be admitted, so she decided to change her major from biology to psychology to pursue a career as a clinical psychologist (as an independent contractor) – a choice that her parents did not understand:

They always talked about it with anybody, like, "Oh, my daughter is going to be a doctor, my daughter is pursuing medicine," like, it was something they were very proud of. I afterwards, when I changed my major, it was something that they were very disappointed in... it's something they don't understand – that I couldn't pursue medicine with my status here. And they don't understand that, ultimately, this choice was made by my status. I think they don't really know how all these systems work.

Participants like Alejandra who often received STEM jobs messages voiced that their parents were limited in their knowledge about their career barriers as well as the wider U.S. system and that their parents were not a reliable source of career guidance. When asked about whether her parents may shape her current career goals and plans in any way, Alejandra replied:

I think right now they don't shape them in any way, shape, or form. I think I've learned to just do things for myself. I've learned how to, like, I put this boundary of whatever I decide to do is what I am going to do. Because for a very long time they were very opinionated about, "you should pursue this career" or "you should pursue that".

This response showed that her parent's instructional STEM jobs messages also left Alejandra to view her parents as being opinionated and unsupportive of her passion (limited perceived support), which she reported discouraged her from engaging in career-related conversations with her parents, and instead, resorting to independent career-decision making.

As for know-how messages, participants who received them also reported a sense of parental knowledge mistrust. Jack (Mexico, DACA-ineligible), who earlier discussed receiving advice from his mother to go to her workplace (the building where she works as a janitor) to network with the workers there shared that he did not "believe" his mother's advice:

I just didn't see myself talking to them and getting somewhere to where I would be getting a job because that's not usually how people in my age get a job, you know. It requires having other jobs for your resume. It requires knowing stuff about the subject that the job the work is for. And it just seems silly to me to go up there and be like, "Oh, hi, my name is this, and this is what I study," which is probably nothing that they do.

Similar to other instructional messages, Jack thought his mother was not a reliable source to guide him through career development within the context of mainstream U.S. society.

Another student, Jessica, a Mexican student without DACA, shared a similar response:

My dad mentions that whatever I want to do after graduation, that I should start now. That's a little more challenging, so I tried to explain to him that I can't necessarily go somewhere and be like, "hey, you know, give me a job," but he doesn't take that. So, it's kind of frustrating hearing his opinion for what I should do and what I should be doing to prepare for the future because I feel like he doesn't necessarily take into account all the challenges that we face... I feel like the ones who have mainly influenced me and pushed me towards what to pursue are my counselors.

Jessica's response reflected again that undocumented students may feel that their parents are not qualified to provide them with such specific instructional messages, which they manage by engaging in independent career decision-making or nonparental support-seeking.

As for anti-blue-collar messages, many students were already aspiring for and pursuing non-blue-collar jobs. However, anti-blue-collar messages, in combination with other instructional messages, seemed to fuel students' beliefs that their parents – who mostly had blue-collar jobs – were not helpful sources of career support. Ultimately, parents' high-paying jobs, STEM jobs, know-how messages, and anti-blue-collar messages, on many occasions, increased children's parental mistrust (in their knowledge and credibility as career mentors) or left them pressured and feel unsupported, which led to topic avoidance with their parents (leaving them with the choices of independent career decision-making and/or nonparental support-seeking).

Responses to Trust/support Messages

Both passive and active trust/support messages were accompanied by generally positive responses (perceived support) from students. Jenny, a student from the Philippines without DACA, shared an account of a passive trust/support message:

He [father] was just very much giving me support, telling me to be free to do whatever... Yea, when he told me this, I was just like, what else am I passionate about? ... So, it kind of just opened up little professions for me that I would have never thought about.

This showed that students may perceive passive trust and support messages as unconditional trust and support from their parents, which encouraged them to explore varieties of career options to find a path that is most suitable for them. However, some students felt that their parents resorted to passive trust/support messages due to limited knowledge. Alejandra shared:

“If you think that’s what’s best for you, okay, like, you know best”. Just kind of those comments, I think are the most memorable. My immigrant parents don't have access to the resources that I have, like the information that I have.

This showed that although such messages often demonstrated parent’s unwavering trust in and support for students’ choices, they also were, in some cases, interpreted as coming from a place of parents’ lacking knowledge (parental knowledge mistrust).

In all accounts of active trust/support messages, however, students always felt supported by their parents. Silvia (Mexico, DACA) described how her mother expressed active trust/support messages regarding Silvia’s aspirations to pursue graduate school:

when I still wasn’t really sure [about grad school], I was calling my mom on the phone... I kept telling her that I kind of wanted to do it, and I was looking into it. But, I was telling her that it was expensive. She went on to tell me that I didn't have to worry about that and that she would help me as much as she could... And so that

made me want to apply... It made me feel motivated because I felt that I had her support.

This exemplar showed that when parents expressed trust in and support for students' chosen career path, accompanied by active involvement, which in this case, was to provide financially and emotionally, the student felt supported and motivated to pursue her chosen career paths.

The co-occurrence analysis also revealed that when parents related trust/support messages (passive or active) along with instructional messages, this might serve as a protective factor against any negative interpretations of instructional messages. In one case, Amy, a student from Mexico without DACA, described her mother's know-how messages and active trust/support messages made her feel supported:

I think that they are very open about advice or see, if my sister – My sister has a therapist that she goes to, so my mom's always like, “Oh, why don't you ask your sister's therapist about what school she went to and what she studied,” like just advice. They are very open about supporting us in the careers that we see ourselves. She'll read an article and be like, “Oh, I heard about this therapist that's working on this, and I think it's really cool.” Or maybe like, “One day you'll work on stuff like that too.” ... I think that my parents support me in every aspect, really in everything. I do talk to them often. Pretty much every day, I talk with my mom.

Although most know-how messages in the interviews had resulted in negative responses across participants' accounts, this exemplar showed that even though the mother often provided know-how advice (telling the participant to go talk to her sister's therapist), her combined message of active trust/support (communicating that she was also trying to stay

informed about the participants' career goal) was related to feeling supported, which increased Amy's willingness to engage in career-related conversation with her mother in the future.

Discussion

The insights gained from the current interview data culminated in the creation of the VAS Model of Structural Limitations (See Figure 1). This model first suggests that various factors, such as the immigration status (e.g., DACA status), gender, SES, and culture (e.g., immigrant and racial/ethnic backgrounds) of the family are related to the kinds and ways in which parents communicate VAS messages to their children. These parental VAS messages (value, instructional, and trust/support messages), either independently or in combinations, can evoke various responses (value adoption, career pressure, parental knowledge mistrust, limited perceived support, and perceived support).³ These initial responses then relate to the children's career outlooks and choices (value-consistent career choices, motivation to pursue chosen career paths, motivation to explore different career options, independent career decision-making) and/or their future career-related interactions with their parents (career-related topic avoidance, career-related conversation engagement) or with nonparental figures (nonparental support-seeking). The model also recognizes that parents may use multiple types of VAS messages at one time, suggesting that messages can weaken or amplify each other's effects.

The current study and model offer several theoretical contributions. First, the study extends our knowledge of VAS by highlighting new kinds of messages that were previously

³ The parent-child relational quality may affect this process; for example, if the parent-child relationship is relatively weak, children are likely to respond to parental VAS messages more negatively.

unexplored in existing studies involving other populations. Although some messages align closely with those identified in existing literature (e.g., high-paying messages and self-sufficiency messages; Jahn & Myers, 2014), corroborating the robustness of certain themes across different settings, the discovery of novel VAS messages (that illuminated the structural barriers faced by undocumented families) underscores the need for expanding VAS research to include more diverse socioeconomic contexts. Second, the model offers intricate insights into how certain parental VAS messages relate to particular responses in children, shedding light on the complex mechanisms through which individuals interpret, internalize, and respond to VAS messages. Specifically, the findings show that VAS messages can have polysemous meanings when interpreted by different individuals. Additionally, it was found that synergistic interaction between certain kinds of VAS messages, as opposed to one kind of VAS message, might shape career outcomes differently. Lastly, the model's application extends beyond its initial focus on undocumented families, as it adopts critical perspectives that acknowledge the historical and structural influences on vocational paths of marginalized populations.

Building upon Suter's (2016) call to situate power that drives certain familial practices and phenomena in the larger structural systems instead of solely within individuals and families, our study and the VAS Model of Structural Limitations aim to reframe the understanding of VAS processes using the lens of what the author calls *critical family career discourse*. In other words, rather than solely locating the driving force of the VAS processes within parents and children (which could portray the knowledge gaps and tensions observed between parents and undocumented children to be grounded on their shortcomings), the model recognizes that the power, to a certain extent, lies in the public structural systems that

push parents to delegitimize their knowledge and skills derived from their lived experiences when discussing careers with their children, and lead children to internalize their parents' "inferiority" in order to acculturate to and become "successful" within the rules set in the dominant US society.

Lucas et al.'s (2006) critical examination of career discourse suggests that the U.S. capitalist system propagates the American Dream myth. The myth is said to perpetuate the notion that anyone, through hard work (Meritocracy), can attain limitless wealth (Materiality) and status (Hierarchy) (Lucas et al., 2006). Importantly, these elements intersect with many of the parental VAS messages that can be observed in our findings (e.g., work-harder messages, anti-blue-collar messages, STEM job messages) – indicating that immigrant parents are receivers as well as transmitters of the American Dream myth. While they are the target population of this discourse, the majority of undocumented immigrants work in blue-collar careers that do not align with the "normative" definition of career success within the context of the American Dream myth (Lucas & Buzzanell, 2004; Lucas et al., 2006). Consequently, undocumented parents who often hold such manual labor jobs (attributed to their status-based barriers and having less education on average than the U.S.-born labor force; Passel & Cohn, 2015), are likely to perceive themselves as not having achieved the American Dream – unqualified to offer educational and career guidance to their children and thus resorting to conveying more general messages or refrain from providing any VAS messages entirely. When parents do communicate more specifically (to seek non-blue-collar or STEM jobs with the hopes that their children would lead lives more aligned with the American Dream myth), they are ultimately undermining themselves in the process – perpetuating their own marginalization. Critical family career discourse can remind scholars

that only after recognizing these structural factors, we can depart from viewing undocumented families or families from other underserved populations to be inherently deficient.

Practical Implications

The findings from this study can be used to inform the practices of professionals (e.g., teachers, counselors, community organizations, Undocumented Student Services) who work closely with undocumented students and their families. Researchers can also use the findings to develop interventions for undocumented families. For example, parents of undocumented students can be advised to refrain from relaying VAS messages that may increase the sense of career pressure, parental knowledge mistrust, and limited perceived support among their children. Specifically, interventions may provide parents with comprehensive information about the career barriers faced by undocumented students. With this deeper understanding, parents can engage in informed conversations with their children about the challenges they face in college and provide VAS messages that take these obstacles into account. Parents can also be encouraged to accompany their messages of trust in and support for their children's chosen career paths with concrete actions of support and with specific reasons. The findings can also be used to help undocumented youths understand the structural factors that may strip away their parents' credibility, and in turn, help undocumented youths better comprehend why their parents may relate VAS messages that can at times, be perceived as unhelpful and unsupportive.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are several limitations of the current study. First, the data used in this research is solely derived from narratives provided by undocumented students, without the inclusion

of parental perspectives. The absence of parents' viewpoints may limit our understanding of the existence of different kinds of parental VAS messages as well as parents' motivations to share those messages. Second, our study focused on the unique experiences of undocumented college students, and this subgroup does not represent the broader community of undocumented youths who do not pursue higher education. As for further future directions, the relationships highlighted in the VAS Model of Structural Limitations can be quantitatively tested to add to the robustness of our findings and aid in refining the proposed theoretical relationships. Longitudinal studies can be conducted to investigate how the VAS messages and their effects change over the family life course. Future research can also examine the applicability of the VAS Model of Structural Limitations to other minoritized groups to further evaluate the model. Finally, it would be valuable to explore VAS messages that undocumented students receive from nonparental figures (e.g., siblings, professionals, media).

The uncertainties surrounding future careers pose a unique stressor to undocumented students. Since the federally imposed status cannot be changed easily, it becomes necessary to identify available resources that can protect against career barriers. By exploring different parental VAS messages conveyed to undocumented students, our findings extend existing knowledge of the VAS process which has not been studied widely with minoritized populations. These insights have led to the development of the VAS Model of Structural Limitations, which can deepen our understanding of the complex factors at play in shaping career outlooks and choices. Lastly, through critical family career discourse, this thesis offers nuanced perspectives that contextualize the findings within the broader public and structural

systems that should be held responsible for the visible knowledge gaps and tensions within the career-related conversations of undocumented youths and their parents.

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Appendix A

Demographic Survey

1. Identification Code:

Below, please enter the four-digit identification code that you received in your email from us, so we can link your answers from today's portion of the study to your interview.

To ensure accuracy, please enter your identification code again:

2. Please check how old you are:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 24 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 22 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 23 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

3. What is your gender identity?

- Cisgender woman (*cisgender means one's gender identity matches one's biological sex*)
- Cisgender man (*cisgender means one's gender identity matches one's biological sex*)
- Gender nonconforming (*one's gender identity does not conform to society's gender norms*)
- Transgender woman (*one's gender identity does not match one's birth sex*)
- Transgender man (*one's gender identity does not match one's birth sex*)
- Nonbinary (*one's gender identity is not exclusively masculine or feminine*)
- Not listed—please specify: _____

4. What is your sexual identity?

- Heterosexual
- Gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- I am not sure about my sexual identity
- Not listed—please specify: _____

5. Are you an undergraduate or graduate student?

- Undergraduate
- Graduate

6. What year are you as an undergraduate or graduate student?

When totaling the years, transfer students should include the years spent at another college or university (e.g., Two years at a community college plus one year at UCSB would mean you are in your 3rd year. If you had gaps in between, only include the years in school.). Graduate students should only count their years at UCSB.

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 st year | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 th year | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 nd year | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 th year | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 rd year | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 th year | |

7. Are you a first-generation college student?

First-generation college student is defined as being the first in your immediate family to attend college. You are the first among your parent(s) and sibling(s) to enroll in college. If you have an immediate family member who attended college, but you did not grow up with them, please do not count them.

- Yes
- No

8. What kind of college do you currently attend?

- Community college
- Four-Year college or university
- Other: _____

9. Please type what college you are enrolled at: _____

10. What state is your school located in?

- Arizona
- California
- Oregon
- Texas
- Other: _____

11. What is your current work situation?

- Employed part time (up to 39 hours per week)
- Employed full time (40 or more hours per week)
- Self-employed
- Unemployed and currently looking for work
- Unemployed but not currently looking for work (e.g., retired, home duties, pursuing education)

12. What country were you born in?

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- China
- Colombia
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- India
- Jamaica
- South Korea
- Mexico
- Philippines
- Peru
- Venezuela
- Vietnam
- Uruguay
- Other: _____

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

14. How many years have you lived in the United States?

- More than 15 years
- Between 11 and 15 years
- Between 6 and 10 years
- Between 1 and 5 years
- Less than 1 year

15. What country was your biological MOTHER born in? _____

16. How many years has your biological MOTHER lived in the United States?

17. What is your biological MOTHER's highest level of education completed?

- No schooling
- Primary (grades 1-6)
- Secondary (grades 7-9)
- Preparatory (grades 10-12)
- University (undergraduate)
- Masters
- Doctorate

Other: _____

18. What country was your biological FATHER born in? _____

19. How many years has your biological FATHER lived in the United States?

20. What is your biological FATHER's highest level of education completed?

- No schooling
- Primary (grades 1-6)
- Secondary (grades 7-9)
- Preparatory (grades 10-12)
- University (undergraduate)
- Masters
- Doctorate
- Other: _____

21. What language do you primarily speak at home with your family?

- English
- Spanish
- Korean
- Other: _____

22. What is your current immigration status?

- No current legal status (e.g., undocumented, non-DACA, expired visa, unauthorized)
- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipient
- Permanent resident/green card holder
- U.S. Citizen (including naturalized citizen)
- Valid Visa holder (e.g., F1, J1, student visa)
- Other (please specify) _____

23. What year did you first become a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipient? _____ [If answered 'DACA' on the previous question]

What is the documentation status (<i>also sometimes referred to as having papers or no papers, authorized/unauthorized, legal/illegal status</i>) of the following people?	Undocumented	Documented	Used to be undocumented, but now have legal status.
24. Biological Father	1	2	3

25. Biological Mother	1	2	3
26. Stepfather (If applicable or leave blank)	1	2	3
27. Stepmother (If applicable or leave blank)	1	2	3

28. What are your SIBLINGS' documentation status (also sometimes referred to as having papers or no papers, authorized/unauthorized, legal/illegal status)?

- All your siblings are undocumented
- Some of your siblings are documented and others are undocumented
- All your siblings are documented
- You don't have any siblings

29. How many siblings do you have? _____

30. Among your siblings, how many are DACA recipients? _____

31. How many friends do you have who are undocumented?

- None
- Only one
- A few
- Many

32. How many people do you know have been deported or detained? _____

Fear of Deportation - Worry

In the past month, how often have you...	Never	Once	A few times	Many times	All the time
33. worried that family members might be detained or deported?	1	2	3	4	5
34. worried that you might be detained or deported?	1	2	3	4	5

Kam modified item based on Suárez-Orozco's work (Carola Suárez-Orozco sent Kam survey questions that they are using in their work with undocumented college students. Personal communication via e-mail).

Orozco-Suárez, C., Yoshikawa, H., Teranishi, R.T., & Orozco-Suárez, M.M. (2011). Growing up in the shadows: The developmental implications of unauthorized status. Harvard Educational Review, 81, 438-472.

35. Does your university have a center dedicated for undocumented students?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

36. Have you ever visited a “Dream Center/Undocumented Student Services Center”?

- Yes
- No

37. How often do you participate in events hosted by your university’s Dream Center/Undocumented Student Services Center?

- None
- Once
- A few times
- Many times
- All the times

38. How often do you access resources provided by your university’s Undocumented Student Services?

- None
- Once
- A few times
- Many times
- All the times

Undocumented Pride

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the items below:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Disagree
39. I’m proud of being undocumented.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I feel good about who I am as an undocumented immigrant.	1	2	3	4	5
Kam et al. (2019). Coping paper https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00909882.2018.1528373?tab=permissions&scroll=top					

Undocumented Centrality

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
41. My undocumented identity is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
42. My undocumented identity is a central part of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Katsiaficas, D., Volpe, V., Raza, S. S., & Garcia, Y. (2019). The role of campus support, undocumented identity, and deferred action for childhood arrivals on civic engagement for Latinx undocumented undergraduates. <i>Child development</i>, 90(3), 790-807.</p> <p>Phinney, J. (1992). The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure: A new scale for use with adolescents and young adults from diverse groups. <i>Journal of Adolescent Research</i>, 7, 156-176.</p>					

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Introductions

1) Interviewer will introduce themselves and explain the purpose of the study:

"Hi. Is this participant's name ?

My name is interviewer's name. You're scheduled to participate in a phone interview right now; is this still a good time?

Great. Thank you participant's name for your time in participating in this interview. I want to start by going over some important introductory information first, and then we'll start the interview itself.

First, this is a one-on-one telephone interview about your experiences living in the United States, focusing particularly on your communication with your family about being undocumented as well as your career choices and plans.

Our discussion is confidential, and I will be audio-recording our conversation only to be able to remember what was said. I will not include your name or any identifying information with the typed interview.

As you may have already seen from the research flyer, the whole process can take anywhere between 45-75 minutes. For your valuable time in having filled out the short survey and now taking part in this interview discussion with me, you will receive \$40.

I also want to tell you briefly about the goal of our research project. Through these interviews, our research team hopes to learn how students and families talk about their status so that we can identify the current needs of undocumented families. Through your valuable input, we hope to provide resources to undocumented families and inform allies on how to be supportive. Do you have any questions for me at this point?"

2) Rights

"Now, I have a few more things I'd like to cover about the interview. If at any time during the interview you feel uncomfortable or don't understand a question, please let me know. If you want to, you can stop the interview at any time. There is no penalty to stopping the interview. The questions we're going to talk about really don't have any right or wrong answers. And we'd just like to know about your experiences."

3) Consent to Record the Interview

"Now, you already agreed to participate in a recorded interview. But I just want to remind you again that this will be recorded so that you can talk as fast and as much as you want to, without worrying about whether I'm able to write it all down. I am going to be writing

some notes, but don't let that distract you. Just keep telling your stories and the recorder will get all the details. Remember that only the research team will know the comments are yours. We will delete the audio recording at the end of the study once we've published papers and presented our findings." *If the student indicates they do not want to be recorded, then terminate the interview.*

4) **Emphasize Confidentiality**

Example: "Lastly, I want to emphasize again our research team's commitment to keep your information and answers to this interview private. First, we will take the information you give us and put it with information from all of the other students we are interviewing. Also, your answers will be kept on our research team's password-protected computers and Box account online. Additionally, we obtained a Certificate of Confidentiality through the National Institutes of Health which protects us from anyone asking for the list of students who are in the study. I'm sworn to keep the information private, even from your parents, teachers, and friends."

5) **Ask student to choose a fake name.**

Example: "Great, now, during the interview – which we will begin very shortly, I'll call you by another name to ensure your privacy. You can make up any name. Just not your real name or even your nickname. Anything else will do. What name would you like to use?"

Introduction to the Interview

"Ready to start the interview? Thank you. Let's begin."

Interview Questions

- 6) Please tell me a little bit about yourself. What made you decide to participate in this interview?
- 7) Can you explain how important, if at all, your undocumented status is to your identity and who you are?
- 8) To what extent do you think about your undocumented status?
 - Can you explain why that might be the case?
- 9) To what extent do you talk about your undocumented status to others?
 - Can you explain why that might be the case?

Career

- 10) Now, I'm going to ask you questions about your post-graduation plans, particularly those involving work. To begin with, can you describe any plans (or even vague ideas) you have for after you graduate from college?
- Can you explain how you developed these plans?
 - When did you first begin to think about your career plans post-graduation?
 - Did you develop them on your own or did others help you come up with these plans?
- 11) Do you think your undocumented status affects your career choices and plans? If so, how?
- 12) If you were to not take your status into account (if you were not limited by your status), what would your post-graduation work plans look like? Would it be the same as now?
- 13) Have you encountered any work-related issues so far (e.g., when looking for jobs or while working at past/current workplaces) due to your status? If so, how?
- 14) How often do your parents or other family members talk to you about your career-related plans following graduation? What do they tend to talk about?
- 15) To what extent did your family members (e.g., parents, siblings) shape your current career goals and plans?
- 16) Can you describe any career or work aspirations that your parents have for you?
- How do you know that? What have they said or done that makes you think they want that for you?
 - How do these expectations and aspirations they have for you make you feel?
 - Why do you think they have these aspirations for you?
 - How did their career or work aspirations make you feel (e.g., is there any pressure to meet their expectations)? Why?
- 17) What is a memorable conversation or comment your parents had/shared with you about your career goals and plans?
- Can you describe the conversation or comment in detail?
 - a. Who said what?
 - b. Where did it take place?
 - c. What prompted it?
 - How did the conversation or comment make you feel?

- Can you tell me how _____ [insert which family members were involved in the conversation] may have felt after this conversation or comment?
 - Why do you think this particular conversation or comment is memorable to you?
 - How did this conversation or comment influence and shape your viewpoints about your career goals, options, or trajectories?
 - Can you tell me what might have motivated your _____ to engage in this conversation or share this comment?
- 18) Do you feel comfortable approaching your parents to talk about job-related topics (e.g., to seek advice, or share concerns about the future)? Why/why not?
- 19) Do you receive career-related support from your parents? If yes, what kinds of career-related support do you receive from your parents?
- 20) What kind of career-related support do you want to receive from your parents?
- 21) Has anyone else made a big influence on your career choices or plans (e.g., friends, teachers, undergrad advisor, school counselor, Undocumented Student Services/DREAM Centers)? Who are they?
- What did they say or do to influence your career plans?
- 22) Do you know of or have used any career development resources that are available on-campus? What are they?
- How about from off-campus? What are they?
- 23) What kind of career-related support do you want to receive from on-campus resources?
- How about from off-campus resources? What are they?

CLOSE: That's all the time we have for today. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about related to this interview?

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me. Remember, your answers to these questions are completely private.

And before we end our interview, I wanted to check in with you about the link to a 10-minute demographic survey we sent you a few days ago. If you haven't filled it out, I'd like to invite you to fill it out now. Once we confirm that you completed the online survey, we can process \$40 as an Amazon gift card to thank you for taking the time to participate in our study. Thank you again for your time.