

Undocuqueer: Interacting and Working within the Intersection of
LGBTQ and Undocumented

by

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ABSTRACT

Employing Queer Intersectionality, this study explored how undocuqueer activists made sense of, interacted and worked within the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience. Participants ascribed three overarching self-meanings: Vulnerability, Complexity, and Resilience. These self-meanings describe the ways participants perceived the interplay of their gender, sexuality and immigration status within the current sociopolitical context of the U.S. Recognizing their vulnerability within a state of illegibility, participants described a sense of exclusion within spaces of belonging, and wariness managing relationships with others; opting for more complex self-definitions, they resisted simplistic conceptions of identity that rendered their social locations invisible (e.g., homonormativity, heteronormativity, DREAMer); and describing themselves as resilient, they described surviving societal as well as familial rejection even when surviving seemed impossible to do so. Interacting and working within the intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status, participants described identity negotiation and *coming out* as a form of resistance to institutionalized oppression, and resilience amidst simultaneous anti-immigrant, xenophobic and heterosexist power structures. Participants learned to live in multiple worlds at the same time, and embrace the multiplicity of their undocuqueer identity while seeking to bridge their communities through stories, activism and peer education. This study has implications for further understanding the way that queer politics and identity interact/relate with various axes of inequality.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

You can be ignorant or blinded like how I was, saying that one thing does not affect the other, but if you sit down and really analyze it, like how it affects your every single day—and it affects it so much! As an LGBT mainstream movement you are not recognized. As an immigrant movement, you are not recognized and you are the negotiating piece. We are always the negotiating piece, and our lives are not to be negotiated. Why is it that we are always the negotiating piece, and why is it that in our lives we have to be okay with that?

In this way, Jesse, an undocuqueer activist from Arizona, describes his experience navigating the cultural intersection of his (homo)sexuality and immigration status. His narrative highlights the unique position lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) undocumented immigrants in the U.S. often find themselves in, given the politicization and commodification of their experiences within mainstream LGBTQ and immigrant rights discourses.

Though the last couple of years have witnessed accomplishments for the LGBTQ rights movement, as well as administrative successes for the immigrant rights movement, LGBTQ undocumented immigrants remain on the fringes of these victories. Discourses around marriage equality, for example, limit rights based upon citizenship (Chávez, 2010; Queers for Economic Justice, 2007). Individuals cannot petition for their same-sex spouses through family based immigration processes unless one of them has citizenship. This agenda, hence, does not benefit undocumented immigrants who are single, unmarried or not in a relationship with a U.S. citizen. Restrictive eligibility requirements and the limited number of visas available per year, further, make undocumented

immigrants who entered the U.S. without inspection ineligible to adjust their immigration status, even if married to a U.S. citizen (see Arellano, 2012; Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996).

Likewise, within the immigrant rights movement, politics of deservingness strategically place undue emphasis on normative ideologies that limit rights based on heterosexism (Queers for Economic Justice, 2007). Positioning families and DREAMers as American in every way except on paper, these discourses frame undocumented immigrants within the dominant values of heterosexuality and gender conformance; hence, rejecting deviant expressions of normative nationalist ideals (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender nonconforming). A pathway to citizenship that does not recognize the distinct barriers facing the more than 267,000 LGBTQ-identified undocumented immigrants in the U.S. would thereby not guarantee equal access to relief (Gates, 2013).

Though LGBTQ and immigrant rights are at the forefront of political debates today, there is little discussion among scholars of how immigration status is an issue for LGBTQ people, and how sexuality and gender disruption similarly implicates the experiences of immigrants. Both movements, which are largely understood to be separate, have generally advocated a politics of inclusion in and assimilation to mainstream national values, utilizing normalizing discourses of belonging to frame their issues (Chávez, 2010, 2013). The tendency to present each movement in terms oriented to the dominant culture has resulted in the exclusion and disenfranchisement of individuals who find themselves outside of normative conceptions of dominant nationalist scripts.

Because mainstream LGBTQ and immigrant rights frameworks delink sexuality and immigration status, “the study of sexuality and immigration remains marginalized, trivialized, depoliticized, or treated with hostility” (Luibhéid, 2004, p. 227). As researchers look at issues of LGBTQ and immigrant rights separately, we have no appreciation for the lives or experiences of individuals outside of these normative conceptions of what it means to be LGBTQ and what it means to be undocumented. Social movement scholars have critiqued unitary-identity social movements for their exclusion of a mass number of constituents, support of the matrix of domination by addressing one form of inequality but not others, and failure to recognize the complex mechanisms behind the inequality they intend to address (Kurtz, 2002). For this reason, the study of LGBTQ and immigrant rights must challenge multiple hierarchies at once or else risk benefiting only those who already benefit from some structural privileges (Luibhéid, 2008).

Undocuqueer has emerged as a coalitional political identity that has been made possible through the lived experiences of LGBTQ undocumented youth (Corrunker, 2012; DasGupta, 2012; Gutierrez, 2012, 2013; Wong, Shaddock-Hernandez, Inzunza, Monroe, Narro, & Valenzuela, 2012). Out of the *closet* and no longer living in the *shadows* (Chávez, 1997), undocuqueers destabilize notions of collective identity by honing in on the complexity of navigating intersectional identities, and the power of creating something new within the contradictions. Their self-defined standpoints provide an alternative formation of identity that disrupts unitary identity politics within the larger LGBTQ and immigrant rights discourses. Undocuqueer, as a discursive formation, thereby not only critiques dominant LGBTQ and immigrant rights frameworks, but also

produces alternate subjectivities and subject positions that resist multiple axes of oppression within a matrix of domination (Collins, 2000).

Undocuqueers campaign for administrative relief inclusive of LGBTQ immigrants; advocate for the rights and protections of LGBTQ immigrants within detention facilities; and conduct double *coming out* forums challenging essentialized conceptions of identity (Portillo, 2012). The experience of organizing for LGBTQ and immigrant rights organizations that challenge current laws and policies has provided the impetus for *coming out* “undocumented and unafraid, queer and unashamed” (Lerner, 2012). Undocuqueers have tapped into the common thread of confronting fear, and have played a prominent role in both the movement toward marriage equality as same-sex binational couples, and as DREAMers in the movement toward immigration reform (Campbell, 2012; Shore, 2013). Yet to speak and be heard in ways that will not immediately invite the most serious of repercussions (e.g., rejection, discrimination, detention, deportation) is a challenge that undocuqueer activists face in ways that other populations with a direct stake in U.S. legislative battles do not. Because these activists are positioned at the overlapping margins of two single-variable identity-based social movements pursuing conflicting political agendas that fail to adequately represent them, their positionality as LGBTQ undocumented immigrants in the U.S. represents an important borderland that commands greater attention.

Purpose of study

There is a body of literature encompassing the experiences of LGBTQ activists from diverse backgrounds (Alimahomed, 2010; Moore, 2010; Pastrana, 2010; Stone, 2009; Swank & Fahs, 2011, 2012; Taylor et al., 2009; Waldner, 2001), as well as

LGBTQ activists' collective identity and motivations for high-risk activism (Ghaziani, 2011; Jones, 2002; Vivienne & Burgess, 2012). Moreover, there is a separate body of literature encompassing undocumented activists' motivations for becoming civically engaged (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2010), the effects of storytelling through digital media (Zimmerman, 2012), and the effects of engaging in political advocacy (Gonzalez, 2008; Morales, Herrera, & Murry 2011; Negron-Gonzalez, 2013). With notable exceptions, empirical research specifically focused on the intersections of sexuality and immigration status, or LGBTQ undocumented immigrants' experiences and perspectives are limited (for exceptions, see Acosta, 2008; Canaday, 2003; Cantú, 1999, 2009; Chávez, 2011; LaFountain-Stokes, 2005; Luibhéid, 2002; Luibhéid & Cantú, 2005; Manalansan, 1994, 2003, 2006; Peña, 2007; Somerville, 2005).

Though the limitations to legal U.S. entry are replete with deep heteronormative assumptions, previous scholarship virtually ignores LGBTQ undocumented immigrants' experiences, and the connections among sexuality, immigration status and normativity (Heller, 2009; Lubheid, 2002, 2004). Related research has explored the specific legal experiences of LGBTQ migrants as they pertain to asylum on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, the rights of HIV positive people who want or need to migrate, and the limitations of family-based immigration benefits pre-*United States v. Windsor* (Cheng, 2006; Hanna, 2005; Holt, 2004; Human Rights Watch & Immigration Equality, 2006; Luibhéid, 2008; Rank, 2002; Wygonik, 2004-2005). Though related, these studies neglect to unpack the uniqueness of living as an LGBTQ undocumented immigrant within the sociopolitical context of the U.S., or being politically excluded from representation within LGBTQ and immigrant rights advocacy frameworks

simultaneously. For these reasons, the purpose of this study is to (1) explore the way undocuqueer activists make sense of the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experiences, and (2) via their personal narratives, understand how they interact and work within the various social systems that simultaneously exclude them.

Significance of Study

Immigration and sexual politics in the U.S. are two of the most divisive issues at the center of major policy and civil rights discussions today. Both have contributed to the polarization of our nation around issues of marriage, adoption, employment non-discrimination, higher education, healthcare and immigration reform. Because undocuqueer activists fall outside of essentialized conceptions of what it means to be LGBTQ and what it means to be undocumented, their views of reality differ from, are not a part of, or have not been fully captured by hegemonic discourses. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incomparable frames of reference causes a cultural collision (Anzaldúa, 1987) producing dissident knowledge that resists normative conceptions of dominant discourse. In this respect, understanding undocuqueer activists' experiences—different from both LGBTQ and undocumented activists—provides localized and specific knowledge that attends to the complexities of gender identity and expression, sexuality and immigration status. Their narratives help work against the consistent erasure of their experiences and perspectives at the overlapping margins of two single-variable identity-based social movements. Rendering these intersectional social locations visible, hence, is politically and culturally powerful for those working with and within LGBTQ and immigrant rights organizations.

Previous research has looked at both LGBTQ and undocumented activists and their respective movements separately, acknowledging the blatant disregard for individuals/communities residing at the margins and overlaps of structural forms of oppression (Ferry, 2012; Ghaziani, 2011; Muñoz, 1999; Nicholls, 2013; Ruiz, 2008; Unzueta Carrasco & Seif, 2014; Zimmerman, 2011). This study moves these conceptual margins to the center of analysis in an effort to explore and understand the way that queer politics and identity interact/ relate with various axes of inequality. The lack of research accorded to studying the intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status paints an incomplete picture of inequality that demands further theorizing. Understanding the way gender identity and expression, sexuality and immigration status affect and shape the experiences of undocuqueer activists is important for charting “the ways in which identity is enacted by minority subjects who must work with/ resist the conditions of (im)possibility that dominant culture generates” (Muñoz, 1999, p. 6).

Research Questions

This study highlights the voices of undocuqueer activists, and is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do undocuqueer activists make sense of the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience?
2. How do undocuqueer activists interact and work within the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience?

My first question gets more at theorizing personal experience in accordance with participants’ meaning making, where as my second question addresses the more practical lived experiences. In this sense, question two follows and informs question one. With

these research questions, I seek to illuminate the Queer Intersectionality of gender, sexuality and immigration status. I am interested in exploring the lived experiences of undocuqueer activists in terms of how they make sense of their experiences, and interact and work within the various social systems that simultaneously oppress them. Given the paucity of studies that look at the intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status for LGBTQ undocumented immigrants in the U.S., highlighting undocuqueer activists' narratives may be an important way of moving society towards a more nuanced and complex understanding of identity, power, resistance and oppression.

Definitions

My research is guided by the following set of clarifications regarding my use of terms and their corresponding interpretations:

Sex, Gender and Sexuality

In the context of the present study, challenging presumed heterosexuality and institutionalized heteronormativity—the idea that “institutionalized heterosexuality constitutes the standard for legitimate and prescriptive sociosexual arrangements” (Ingraham, 1994, p. 204)—is at the root of understanding the relationship between sex, gender and sexuality. Accordingly, we must re-imagine sex, gender and sexuality as complex, diverse, and fluid social constructs rather than biological certainties.

Heteronormativity requires the binarization, normalization and naturalization of sex and gender difference. Sex categorization activates gendered status distinctions. Gender, as a normative discourse for sex, is intimately interwoven with sexuality. Hence, sex becomes a symptom for sexuality. Because heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality are all dependent on similar understandings of sex, when gender resists the

binary categorization of man and woman (e.g., transgender, genderqueer, agender, pangender, gender nonconforming) it simultaneously resists the dominant relationship of sex and gender that sexuality is dependent on (Stryker, 2008). For this reason, gender and sexuality are not universal, biologically-rooted categories, but instead socially and culturally contingent. They help explain how identities are formed by social norms and culture, and how individuals can resist the regulation of their identities by transgressing boundaries. Although these constructs may appear to be static and fixed, they have changed over time to monitor, control, and discipline us in ways that reflect social, political, and economic debates and struggles. Foucault (1978) helps us to understand how the expectations regarding gender expression, sexual behavior, and social roles have changed, and how categories have been created to discipline the body across different eras. Although we may be limited by the materiality of the time and place in which we live, we have choices about acceding to or resisting gender and sexual regulation.

Queer Theory demonstrates how gender and sexuality are both negotiated categories, reworked and restructured in each encounter. For the purpose of this study, the term *queer* will be used to denote same-sex desires and identities, as well as transgender and other gender identities and expressions (e.g., genderqueer) that are marked as deviant and/or nonconforming by heteronormative power structures (Oswald, Kivalanka, Blume, & Berkowitz, 2009). *Queer* serves as a political objection to placing heterosexuality and homosexuality in binary categories, and can similarly be used to challenge binaries of masculinity and femininity or to describe oneself as gender nonconforming. It refers to living out the notion that we can never adequately identify or codify identity. It is about contingent knowledge whose meanings we must constantly

reevaluate and reinterpret. It is about being politically, culturally, and socially dissident (Cohen, 2001; Talburt & Steinberg, 2000). Queer reveals the possibility of non-normativity in all people, thereby redefining what counts as “normal,” as well as shifting the power dynamics inherent within binary structures (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 27).

Immigration Status

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2012), every person admitted into the U.S. is assigned either an immigrant or nonimmigrant immigration status. An immigrant status refers to people who have been granted permission to live and work permanently in the U.S. without restrictions. A nonimmigrant status refers to people who enter the U.S. on a temporary basis for tourism, business, temporary work, or study purposes. Each nonimmigrant status has rules and guidelines, which must be followed in order for the nonimmigrant to remain in status.

Persons with an unlawful immigration status are those who (1) entered the U.S. without inspection or legal permission, or (2) were lawfully admitted but fell out of status or their status was revoked per United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). These persons are considered undocumented because they live in the U.S. without legal permission. Though undocumented immigrants are protected under certain laws and, in fact, have many rights (Abrego, 2008; Cutin, 2011; Gonzales, 2008; Abrego, 2011; Seif, 2011), they are always deportable per Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Activism

Activism can be articulated in terms of transgression as a means of resistance. It is any intentional action or activity by an individual or a group of actors in opposition to or

in support of a cause. Its classification as activism is contingent upon its purpose and/or the intention of the actor rather than of the type of activity itself. Activism does not require actors to be organized. Likewise, it can be both individual and collective, and take a wide range of forms: petitions, letters, articles, demonstrations, rallies, marches, direct action, etc. In this sense, all forms of identity politics can be understood as activism, because they take the individual to the site of political activity (Taylor & Raeburn, 1995). Identity politics allow marginalized identities to challenge negative descriptions used by oppressive systems and become normalized.

Organization of Dissertation

The study is organized into five distinct chapters. In this chapter, I have introduced the topic of inquiry, outlining the purpose and significance of this study. I have similarly identified the research questions guiding this study. In Chapter Two, I review the literature on the context and history of the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements, honing in on the study of their respective activists. I also describe my use of Queer Theory and Intersectionality in the adoption of Queer Intersectionality as the framework guiding this study. Chapter Three outlines the study methodology, which draws from narrative inquiry. I also describe the details of the process by which I conducted this study and the approach I used to analyze data gathered. Chapter Four describes the findings that emerged from the data, and Chapter Five provides a discussion regarding the way these findings connect with other concepts and bodies of literature. I conclude by raising implications for policy and research.

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature

Inherent to understanding individual's positionality at the overlapping margins of two social movements is the centering of their lived experiences within hegemonic power structures. In this chapter, I summarize the politics of LGBTQ and immigrant rights in the U.S. to frame the experiences of undocuqueer activists at the overlapping margins of these two social movements. Doing so, I provide the rationale for exploring gender, sexuality and immigration status in relation to each other. I draw from Queer Theory to conceptualize identity as a form of dissent from normative structures, then discuss Intersectionality as an analytic framework for understanding gender, sexuality and immigration status as interlocking systems of oppression, highlighting accounts of lived experience within those societal power structures. This section concludes with the framework undergirding this study, identifying the ways Queer Intersectionality is used to explore the lived experiences of undocuqueer activists.

Politics of LGBTQ Rights in the U.S.

For half a century, LGBTQ rights activists have invoked the language of Americanism (e.g., patriotism, liberty, equality) and appealed to national ideals in their struggle for equal rights (Hall, 2013). While the prominence afforded to the Gay Liberation Front, Queer Nation, ACT UP, and similar groups has, at times, worked to obscure the appeals to Americanism in the LGBTQ rights movement post-Stonewall, since the 1990s the politic of sexuality has increasingly been about seeking access into mainstream culture through demanding equal rights of citizenship (D'Emilio 2000; Ghaziani 2005; Hall, 2013; Richardson, 2005; Seidman, 2002; Vaid, 1995; Ward, 2008). These approaches have become the dominant political discourse in the U.S., where the

subject of equality is interpreted as equal entitlement to recognition and resources (Warner 1999).

Unsettling to those who hold transgressive, progressive or radical visions of gay liberation, a common justification of these and other demands for social inclusion is that LGBTQ persons are ordinary, normal citizens, same as heterosexuals. This tendency to present the movement in terms oriented to the dominant culture has led activists to focus conservatively on petitioning rights and recognition (Mucciaroni 2008; Seidman, 2002). In these battles, LGBTQ activists and their allies have continued the tradition of invoking Americanism by deploying language and symbols that resonate powerfully with deep-rooted protest traditions that have proven successful in the past (Hall, 2013). Rather than challenge the institutionalization of systems of power that oppress people both as individuals and as a movement, these efforts have promoted a politic that strives for conventional citizenship, upholds heteronormative ideas and institutions, and promises a “privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (Duggan, 2003, p. 50). With increased political and social assimilation, these issues have diverted our attention from the interrelated nature of oppression and transfixed the LGBTQ community with promises of legal and social equality that reinforces existing race, class and gender divisions. Such rights-based organizing ultimately reasserts the state’s authority to make determinations about who should be subject to rights, and who can and should be rightfully excluded (Eng et al., 2005). After all, seeking inclusion within an exclusive system legitimizes colonial, gender and racial control, and establishes distinctions between “deserving” and “undeserving” people that justify the harm these

systems and institutions perpetuate particularly for queer and trans people of color (Spade, 2013, p. 85).

According to Warner (1999), this is precisely the trouble with positioning LGBTQ individuals and the broader movement as “normal.” Through assimilation politics, which ignore power and privilege, dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions remain unchallenged and unquestioned (Ferry, 2012), LGBTQ identity becomes “privatized” and “depoliticized” (Duggan, 2002, p. 179), and the structure of social inequality remains materially intact (Jakobsen & Pellegrini, 2003). The desirability and necessity of marital-style sexual coupledness, privileged over other forms of relationships of care and support, becomes the basis for many kinds of rights entitlements (Wise & Stanley, 2004). This rhetoric of homonormativity, privileges certain forms of homosexual expression and regulates bodies and practices within neoliberal privatized norms. Further, it undermines rather than supports the broader movement for social justice and democratic diversity (Duggan, 2002, 2003, 2004; Ghaziani, 2011; Richardson, 2004).

For this reason, the acronym LGBTQ and the distinctions maintained within this grouping neither effectively communicate information about these groups as a whole or individually (Moraga, 2009; Muñoz, 1999). The assertion of a collective identity marginalizes and excludes those unable or unwilling to conform to it, and similarly negotiates and commodifies the experiences of queer people of color to reinforce and (re)produce a false homogeneity (Ferguson, 2003; Muñoz, 1999; Vaid, 2012). Queer individuals that are of color, undocumented, fluid in their sexual expression or gender, or a combination of such, are often left out of representation (Ferry, 2012; Muñoz, 1999).

Duggan (2003) warns that the homonormative approach risks squeezing out progressive visions of a more radical LGBTQ rights movement working in concert with workers, minorities, and other oppressed or marginalized people.

LGBTQ activists. While the LGBTQ rights movement has received many critical scholars' attention, studies on the experiences of LGBTQ activists from diverse backgrounds are rare (e.g., Alimahomed, 2010; Moore, 2010; Pastrana, 2010; Swank & Fahs, 2011, 2012; Stone, 2009; Taylor et al., 2009; Waldner, 2001). Many focus on issues of collective identity and/or activists' motivations for participating in activism (Ghaziani, 2011; Jones, 2002; Vivienne & Burgess, 2012); however, these often overlook the ways intersectional identity constructs (e.g., race, gender, immigration status) shape activists' experiences or perspectives within the movement.

Among the exceptions, Alimahomed (2010) found that queer Latinas and Asian/Pacific Islander women used their social positions as *outsiders within* (Collins, 2004) both the LGBTQ movement and their own racial/ethnic communities to challenge their invisibility within the representation, politics, and structures of the LGBTQ movement. These women adopted a particular oppositional politic that stressed the interconnectedness of their marked and subordinate identities to produce new and resistant meanings and expressions of their identity that interrogated the implicit White racial construction of hegemonic queer identity. Moore (2010) similarly describes LGBTQ protest within Black environments, and highlights how activists understand and negotiate multiple identity statuses based on race and sexuality. Protest in this context used cultural references to connect Black sexual minorities' struggles to historical efforts

for Black equality, and draw from nationalist symbols and language to frame their political work.

Other studies reveal how LGB activists of color often claim feeling like a token racial minority at LGB events (Balsam et al., 2011), and express how practices of racism are often minimized, or sometimes reenacted, by most wings of the LGBTQ rights movement (Alimahomed, 2010; Levitsky, 2007; Ward, 2008b). Activists' experiences of racism, homophobia, and discrimination within LGBT populations and within their own racial group similarly affect their identities and activism. Pastrana (2010) described how even though LGBTQ activists of color view their lives as intersectional, certain traits or characteristics often take precedence over others. Experiences of racism, homophobia, and discrimination within LGBT populations and within their own racial group affected their identities and their activism, but also contributed to such facts as increased visibility and ease of access to communities of color.

Swank and Fahs (2012), who explored activists' motives for involvement in the LGBTQ rights movement, found that publicly revealing one's sexual identity and experiencing heterosexist discrimination generally increased activism regardless of gender and race. White lesbians, however, were less likely to protest and vote than lesbians of color. For gay men, experiencing workplace discrimination and embracing an activist identity were especially relevant in predicting activist behaviors.

Though limited, the existing literature on LGBTQ rights activists most often provides accounts of how the LGBTQ rights movement most often prioritizes the demands of gay men over lesbian women, and White over sexual minorities of color (Alimahomed, 2010; Levitsky 2007; Ward 2008b). The scarcity of research focusing on

LGBTQ activists of diverse backgrounds suggests that this population has not received much attention for their role-identity as activists within the LGBTQ rights movement. Previous studies presume homogeneity of experience, or simply do not rigorously interrogate interlocking systems of oppression. Likewise, no accounts of undocumented activists' experiences within the LGBTQ rights movement were identified, despite their grassroots efforts and strong visibility within the fight towards marriage equality as same-sex binational couples over the last couple of years.

Politics of Immigrant Rights in the U.S.

Firmly intertwined with the “war on terrorism,” controlling unauthorized immigration to the U.S. has become a top priority, authorizing the expanded criminalization, incarceration, and withdrawal of rights and due process for all migrants (Luibhéid, 2008, p. 289). Given an increase in anti-immigrant policies across the nation, and the lack of success in passing the DREAM Act¹, or comprehensive immigration reform in general, the immigrant rights movement has organized around their undocumented status to advocate for administrative relief, family reunification, a pathway to citizenship, and increased access to higher education. Leading to some of the most successful civil rights actions in terms of numbers and geographical breadth (see Vargas, 2007), the immigrant rights movement has sought to create the necessary tension to deal with the systemic problems of state and federal immigration policy. Undocumented youth have been some of the most visible at the forefront of these efforts (Gonzalez, 2008).

¹ The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is a narrowly tailored bill that would allow grant eligible undocumented youth conditional legal status if they attend college or join the military to legalize their status in the U.S. Since 2001, the DREAM Act has undergone numerous revisions, and has been reintroduced and defeated in every Congress.

Initially, student issues were not a prominent part of the immigrant rights movements' broader agenda, but the DREAM Act inspired political participation and activism amongst undocumented youth in unprecedented numbers (Zimmerman, 2011). As youth became organized and individuals began to find comfort in knowing they were not alone, DREAM Act advocacy gave many undocumented youth a means to participate in the political process around a matter of direct relevance to them (Gonzalez, 2008). As a result, national coalitions emerged (e.g., United We Dream Network), coordinating undocumented youth organizations across the country and opting for forms of grassroots organizing that prioritized undocumented youth leadership and strategies (Zimmerman, 2011). Despite the dangers involved in speaking out publicly, campaigns based on the tactic of *coming out*—a repertoire used by the LGBTQ movement—have been a fundamental mobilizing strategy and collective identification tool amongst undocumented youth, forcing Americans to put a face to the term *undocumented* (Corruner, 2012; Seif, 2004, 2011).

The immigrant rights movement and its respective activists have emerged from the shadows, claiming their own space in the public sphere and asserting their right to recognition—a right to have rights (Nicholls, 2013). Establishing visibility, immigrant rights activists transitioned their protests from street marches to civil disobedience, putting their bodies on the line, risking deportation by staging sit-ins, occupying congressmen's offices, blocking ICE facilities and detention centers, and holding hunger-strikes to call attention to their blocked opportunities (Galindo, 2012; Gonzalez, 2008; Olzen, 2011; Seif, 2011). The civil disobedience reflects how the immigrant rights movement transitioned and transformed from a movement initially focused on building

support for the DREAM Act, to one that has increasingly used direct action and social media activism to bring attention to the broader social issues that have largely remained hidden from public view (Zimmerman, 2011).

Stopping the deportation of DREAM Act-eligible youth through administrative action represented a strategic shift for the youth-led immigrant rights movement in 2012. The announcement of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)², and its later implementation, was an unprecedented reflection of the power of their organizing (Unzueta Carrasco & Seif, 2014)—a success that these activists championed by cultivating the notion of cultural Americanism and deservingness. Cultural Americanism has been the most utilized tactic within the youth-led immigrant rights movement, offering undocumented activists an opportunity to reach out and build support on the basis of shared values and ideals (Nicholls, 2013). The aim of this collective strategy has been to dismantle negative public perceptions and depictions of undocumented immigrants as being “unworthy.” Rather than contest this model of citizenship or assert alternative understandings of citizenship, the immigrant rights movement has argued for immigrants’ inclusion in this exclusionary category as model citizens-to-be. This tactic, however, does little to question the restrictive and highly circumscribed notions of citizenship, as well as conceptions of worthiness that exclude those who do not fit these characteristics (Baker-Cristales, 2009; Coutin, 2000).

During legislative campaigns pushing for the passage of the DREAM Act, for example, politicians and advocates argued for the rights of students by placing the blame

² DACA provides a qualified group of undocumented immigrants an opportunity to apply for temporary work permits and protection from deportation while waiting on Congress to implement their DREAM (Arellano, 2012; Richard, 2013).

of their status on their parents, thereby distinguishing who was defined as worthy, culpable and deportable (Unzueta Carrasco & Seif, 2014). Though DREAM Act legislation first emphasized why an immigrant with lower priority status warrants deferred action from removal proceedings (Smith, 2013), DACA materialized the divider that separated those undocumented immigrants who were deemed “deserving” from those who were not. Becoming DACAmented, hence, highlighted the different treatment and levels of privilege among undocumented immigrants, and the immigrant rights movement’s responsibility for creating a community that is inclusive of the diversity of immigration experiences (Unzueta Carrasco & Seif, 2014).

Today, politicians and policy-makers have shifted the debate from conceptualizing immigrants primarily as burdens on U.S. society to seeing them as sources of criminality and security threats (Baker-Cristales, 2009). Consequently, undocumented organizers are moving away from justifying access to rights by measuring worthiness according to norms, and moving more towards articulating rights based on the community’s needs, thereby shifting definitions of citizenship and deportability. There is an increasing awareness within the immigrant rights movement that when activists “emphasize the right of some to remain within, they also define who gets left out, marginalized, criminalized and deported” (Unzueta Carrasco & Seif, 2014, p. 289).

Undocumented activists. Undocumented youth, over the last decade, have participated in immigrant rights activism in unprecedented numbers, defying stereotypes of immigrant youth as being politically powerless. Through civic engagement, they have challenged their societal marginalization and demonstrated their contributions to a society

that rejects them (Abrego, 2006, 2008; Galindo, 2012; Gonzales, 2008; Seif, 2004, 2011; Vélez et al., 2008).

Storytelling through digital media has been essential in constructing a collective identity for undocumented activists. New media, including Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, micro-blogging, chat rooms, and discussion forums, enable undocumented youth to feel a sense of community by connecting and communicating with other youth similarly situated (Zimmerman, 2012). Telling stories about shared struggles and movement victories through user generated videos and blogs have had the cumulative effect of increasing undocumented youth's sense of belonging, group solidarity and sense of political efficacy. Corruner (2012) found visibility through digital media, in addition to leadership and deservingness, to be a major source of empowerment for undocumented activists. The moral and persuasive power of their narratives was something they used, to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people and to the contexts in which they operate. Speaking out further connected them to a large network of other undocumented students who share many of the same experiences, challenges, and aspirations (Corruner, 2012).

According to Perez et al., (2010) undocumented students reveal that they are driven to become civically engaged because it serves as an antidote to the political and social marginalization they face as undocumented students. Civic engagement—defined as providing a social service, activism, tutoring, and functionary work—serves as a way to feel a sense of belonging, and allows them the opportunity to affirm themselves as good people and model citizens despite current negative public opinion regarding unauthorized immigration (Pérez et al., 2009; Pérez et al., 2010b). In a study of student

activism, Gonzales (2008) examined how the experience of exclusion shaped the political identity and consciousness of undocumented students. He noted that the fear and shame of students' undocumented status served as a catalyst for political engagement and for forging collective identity among undocumented youth. Sharing testimonies of exclusion played a critical role in the development of oppositional consciousness and critical thinking.

Negron-Gonzalez (2013) similarly explored the way in which negotiation of “illegality” in sites of daily life contributes to the development of an oppositional consciousness. She found that engagement in activism, and the subsequent process of taking pride in an undocumented identity, plays a role in eroding fear and shame. The pervasive experience of being “othered” impelled undocumented youth to create community and collective identity with other undocumented youth, often resulting in political engagement (Negron-Gonzalez, 2013). Morales et al. (2011) found similar results, observing that undocumented immigrant students found common purpose, self-preservation, and resiliency in volatile political contexts through political advocacy.

In general, similar to research exploring the experiences of LGBTQ activists, the existing literature on undocumented activists reveals that differences amongst participants regarding their experiences within the immigrant rights movement are rarely explicitly explicated. Their experience is presumed homogeneous, and fewer are the studies that highlight the intersection of multiple forms of oppression experienced by undocumented activists, specifically in regard to LGBTQ identities. No empirical study focused on LGBTQ activists within the immigrant rights movement was accounted for,

despite the fact that the leadership of the immigrant youth movement disproportionately identifies as queer (Costanza-Chock, 2014).

Intersecting Politics of LGBTQ Immigration in the U.S.

Heteronormative immigration control has historically withheld recognition from many kinds of immigrants, based not only on sexuality but also on intersecting gender, racial, class, and geopolitical factors (Foss, 1994; Luibhéid, 2008; Rodriguez, 2003). The ideal of the “good citizen” has long been permeated with assumptions based on race, class, gender and sexuality, and the notion of deportability has long been inscribed with deep personal and social implications for those deemed socially undesirable to both make them more exploitable by their bosses and easier to purge (De Genova, 2002; Kanstroom, 2010; Ngai, 2004; Peutz & De Genova, 2010). Luibhéid (2002) identified the immigration control apparatus as, “a key site for the production and reproduction of sexual categories, identities, and norms within relations of inequality” (p. x).

The incorporation of sexual categorizations into exclusion laws, as well as the development of procedures to detect and deter entry by those who fit the categorizations, is a key piece of how the immigration system came to exclude individuals on the basis of sexuality. (Luibhéid, 1998, p. 479-480)

Beginning with the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), homosexual exclusion was permitted by two provisions. The first was based on conduct, which treated homosexuality as a behavior, a crime of “moral turpitude” that indicated a “lack of good moral character.” The second provision barred immigrants based on status, which excluded homosexuals as persons “afflicted with psychopathic personality” (as cited in Canaday, 2003; Minter, 1993). This categorization reflected the contemporary dominant

view that homosexuality was a mental illness. Though the word *homosexual* was not used in the text of the statute, “those who were found to be homosexual or to engage in homosexual behavior were almost always either denied entry or, if granted entry, later deported for their status and/or conduct” (Chávez, 2007, p. 98). The dominant political and cultural ethos of the decade held that homosexuals, like communists, were dangerous, subversive, and profoundly un-American (as cited in Canaday, 2003; Minter, 1993).

After the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses in 1973, and the Public Health Service announced that it would no longer certify homosexuals as psychopathic personalities, the Department of Justice in 1980 announced that it would excise its legal obligation to exclude homosexuals from entering the U.S. only upon the voluntary admission by an immigrant that he or she was homosexual (see Minter, 1993). Given the nature of this controversial provision—which discriminated against the openly homosexual immigrant and those who appear homosexual even though they may not be (Pena, 2007)—the Immigration Act of 1990 repealed many of the exclusionary provisions of the INA, thereby rescinding language banning LGBTQ people from entering the country, and eliminating the pressure on immigrants to conceal their sexual orientation within immigration processes and beyond.

Given this history, pre-1990 political projects “publicly linking struggles around homophobia, racism, and anti-immigrant sentiment” were practically impossible, as immigrants who identified as LGBTQ “risked exclusion by announcing their presence, publicizing their struggles, or participating in organizing” (Luibhéid, 1998, p. 505).

Though the lifting of the ban on LGBTQ people within immigration processes made new

social justice strategies possible, exclusions within immigration processes continue to manifest themselves through rigid asylum policies; an HIV ban on immigration (lifted in 2010); and the narrow definition of family, which continues to be used today (Luibhéid, 2002).

Today, deeply rooted homo/heteronormativity within the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements continues to place limitations on the scale and impact of intersectional work. Marriage equality strategies within the LGBTQ rights movement, for example, are limited by definitions of conventional citizenship (Chávez, 2010). Though the same-sex foreign-born partners of U.S. citizens are now eligible for sponsorship through family-based immigration (see *United States v. Windsor*, 2013), their claim to family status remains contingent upon citizenship. Hence, though marriage equality has been recognized as a constitutional right, LGBTQ undocumented immigrants who are single, unmarried or not in a relationship with a U.S. citizen are unable to benefit from this victory (Queers for Economic Justice, 2007). Restrictive eligibility requirements and the limited number of visas available per year, further, make undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. without inspection ineligible to adjust their immigration status, even if married to a U.S. citizen (see Arellano, 2012; Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996).

Within the immigrant rights movement, strategies that place undue emphasis on heteronormative family values, marriage and conceptions of normality are similarly not inclusive of LGBTQ immigrants' experiences (Queers for Economic Justice, 2007). Positioning families and DREAMers as more deserving of a pathway to citizenship, for example, simultaneously frames LGBTQ undocumented immigrants as “good” or “bad.”

Good immigrants if they fall within the dominant values of heteronormativity and gender conformance. Bad immigrants if they fall outside of these normative expressions of conservative nationalistic ideals. Hence, good immigrants become deserving of relief from deportation, renewable work permits, and temporary Social Security numbers, while bad immigrants become high priorities under the deportation machine. LGBTQ-neutral immigration policies mask the complex ways that gender and sexuality affect undocumented immigrants' eligibility for relief.

Similarly, because the definition of family in U.S. immigration law presumes a heteronormative family structure and is limited to parents, spouses, and children of immigrants, it does not apply to more complex family structures (e.g., committed relationships, extended families, kinship networks) responsive to the animus against LGBTQ people embodied by U.S. culture and law (e.g., family rejection, second-parent/stepparent adoption restrictions). Hence, without challenging the very definition of family and immigration law's reliance on it, as well as policies that restrict the rights of LGBTQ people across states, the acquisition of legal status is thereby more likely to result for those who already have some structural privileges (Chávez, 2010).

LGBTQ Undocumented Immigrants. LGBTQ undocumented immigrants face numerous challenges endemic to the interaction of gender, sexuality and immigration status. Studies on the intersecting identities of gay immigrant men examine how gender, sexuality, social class and immigration interact in the identity formation processes of gay subjectivities (Thing, 2010). Others explore the impact of international migration on the interpretation and practice of gay sexuality (Carrillo & Fontdevila, 2014). Cantú (2009), for example, investigates the role of sexuality in the processes of immigration and

identity formation of Mexican gay male immigrants to the U.S. He finds that many gay Mexican Latinos find themselves escaping homophobia in their home country, but encountering racism in the U.S. To negotiate stigma and ostracism from mainstream communities, they reconfigure familial and social networks.

Several studies highlight how migrant queers establish and sustain socio-cultural networks to mitigate the violence and rejection they face from biological families, mainstream society and the LGBTQ community (Acosta, 2008; Cantú, 1999, 2009; Gopinath, 2005; Manalansan, 1994, 2003; Roque Ramirez, 2001). Gopinath (2005), for example, found that queer migrants of color establish multiple hybrid cultures and create spaces for community activities and new cultural traditions in order to mitigate the discrimination and stigma they experience from both their own migrant communities and mainstream heterosexual and LGBTQ cultures. Acosta (2008) similarly describes how by distancing themselves from their families of origin, migrant *lesbianas* construct a borderland space to express their sexuality. Their narratives illustrate their desire to maintain close family ties while developing sexual identities outside of their familial structures. *Lesbianas* sacrifice an *out* identity for the sake of maintaining family relationships.

Performing a needs assessment of LGBTQ immigrants, asylees and refugees in Southern Arizona, Chávez (2011) found that LGBTQ migrants expressed a desire for cultural competence regarding individuals' cultural backgrounds, LGBTQ identity, immigration status, and the ways these impact one another in all areas of service provision (e.g., health care, legal, housing, education, employment). Surveillance and the ability to obtain and keep housing without discrimination for migrant or LGBTQ status

were significant issues for many LGBTQ migrants, as some constantly worried that they would be harassed, arrested, or deported (Chávez, 2011).

Given the prospect of detention for undocumented immigrants, several reports have also documented incidents of sexual assault, denial of medical care, prolonged use of solitary confinement, verbal and physical abuse, and even death within immigration detention centers (Biron, 2013; Burns, Garcia, & Wolgin, 2013; Dalton, 2013; Feder, 2014; Gruber, 2013; Harmon, 2012; NIJC & PHR, 2012; Urbina, 2013). LGBTQ immigrants have been particularly vulnerable to this abuse and mistreatment on account of their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Rape, harassment, abuse, and denial of HIV treatment and hormone therapy are some of the routine forms of hardship for LGBTQ immigrants in detention (Gruber, 2013, 2014). Transgender detainees experience perhaps the worst forms of mistreatment when they are misplaced in housing that is discordant with their gender identity (Burns, Garcia & Wolgin. 2013). Instead of finding refuge and safety from persecution, LGBTQ undocumented immigrants are threatened with dangerous and life threatening conditions within a dysfunctional immigration detention system.

Though scarce, the literature on LGBTQ migrants/immigrants highlights several important intersections in their lived experiences. However, many of these accounts are of recent migrants. The focus is not on LGBTQ undocumented immigrants who have grown up in the U.S. These accounts are not represented in the literature or are enmeshed with the experiences of documented LGBTQ immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Further, no studies currently reference activists' perspectives or their experiences at the overlapping margins of LGBTQ and immigrant rights discourses.

Summary

Since 1990, much has happened in the political landscape that has changed the public discourse on LGBTQ and undocumented issues: the strike down of Texas' anti-sodomy law (2003); the lifting of the 1987 HIV ban on immigration (2010); the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell (2011); DACA (2012), its expansion and DAPA (2014); the repeal of Section 3 of DOMA (2013); executive action for federal LGBTQ employment protections (2014); and the U.S. Supreme Court's decision for marriage equality (2015). Despite these changes, many challenges remain for LGBTQ undocumented immigrants: no pathway to citizenship, criminalization of LGBTQ and undocumented persons, mistreatment in detention centers, heteronormative immigration processes, and homonormative political agendas.

The scholarship on LGBTQ and undocumented activists conjoins related, yet disparate bodies of literature that provide the context for this particular study. Although separate bodies of scholarship can be found about LGBTQ and undocumented activists—as separate groups—few studies have examined the way LGBTQ undocumented immigrants experience the intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status, or the way they ascribe meaning to their experiences. Accounts of activists' experiences as participants within the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements are scarce, and the voices of individuals at the overlapping margins of both movements remain absented. Though the stories of LGBTQ undocumented immigrants have been highlighted in the media, the lived experiences of undocuqueer activists have yet to be comprehensively explored.

Conceptual Framework

To attend to this gap in the literature, I merge Queer Theory and Intersectionality to frame this study of undocuqueer activists' lived experiences, and the importance of considering how individuals' identities develop/become salient within the existing sociopolitical context of the U.S.

Queer Theory

Queer Theory is an anti-normative framework that seeks to subvert, challenge and critique taken-for-granted stabilities in our social lives. It evolved as a response to identity politics to propose a politics of difference, stressing the artificiality of boundaries (Baldo, 2008). According to Brekhus (2003), "contrary to the public perception of a unitary, easily identifiable, and coherent way to be gay (or to be any other identity), there are multiple ways to present and organize a marked identity," and "there is considerable conflict within identity categories about how to perform one's identity" (p. 11). Thus, destabilizing and challenging naturalist assumptions is inherent to the very concept of Queer Theory (see Bernstein & Reimann, 2001; Boone & others, 2000). It is a lens through which to analyze how the constitution and enactment of sexual identities impacts how power relations circulate and how identities may be sought and confirmed in light of those relations. It is this politic of boundary disruption and category deconstruction that reminds us to attend to diversity among sexual minorities and to recognize the discontinuity of experience through time and across cultures.

Sexual identities are historical and social products that reflect the time, place, and culture in which they exist for the individuals who enact them (Butler, 2008; Foucault, 1978; Sedgwick, 1990). Identity is constructed in and through its relations with others,

and with systems of power and knowledge. We embody the discourses that exist in our culture, and our being is constituted by them (Sullivan, 2003). Hence, queer subjects are those that are consistently marginalized from normative and socially accepted identity categories. For example, because immigration and LGBTQ status are sociopolitically and socioculturally constructed, they are performative and repetitive, changing as the individual affects society and as society affects the individual (Butler, 1993, 1999, 2008). Hence, it is socially produced binaries that are the basis of oppression. Collective identity production is purchased at the price of hierarchy, normalization, and exclusion (Gamson, 1995).

Queer Theory advocates for change and conceives of ways bodies can serve as sites of ideological and discursive trouble (Burlington & Butler, 1999; Irving, 2008; Muñoz, 1999; Solis, 2007). It is through the loosening of definitions of identity that Queer Theory is able to challenge rigid social norms, and create broader social inclusion of people who do not neatly identify with normative standards (Fotopoulou, 2012; Prasad, 2009). It challenges the normative social ordering of identities and subjectivities along the heterosexual/homosexual binary as well as the privileging of heterosexuality as natural.

Queer Theory is relevant to the purpose of this study because undocuqueer activism is queer work. *Coming out* privileges individuals' voices and non-normative perspectives, and effectively disrupts false conceptions of equality within the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements. The very act of being *out* challenges the consistent erasure of undocuqueer experiences within LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements. The contradiction between their physical and social presence generates spaces of

nonexistence, an erasure of legal personhood, and a space of forced invisibility, exclusion, subjugation, and repression (De Genova, 2002). By *coming out*, undocumented immigrants both “unreservedly and unapologetically assert their irreversible presence” and “uphold the intractable challenge of their own intrinsic incorrigibility” (De Genova, 2010, p. 103).

Undocumented is not just a social relation to the state produced as an effect of law materially inscribed on papers, but also as an effect of a discursive formation—an identity (De Genova, 2002). Publicly adopting *undocumented* as a label challenges and reshapes the grounds of exclusion by rejecting the fear, shame and invisibility inherent in an unauthorized immigration status (Corruner, 2012; Galindo, 2012). It signifies that repressive power is nothing compared to the power of vitality and indomitable will to persevere and prevail even without the protective blanket of legislations (De Genova, 2010). Reclaiming *undocumented*, hence, challenges the notion of illegality and the criminalization of undocumented immigrants, demonstrating that they will no longer allow the state or their antagonists to cast them to the *shadows* (Chávez, 1997; Corruner, 2012; Gonzalez & Chávez, 2012).

Similarly, reclaiming *queer* asserts difference from heterosexuals and difference among gays themselves, resisting inclusion within existing heteronormative social structures. By embracing the category used to shame and cast out sexual deviants, *queer* becomes synonymous with a form of opposition (Warner, 1991). It insists upon more inclusivity because political membership is no longer defined by one’s (homo)sexuality or the sex/gender of one’s sexual partner, but rather by the shared dissent of the dominant (“normal”) organization of sex and gender (Duggan, 1992, p. 20). Because its roots lie

deeply in activism, *queer* audaciously asserts the existence of something fundamentally unintelligible, incommensurable, incompatible, and inassimilable (De Genova, 2010). It does not seek integration within the existing social systems, rather a destabilization of normative and hierarchical, rigidly constructed systems of power. Current structures are built upon and reliant on the oppression of others (Foucault, 1978), pushing LGBTQ people into the *closet*.

So while *undocumented* reminds us of the diversity of differences within the LGBTQ community, *queer* forces attention to how sexuality and gender are as significant as other systems of power in immigration policies and practices. In line with Queer Theory, *undocuqueer* identities, hence, expose the privileging and normalizing tendencies of organizations and institutions casting LGBTQ undocumented immigrants to the *shadows* and into the *closet*.

Queer Theory has previously been critiqued for ignoring the material circumstances of various subject positions and relationships. In focusing on sexuality, for example, Queer Theory elides the ways that the centrality of sexuality to an individual's understanding of his/herself may be mediated by other factors that in some settings may be more pressing or more salient—like the roles that race, class, gender and immigration status play in defining people's differing relations to dominant and normalizing power (Carbado, 2005; Cohen, 2005). Organizing in a straight versus queer dichotomy systematically ignores those who simultaneously experience exclusion along other axes of oppression (Johnson & Henderson, 2005). In response to this critique, the next section describes Intersectionality as a corrective to Queer Theory. I explore Intersectionality as

an analytic framework for understanding lived experience within interlocking structures of oppression and resistance.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality locates individual subjectivities and experiences within intersecting, hierarchical systems of domination and subordination (Collins, 2009b; Crenshaw, 1991), and is used as a way to make visible the experiences, identities, and subject positions that unitary models of oppression obscure. It highlights some of what gets obfuscated, collapsed, or ignored in claims of solidarity by taking marginalized intersectional identities as an analytic starting point, revealing the complexity, simultaneity and irreducibility of lived experience within such groups (McCall, 2005).

Intersectionality begins with the theoretical assumption of anticategorical complexity, stating that unitary categories are too simplistic to capture the complexity of the lived experience. It proclaims intracategorical complexity, problematizing the exclusionary repercussions of categorization in multiply-marginalized subjects' experiences, and highlights the relationships of inequality among already constituted social groups by asserting intercategorical complexity (McCall, 2005). It defines the interlocking nature of identity and power, and reveals that there is no single identity category that satisfactorily describes how we respond to our social environment or are responded to by others (Shields, 2008). Within this approach is the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality that compose "complex identities" (Meyers, 2000, p. 154). Because Intersectionality is attuned to subjects who exist within the overlapping margins of identity discourse, it is used for exploring and theorizing the simultaneity of identity

constructs as social processes, and the relationships between identity and intersecting systems of inequality (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991). Because oppressions are experienced simultaneously, and because they constitute one another, they are not reducible to unitary categories. To reduce them is to simplify subjects' experiences.

Intersectionality is explicitly focused on locating individuals within “distinctive yet interlocking structures of oppression” linked together by macro level systems (Collins, 1993, p. 26). Collins' (2009a) matrix of domination describes the overall organization of power in a society as organized through four interrelated domains. “Regardless of the particular intersections involved, structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression” (p. 21). Collins (1991) moves beyond models of oppression rooted in the either/or dichotomous thinking, and expands the focus of analysis from merely describing the similarities and differences distinguishing systems of oppression to bringing greater attention to how they interconnect. It both notices and contends with the realities of multiple inequalities (Crenshaw 1989). Put broadly, Intersectionality references the ability of different systems of oppression to mutually construct one another and bring new hybrid forms of oppression into being (Collins, 2003; Cooper, 2006). Through an intricate process of competing hierarchies, obligations, and experiences, these multiple locations inform and modify one another in ways that produce qualitatively different lived realities (McCall, 2005). It is for this reason that different axes of oppression cannot simply be added or multiplied together to produce one grand oppression.

Recognizing its complexity, scholars have previously used Intersectionality to underscore the multidimensionality of Black women's lived experiences by criticizing the

rigidly top-down social and political order from the perspective of the bottom up (Crenshaw 1991). Their experiences serve to demonstrate the shortcomings of conventional feminist and anti-racist work, which reproduce Black women's subordination in social hierarchies (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Crenshaw (1991) argues that by virtue of their membership in at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas, Black women are inadequately represented in both. The problem is that because gender oppression is constructed as the oppression suffered by White women, and race oppression as that suffered by Black men, these discourses cannot conceptualize the racialized, gendered oppression suffered by Black women (Crenshaw, 1991). The aim of critical accounts of Intersectionality like Crenshaw's is to consider how race, class, gender and sexuality are intertwined and mutually constitutive.

Du Bois' (1903/1996) double consciousness, Andersen and Collins' (1992) simultaneity, and Anzaldúa's (1987) borderlands and *mestizaje* have all contributed to the study of Intersectionality as a lived experience and a method of inquiry that privileges oppression. However, equally important to identifying interlocking systems of oppression within narratives of lived experience is challenging and deconstructing them. In this sense, Queer Theory aids the analysis of Intersectionality by taking account of the way participants utilize their non-normative identities as a form of resistance to normative discourses. In the following section, I propose Queer Intersectionality as a framework for exploring the lived experience of undocuqueer activists.

Queer Intersectionality

Queer Theory views identity as being multiple, exclusionary, fragmented, incoherent, disciplinary, disunified, unstable, fluid and perpetually becoming. It also

views it as being constituted within historically, geographically and socially specific locations. Because Intersectionality links together individual, interpersonal, and structural domains of experience as inextricably related (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Shields, 2008), it strategically supplements Queer Theory's critical account of non-normativity as resistance. Intersectionality is a corrective to a Queer Theory that omits the significance of intersectional systems of power on queer sexuality and gender—multiple identity dimensions are always fused intrasectionally. It is a theory developed from people's lived experiences that places the struggles of marginalized communities at the center of analysis, and examines the ways interconnected domains of power organize and structure inequality and oppression. Together, Queer Theory and Intersectionality recognize the complexity and fluidity of experience and the systems of power that produce it. They challenge normalized conceptions of identity, while simultaneously deconstructing simplistic ideas about subjectivity and political action based on the lived experiences and subjectivities of oppressed people.

Ward (2008) previously used Intersectionality to re-theorize the political practice and performance of what Duggan (2003) calls the new homonormativity of the LGBTQ rights movement. She proposed Queer Intersectionality as an approach striving for racial, gender, socioeconomic, and sexual diversity, while simultaneously resisting the institutional forces seeking to contain and normalize differences and reinforce static identity categories. Ethnographically, Ward (2008) shows how race, class, gender and sexuality structure both identities and social movements, and suggests that an examination of sexuality is integral to an Intersectionality approach.

Rahman (2010) similarly theorized Intersectionality using Queer Theory for research on gay Muslim identities. Rahman suggested an understanding of Intersectionality as productively queer, and queer as analytically intersectional; thus, illuminating gay Muslims' identities as always ontologically deferred from the dominant identity categories of *gay* and *Muslim*, resultant from cultural and political Islamophobia and homophobia. Rahman argued that an explicitly queer intersectional perspective gives us a purchase on the lived experiences of multiple oppressions that allows us to better articulate their significance. The ontological uncertainty of individuals' lived experience "inevitably directs us to consider that dominant identity categories are, in actuality, ontologically incomplete and achieve their (incomplete) coherence only through the exclusion of 'others'" (Rahman, 2010, p. 953).

This dissertation heeds to Ward (2008) and Rahman's (2010) call for more grounded standpoint research from a queer intersectional approach. It seeks to consider how Intersectionality and Queer Theory can come together along matrices of domination (Collins, 2000) to explore the lived experiences of undocuqueer activists at the overlapping margins of two single variable identity-based social movements. While abjectivity (see Kristeva, 1982; McNevin, 2009; Nyers, 2003) and mestiza consciousness (see Anzaldúa, 1987) frameworks have previously been used to study LGBTQ and immigrant populations, Queer Intersectionality is used to (1) place the experiences of undocuqueer activists at the center of analysis; (2) explore the complexities of individual and collective identity, recognizing that variations within groups are often ignored and essentialized; (3) reveal the ways interconnected domains of power organize and produce

inequality and oppression; and (4) analyze the ways undocuqueer activists resist the normalizing tendencies of organizations and institutions.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

Though political conditions constrain particular events from being narrated, activism in the form of storytelling helps individuals name their injuries, connect with others, and engage in political action (Riessman, 1993; Solinger et al., 2008). Polletta (2006, 2009) contends that storytelling is an effective way for social movements to counter hegemonic meanings, as stories highlight issues of social justice, promote human rights, and propel people and communities to activism. Stories about injustice can overcome some of the limitations of policy frames by breaking coercive silences and the isolation of their narrators. Stories inspire sympathy, solidarity and identification by making the abstract real and the political personal (Zimmerman, 2012).

The power behind stories is that they also help us to understand ourselves in relation to others. They are fundamentally about the vicissitudes of human intention organized in time (Bruner, 1986, 1990). According to Polkinghorne (1995), “stories express a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes human experience in which actions and happenings contribute positively and negatively to attaining goals and fulfilling purposes” (p. 8). The ability to reflect and make meaning of past experiences serves as a core psychological process in connecting memories to identities, and is considered a driving force for identity development (McLean, 2005; McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007; Thorne & McLean, 2003; Thorne, 2000). Because storylines arise out of, are associated with, and locate narratives within specific cultural and social environments, storytelling reveals facets of a narrator’s situated selfhood—how individuals make sense of themselves and their place in the world (Ochs & Capps, 1996). The way context

influences individuals' perceptions of identity is directly related to the complexity of the individuals' meaning-making capacity (Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007).

Because storytelling “privileges positionality and subjectivity” (Reissman, 2000, p. 696), and because stories have played a significant role in advocacy and human rights struggles (see Beverley, 2004; Dawes, 2007; Nance, 2006; Schaffer & Smith, 2004)—particularly within the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements (Corrunker, 2012; Vivienne & Burgess, 2012; Zimmerman, 2012)—narrative inquiry is used as the primary method for exploring the lived experiences and personal meaning-making of undocuqueer activists. Narrative inquiry recognizes that personal stories are shaped by the knowledge, experiences, values and feelings of the persons who are telling them. It advances a social justice research agenda in line with the tenets of Intersectionality and Queer Theory, placing lived experience at the starting point of theory development and allowing for the reframing and redefining of ontological views that, within normative categorizations, have been rendered as marginalized, silenced and oppressed.

Because LGBTQ and undocumented activists have been sharing their stories separately within their respective movements to counter dominant homo/transphobic and anti-immigrant narratives, narrative inquiry is a suitable approach to the study of undocuqueer activists. In the following section, I discuss how this research uses their stories as undocuqueer activists are used to explore their lived experience at the overlapping margins of gender, sexuality and immigration status, as well as understand the way they navigate and attach meaning to their experiences. This discussion is preceded by a description of the study context and the individuals invited to participate.

I conclude by describing the methods for data collection and my analysis, paying special attention to my positionality as a queer immigrant of color.

Narrative Inquiry

Narratives are accounts of lived experience organized as stories selected, organized, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997; Riessman, 2004; Schegloff, 1997). They represent the explanatory and dialogic recapitulations of past events co-constructed, co-evaluated, and modified through interaction and negotiation between teller and audience (De Fina, 2009). Unlike stories, narratives are in a constant state of production and re-production, and can escape the neat organization of monological tellings.

Narratives are a way of understanding one's own and others' actions, organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time (Chase, 2005). Narratives provide access to the meaning-making process as it actively occurs, and allow participants to "find and speak in their own 'voices'" (Mishler, 1986, p. 118). Atkinson (2007) explains that the experience of narrating a life story is associated with benefits such as meaning-making, greater self-understanding, and disclosure that promotes healing and increased understanding of social and community phenomena. Thus, narratives provide the structure by which one organizes their view of self through time, and interprets the past in the light of the current process of narrativizing self (Georgakopoulou, 2007). Narrative statements are, thus, opportunities for individuals to (re)create and (re)present who they are. For this reason, the narrative structures and the vocabulary we use when we craft and tell stories of our

perceptions and experiences are significant for understanding the impact of external influences on lived experience (Sikes & Gale, 2006).

Langellier (1999) states that personal narratives constitute identities and are sites “where the social is articulated, structured, and struggled over” (p. 128). Personal narratives evolve from a structure of power relations, and simultaneously produce, maintain, and reproduce that power structure (Langellier, 1989). Identities, at the personal level, can be analyzed as narratives that are products of lived subjective experience, which are made meaningful in relation to identities at the cultural and social level (Khayatt, 2002). This multi-level view of identity allows critical researchers to connect lived experience to larger political, social, and cultural contexts. For this reason, narratives become a fundamental analytic tool for the study of immigrant and LGBTQ lives, as both LGBTQ and undocumented issues are at the center of major policy and civil rights discussions today.

To account for this multi-level view of identity, I adopt a constructivist perspective to explore societal dynamics and power structures. Not accounting for nativism and heterosexism within a study of identity construction reifies the structures of oppression (Abes, 2009, 2012). Narratives are always historically situated and dependent on the cumulative social and political activity that transforms societal attitudes around a given topic (Cohler & Hammack, 2006; Hammack, 2008). As Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) explain,

Beginning with a respect for ordinary lived experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only a valorizing of individual’s experience but also an exploration of social, cultural and institutional narratives within which individual’s

experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted. (p.42)

In qualitative research, the methods we use often let us speak to or interact with people directly. Hence, partnering Queer Intersectionality with my constructivist perspective becomes an important borderland (Abes 2009, 2012; Anzaldúa, 1987) for exploring the construction and deconstruction of lived experience. Constructivism is not concerned with generalizations. Instead it focuses on how individuals make meaning on a micro-level (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Constructivism assumes reality, knowledge, truth, and meaning are constructed by individuals, and that this construction of meaning is linked between the researcher and participant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Previously, narratives have been used to explore the construction of sexual identity within the context of socio-historically located discourse and meanings of homosexuality (see Cohler & Hammack, 2006, 2007; Dilley, 2002, 2005; Hammack, 2005; Hammack & Cohler, 2009; Parks, 1999). Narratives of same-sex attraction and identity have similarly been used to illustrate how socio-cultural context is central to understanding accounts of identity construction (see Abes & Jones, 2004; Flowers & Buston, 2001; Luizzi, 2001; Stevens, 2004; Trujillo, 1991). Findings overwhelmingly suggest that one's sexual identity is complexly integrated and often at odds with other aspects of an individual's identity.

Narratives have also previously been used to make hearable the voices of immigrants and to insert their experiences into the landscape of political debate (see Caminero-Santangelo, 2012; Gonzalez, Plata, Garcia, Torres, & Urrieta, 2003; King & Puntí, 2012; Orner & Andes, 2008). Narratives have described how being undocumented influences immigrant youths' educational aspirations, experiences, and opportunities

(Gonzalez, 2008; Gonzalez & Chávez, 2012; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2013), while counternarratives have acknowledged and created spaces for exposing and resisting hegemonic narratives of *illegality* (Castro-Salazara & Bagley, 2010; Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012). Findings overwhelmingly reflect the ways in which abjectivity and immigration status constrain individuals' daily lives, create internalized fears, in some ways immobilize families, and in other ways motivate them to engage politically to resist the dire conditions of their lives.

No narrative study to date, however, has explored the experiences of undocuqueer activists, specifically. The experiences of LGBTQ undocumented immigrants continue to be negotiated and commoditized to reinforce and (re)produce a false homogeneity within the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements. A study of the lived experiences of undocuqueer activists brings light to the diversity and inconsistencies within monolithic constructions of identity, and advance a politic that is not just good for one group, but one that sees how race, class, gender, sexuality and other systems of power operate together to sustain structural and systemic oppression.

Study Context

Because undocuqueer activists are part of two sensitive and relatively invisible populations, I collected data from self-identified undocuqueer activists who were also members of LGBTQ immigrant organizations in the U.S. The Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project (QUIP), a project of United We Dream, has been one of the principal organizations addressing and advocating for LGBTQ undocumented immigrants. QUIP seeks to empower LGBTQ undocumented immigrants, queer immigrant youth and allies through grassroots organizing, leadership development, education and advocacy (United

We Dream, 2015). The project aims to build bridges between the LGBTQ and immigrant communities by creating awareness of individuals' lived experiences at the intersection of two politically marginalized social movements. It strives for solidarity within the LGBTQ and immigrant communities, and exemplifies coalitional politics congruent with the alternative and liberatory strategies of Queer Theory.

While only Washington D.C. and Arizona hold official QUIP chapters, numerous affiliate organizations within the UWD network have identified undocuqueer leaders that actively promote QUIP tactics and strategies within their local communities. I worked directly with QUIP leadership to recruit these activists. Given the changing nature of policy and legislation, it is important to note that interviews were conducted within the sociopolitical context of October and November 2014.

Participant Selection

LGBTQ undocumented immigrants represent a relatively small, geographically dispersed segment of the general population. The UCLA Williams Institute reports that there are an estimated 267,000 LGBTQ-identified undocumented immigrants living the U.S. (Gates, 2013). They are younger than the broader undocumented population—nearly half (49%) are under the age 30, as compared to 30 percent of the total undocumented population that falls in this same age range—and a substantial majority identifies as Hispanic (71%)³. Similarly, compared to the broader LGBTQ community where the

³ Followed by Asian and Pacific Islanders (15%), Whites (8%), and Blacks (6%)

majority is female (53%), men comprise the majority of LGBTQ-identified undocumented immigrants (67%) (Gates, 2013).⁴

As a member of the Arizona chapter of QUIP, I started with a convenience sample of Arizona QUIP members. Given its effectiveness for sampling hard-to-reach, or equivalently hidden populations (Heckathorn, 2011), snowball sampling aided the process of identifying additional eligible participants. I recruited 10 Arizona QUIP members to participate, and solicited their assistance in identifying a total of 21 other undocuqueer activists who, like them, (1) self-identified as undocuqueer, (2) were over the age of 18, and (3) were involved in some form of undocuqueer activism. Upon receiving their referral, I contacted them via Facebook and requested their participation. Two individuals who had recently resolved their immigration status, but still self-identified as undocuqueer, were included in the total sample of 31 participants (see Table 1.).

Participants currently resided in 10 different U.S. states, plus Washington D.C, and represented six different countries of origin. All 31 participants identified as Hispanic/Latino, and the majority of participants (30) were between the ages of 19-30. Cisgender men (17) composed the majority of the sample, followed by genderqueer (6) participants, cisgender women (4), and transgender women (4). Twenty-one participants were DACA recipients, and 22 had at least some college experience (see Table 1.).

⁴ These figures represent the lower-bound estimates of the true undocumented LGBTQ population in the U.S., as they do not account for undocumented LGBTQ immigrants under the age of 18 or under-reporting resultant from reluctance in self-identifying as undocumented or LGBTQ.

Table 1. Participants

	Age	Gender	Gender Identity	Sexuality	Immigration Status	DACA	U.S. Educational Attainment	Home State	Country of Origin
Alex	21	Man	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Some college, no degree	Connecticut	Mexico
Antonia	32	Genderqueer		Lesbian	Undocumented	No	High school or GED equivalent	Arizona	Mexico
Bianca	24	Woman	Transgender	Queer	Lawful permanent resident	No	High school or GED equivalent	New York	Mexico
Camilo	20	Man	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	No	High school or GED equivalent	Massachusetts	Colombia
Claudio	22	Man	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Some college, no degree	Washington	Mexico
Daniel	21	Man	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Some college, no degree	Connecticut	Colombia
Darcy	21	Woman	Cisgender	Queer	Lawful permanent resident	No	Some college, no degree	North Carolina	Costa Rica
Draco	27	Genderqueer		Queer	Undocumented	No	Some college, no degree	Arizona	Mexico
Elias	23	Genderqueer		Gay	Undocumented	No	High school or GED equivalent	Washington	Mexico
Ester	26	Woman	Transgender	Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Bachelor's degree	Washington D.C.	Colombia
Felix	28	Man	Cisgender	Pansexual	Undocumented	Yes	Bachelor's degree	Florida	Brazil
Franco	24	Man	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Some college, no degree	Arizona	Mexico
Jesse	22	Genderqueer		Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Associates degree	Arizona	Mexico
Joe	22	Man	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Bachelor's degree	Nevada	Mexico
Joel	30	Man	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Some college, no degree	California	Mexico
Josefina	41	Woman	Transgender	Queer	Undocumented	No	Some high school, no diploma	New York	Mexico
Josh	25	Man	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Some college, no degree	California	Mexico
Julian	20	Man	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	No	High school or GED equivalent	North Carolina	El Salvador
Julio	20	Man	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Some college, no degree	Arizona	Mexico
Lalo	27	Genderqueer		Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Associates degree	California	Mexico
Maria	23	Woman	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Associates degree	Florida	Costa Rica
Mario	28	Man	Cisgender	Gay	Undocumented	Yes	Bachelor's degree	Florida	Peru
Mark	27	Man	Cisgender	Gay	Undocumented	Yes	Bachelor's degree	California	Mexico
Patricia	25	Genderqueer		Pansexual	Undocumented	Yes	Bachelor's degree	Texas	Mexico
Ramon	23	Man	Cisgender	Gay	Undocumented	Yes	Bachelor's degree	Washington	Mexico
Santos	30	Man	Cisgender	Gay	Undocumented	Yes	Some college, no degree	Arizona	Mexico
Susana	25	Woman	Cisgender	Bisexual	Undocumented	Yes	High school or GED equivalent	Arizona	Mexico
Sylvia	22	Woman	Cisgender	Bisexual	Undocumented	Yes	Some college, no degree	Arizona	Mexico
Tommy	24	Man	Cisgender	Queer	Undocumented	Yes	Bachelor's degree	California	Mexico
Valery	19	Woman	Transgender	Queer	Undocumented	No	Some high school, no diploma	Arizona	Mexico
Xavier	21	Man	Cisgender	Gay	Undocumented	Yes	High school or GED equivalent	Arizona	Mexico

Data Collection

Semi-structured Interviews. Narratives told in interviews have been a central tool of qualitative research. Because interviews represent an interactional context for

storytelling (see De Fina, 2009; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1991, 2008), narratives are sequentially co-produced within an interview and often embedded in responses to interview questions (see Baker & Johnson, 2000; De Fina & King, 2011). Consistent with my constructivist epistemology, the data for this qualitative study was generated from in-depth, conversational, semi-structured interviews with undocuqueer activists. I situated the findings in a cultural context based on participants' constructions of meaning.

All interviews were conducted in person or via Skype videoconference. The interviews were designed to generate narratives that served as the sole method of inquiry. They aimed to elicit descriptions of and/or narratives about (1) their lives; (2) their experiences; (3) and the meaning they ascribed to being undocuqueer. Though I relied on a uniform interview protocol, participants retained the discretion to lead the direction of the interview and choose how to relay their narratives. Interviews ranged between 45 minutes to 3.5 hours. Prior to the interview, I reviewed the purpose of the study and provided each respondent with an informed-consent agreement form. All interviews were recorded, and each interview produced two separate sources of data: audio recording and researcher's notes.

Protocol. Riessman (2008) emphasizes that the goal of narrative interviewing is to generate detailed accounts rather than general or closed-ended responses. Hence, open-ended interview questions were used to elicit narration and allow the narrator to lead the process (see Appendix A for full data collection protocol). I carried out the interviews as they occurred organically, making judgments about additional questions to ask and areas to explore as they arose. Specifically, I explored and probed into language that signified

patterns of thinking and behaviors pertaining to meaning making. I used the following open-ended probes to delve further into participants' responses:

- Tell me more about that.
- How did that make you feel?
- What did that mean to you?
- What was that experience like for you?
- What happened next?

I commenced each interview broadly asking participants to share their story with me. To explore the ways in which they navigated the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience, I probed into those specific instances where their LGBTQ and undocumented identities came up. To capture the nuances of their lived experience, I asked them to share their *coming out* experiences as LGBTQ, undocumented, and undocuqueer.

Following these stories, I asked participants what being undocuqueer meant to them, and how they perceived that being undocumented affected their experience as LGBTQ, and vice versa. This set of questions aimed at eliciting the meaning participants ascribed to their undocuqueer identity, and the ways they understood how dimensions of their identity impacted each other.

Upon gauging participants' self-meanings and perceptions of self, I moved the conversation toward exploring their experiences at the overlapping margins of the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements. The following set of questions sought to elicit activists' motivations and/or triggers leading to their involvement in undocuqueer activism. More specifically, I asked how, when and why they decided to get involved

with undocuqueer activism, and how their experiences, as undocumented and LGBTQ, influenced their involvement in undocuqueer activism. In order to gauge immediate needs and participants' perceptions of the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements, I ended the interview by asking participants what they would like to see happen within the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements, respectively.

This interview process provided moments for transformation and empowerment, as participants were able to share their coping and survival strategies as they worked to affirm their gender, sexuality and immigration status.

Researcher

Constructivism encourages interpretive inquiry, whereby meaning making is shaped by the perspectives and perceptions of the researcher (Piantanida & Garman, 2009). As the researcher, I hold the view that meaning and knowledge are human constructions. My thoughts are rooted in notions that multiple realities exist, and that realities are co-constructed between the researcher and participant through dialogue (Charmaz, 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this sense, narrative inquiry is a collaborative venture between researcher and participant. As the researcher, I serve as a participatory interactant subjectively and intersubjectively, through my own lens and through interaction with participants, interpreting meaning based on participants' perceptions and experiences (Grbich, 2012). Because narrative accounts are context sensitive and dependent on the type of relationships that interviewers and interviewees establish (De Fina, 2009, 2011), I describe my subjectivity as a queer immigrant of color and my involvement with LGBTQ and immigrant rights organizations. I utilized this subjectivity to better engage all aspects of the research process (e.g., planning, data

collection, and data analysis).

As direct beneficiaries of family-based immigration, my family permanently migrated to the U.S. from Mexico when I was six years old. Though we were all born in Mexico, my mother was fortunate enough to become naturalized after my grandfather petitioned for her through family based immigration. She then was able to utilize this opportunity to petition for my dad and me. Prior to receiving our green cards, however, it was not uncommon for our family to utilize relatives' documentation to cross the U.S./Mexico border. In many ways, that was the only option we had to visit friends and family in the U.S., given our inability to otherwise qualify for a tourist visa.

Moving to the U.S., I quickly learned there was an inherent class-based stigma associated with being an immigrant. Much of it had to do with skin color and language proficiency, but as a child, I internalized it as citizenship. In many ways, it was easier for me to claim to be a U.S. citizen than to confront the reality of being treated as a "problem." Though I became naturalized at the age of 16, I did not incur pride in my immigrant experience until I started college. College inculcated a sense of pride in diversity that impelled me to reflect on my immigrant background and embrace it.

This self-exploration ultimately induced me to come to terms with my sexuality. I recognized my attraction to other men as early as 12, but shoved it to the back of my mind because I was afraid of social consequences. The visibility of other LGBTQ students and groups on campus, however, gave me the courage to challenge internalized homophobia and ensue my identity crisis. The biggest impediment to my sexual identity development was the overwhelming heteropatriarchal oppression I felt at home, which placed restrictions as to who and what I could be and how I could show it. Hence, going

away to college represented an opportunity to engage identity exploration outside the restrictive constraints of home. Though I was *out* to friends and significant others on campus, I was not open with my family. I avoided or deflected all sorts of personal questions and lied, when necessary, to keep my personal and family lives separate. When I finally built up the courage to *come out* to my family at the age of 23, I did not experience rejection, as I originally feared. Rather, I experienced guilt for bringing shame and disappointment to my family. Six years later, though my family is supportive, my parents still struggle to reconcile their feelings about having an openly gay son. Hence, family support comes at the cost self-regulation.

Today, I define myself as an educator, an organizer and an educational activist researcher. I educate to increase others' competencies for working with diverse populations, and organize to challenge exclusionary systems of oppression underlying education policy. I have been a member of the Arizona DREAM Act Coalition (ADAC) and QUIP since 2012, actively participating in meetings, marches, fundraisers and actions. My involvement came about in collaboration with DREAMzone, a knowledge mobilization initiative I coordinate at Arizona State University that seeks to create safe and inclusive spaces for undocumented students within educational institutions. My commitment to the work was triggered by my personal experience as an immigrant, and my *coming out* struggles as a queer person of color.

Ethical Considerations

My involvement within the LGBTQ, immigrant and undocuqueer communities helps procure cultural competency and ethical care, and assists in gaining participants' trust for sharing their experiences. My positionality, further, enables me to directly

interact and connect with participants in ways that are less exploitative, less objectifying, and more politically relevant (Haritaworn, 2008).

As an activist myself, I intend to use the results of this study to not only increase awareness of the work and experiences of undocuqueer activists, but also to synthesize cultural knowledge for the LGBTQ and immigrant communities. Activist research in education is counter-hegemonic in purpose and in action, and is committed to bringing about material change for participants and others in the community at the spaces and sites of research (DeMeulenaere & Cann, 2013). Because activist research reflects the degree to which individual lives are affected by the research, my hope is to produce reports that can assist undocuqueer activists advocate for resources, support and funding conducive to their movement-building agendas.

Protecting the confidentiality of participants is a vital component of this study. I provide confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms. Prior to the interview, I reviewed the purpose of the study and communicated that all interviews would be recorded and subsequently transcribed. A letter of consent was provided to all participants at the site of the interview, and consent was obtained through their participation (see Appendix B).

Analytic Procedure

Narrative analysis is an inductive process that starts out with the assertion that human experience has a crucial narrative dimension (Kleres, 2011). It seeks to access the inner world of perception and meaning making through narratives in order to understand, describe, and explain social processes from the perspective of study participants. Hence, the unit of analysis for my study was personal narratives. As the researcher, I interpreted the content constructed within the text of the narrative in an attempt to give meaning to

what was being expressed by the narrator (Riessman, 2004; Saldana, 2013). The analysis looked beyond what was told in order to understand the underlying intention and purpose the content served. Personal stories in individuals' storytelling generated not only the potential for recurring motifs, but also connected meanings and thought processes (McLeod & Thompson, 2009). The ultimate goal was to create a story as research representation that depicted "how and why a particular outcome came about" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 19).

I started by producing verbatim texts of participants' narrative interviews. I utilized Dragon speech recognition software to assist me with transcribing interviews conducted in English, but transcribed Spanish and Spanglish interviews solely by hand. Following transcription, I imported all interviews into MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software. I ensued open coding, noting concepts that emerged directly from words or phrases of the interviewees, or indirectly from my interpretation of segments of the transcripts. I utilized the MAXQDA color coding functions to differentiate codes, and grounded the language that I employed for naming my codes in the terminology and constructs of Queer Intersectionality (e.g., patterns of resistance, intersections, and normalizing discourses). I used the following questions to guide the process:

1. What is this segment of the story about?
2. What can I understand about the narrator's experience from this narration?

These questions helped me focus on the content of the narratives and the meanings circulating from them. Open coding resulted in the following broad categories: *Meaning making*, *Intersections*, *Queering*, *Identity Negotiation*, *Survival*, *DREAMer Discourse*, and *Limitations* (see Table 2.).

During second level coding, I looked at each of the aforementioned categories individually, and created sub-categories illustrative of participants' contextualized experiences. These sub-categories helped describe the context of the broader categories and illustrated the diversity within participants' experiences within each category. While many sub-categories emerged, only those with a minimum of five codes were retained for analysis in this study. Their frequencies are outlined in Table 3.

Table 2. Codebook

	Category	Definition	Sub-categories	Illustrative Quotes
M	Meaning making	The meaning participants ascribe to undocuqueer	Complexity Vulnerability Resilience	"I can't separate my identities..." "Yeah, constantly feeling vulnerable." "...helped me build tough skin."
B	Intersections	Where identities cross paths or intersect	Nightclubs Employment Dating	"...I had my <i>matricula</i> , and I wasn't allowed to go in." "...negative impact for being out in my workplace." "...choosing who to date..."
Q	Queering	Resistance to normative discourses	Heteronormativity Homonormativity	"...but neglected my queer self." "...dominated by a narrative that is very white."
N	Identity Negotiation	When, where and why participants conceal/disclose their identities	Coming out Closet Shadows	"...I felt the need to actually come out..." "...I have been in this closet for so long..." "It was basically, don't ask don't tell."
U	Survival	Harsh conditions participants learn to live with/through	Homelessness Sex work Criminalization	"I was homeless for about three months..." "I was a sex worker for a while..." "...our communities are being criminalized..."
D	DREAMer Discourse	<i>DREAMer</i> is described as not central to participants' identity	Not critical Deservingness	"...it's a very passive word. It is not critical..." "...good immigrant versus bad immigrant..."
L	Limitations	Material limitations participants are exposed to	ID & license Healthcare Employment Shelter Higher education	"I can't get a driver's license..." "...not being able to access healthcare..." "...people didn't want to give me jobs..." "...turned away from a shelter..." "...I can't get into college with in-state tuition."

Table 3. Frequencies

	A	B	C	C	D	D	E	E	F	J	J	J	J	J	J	L	M	M	M	P	R	S	S	S	T	V	X
	l	n	a	r	a	a	a	i	r	e	o	o	o	o	u	u	a	a	a	a	a	a	s	u	y	o	a
	e	i	m																								
M	Complexity	1		1	1	1	3	1	1	1	2	5	5	1		1	1		1	3					1		
	Vulnerability	1	1	1			1			1	1				1	1	2									1	1
	Resilience					6			1	1	1		1	1	2	1	1	1		2	3		1			1	
B	Nightclubs				1							1			1	1	1			1						1	
	Employment		1	4				1	1					6			1										
	Dating	1	2		3	1	2	1	2	1	1				1	2		5	4			1	1				
Q	Heteronormativity				3	5	1	2	1		2	1	1	1		3	1			1	1	1	1		1	2	1
	Homonormativity	1					2		1	2	2				4	2	3	1			2	1		1	1	2	
	Coming out				1				1		1						1			1	1	1	1			1	
N	Closet	1	1		5	2			1	1	1	6		1	2		1	2	2			1	2	1	1	1	2
	Shadows	1	1							1	2		5							3			3		1		
	Homelessness			1	1			1	3	3	3	1		1			1	1								1	
U	Sex work	1	2								1		3				2									1	
	Criminalization									2	1		3			4							1			1	
D	Not critical						1					1	4		1	1	1			1	2				1		
	Deservingness	1					3	1		2	1	1		1				1		1					2		
L	ID & license		2	1					3	2	1				3	2	3		1	1					1	1	
	Healthcare			1	1					1			1					1								2	
	Employment								3					1	1	1	1									1	2
	Shelter								1	2							1	1									1
	Higher education	1	4	1	2		2	3	1	3	3	1	2		3	3	2	4	4	6	3		1	1	4	1	

Trustworthiness. To increase the study's trustworthiness, I employed peer-debriefing strategies. Peer debriefers challenged my interpretations of data, identified gaps in my analyses, and constructively responded to my preliminary interpretations of the data. Peer debriefers consisted of five individuals who were provided my codebook and preliminary interpretations of my analysis. They were also invited on several occasions to interpret the de-identified data with me. Three of my peer debriefers were also participants in this study, so they simultaneously held me accountable to staying true to their narratives and their movement.

Prolonged engagement between the investigator and the participants further supports the trustworthiness of this study. As previously stated, I have been a member of the Arizona Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project since 2012, actively participating in retreats, events and actions. This involvement has allowed me to reflect on, learn about and understand the culture, social setting, and experiences of undocuqueers within the context of activism. Through my involvement, I have been able to gain an adequate understanding of undocuqueer activism and establish a relationship of trust with participants as a peer, an ally and a colleague. Since then, I have also become a member of Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement, an LGBTQ Latino grassroots organization.

CHAPTER 4: Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings from 31 individual interviews conducted with 31 self-identified undocuqueer activists. This chapter is organized around two research questions.

1. How do undocuqueer activists make sense of the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience?
2. How do undocuqueer activists interact and work within the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience?

My first question gets more at theorizing personal experience in accordance with participants' meaning making, where as my second question addresses the more practical lived experiences. Because question two follows and informs question one, I have organized Section 1 of this chapter around the meanings participants ascribed to living at the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience. Three overarching self-meanings emerged from the data: Vulnerability, Complexity and Resilience. These self-meanings describe the ways participants perceived the interplay of their gender, sexuality and immigration status within the current sociopolitical context encompassing the state of their (non)existence. Recognizing their vulnerability within a state of illegibility (Anzaldúa, 1987), participants described a sense of exclusion within spaces of belonging, and wariness managing relationships with others. Opting for more complex self-definitions, they resisted simplistic conceptions of identity that rendered their social locations invisible (e.g., homonormativity, heteronormativity, DREAMer). Surviving societal as well as familial rejection, they demonstrated resilience even when thriving seemed (im)possible to do so.

Section 2 specifically addresses the consistent theme of identity negotiation, which participants described as essential for interacting and working within the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience. This section describes how participants utilized *coming out* as a form of resistance to institutionalized oppression, and resilience amidst anti-immigrant, xenophobic and heterosexist power structures. It concludes highlighting how participants simultaneously work to bridge their communities through their stories, activism and peer education.

Section 1: Meaning Making

I started each interview asking participants to share their story with me. More specifically, I inquired about their *coming out* experiences as LGBTQ, undocumented and undocuqueer. Next, I asked them to describe what it means to be undocuqueer—to live at the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience. In their narratives, participants inevitably highlighted the salience of their gender identity and expression as related to their LGBTQ identity. Beyond just conversations around sexuality and immigration status, gender was deemed significant, particularly for trans identities.

Three overarching self-meanings emerged from the data: Vulnerability, Complexity and Resilience. These self-meanings were informed by participants' experiences navigating the sociopolitical context of their state around LGBTQ and immigration issues. Living in the borderlands between cultures rendered participants partially unintelligible to dominant LGBTQ and immigrant culture simultaneously. Hence, experiences generally centered around the illegibility (Anzaldúa, 1987) participants experienced resultant from hostility against LGBTQ and undocumented people inscribed into law.

Vulnerability: Recognizing Illegibility Inscribed by Law

Participants described recognizing their existence as a vulnerable existence. The intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status for several participants invoked a certain level of fear and uncertainty imposed by law, policy and dominant culture. Participants shared the looming threat of rejection and deportation as two factors that consistently shaped the way they navigated their lives. Consequently, they described undocuqueer as being vulnerable to dominant culture and the state. The ways they were looked at, or not, contributed to the illegibility they experienced, given the contradiction between their physical and social presence inscribed by law. Their marginalization was most evidenced at the state level, where they were prevented from accessing specific state public benefits (e.g., identification card, driver's license, financial aid, and health care) and rights (e.g., marriage and employment non-discrimination) otherwise afforded to documented heterosexuals. However, their vulnerability similarly extended to the ways these limitations materialized as exclusion and rejection within dominant culture.

Julio, a 20-year-old DACA recipient from Arizona, described how his sexuality and immigration status imposed simultaneous barriers to his everyday existence and made him vulnerable to the state. Restrictive laws and policies targeted his queer and undocumented identities simultaneously via racial profiling practices, exclusions and religious exemptions (e.g., SB 1070, Prop 300 and SB 1062).

Prop 300, not being able to go to school, in-state tuition, not qualifying for that.

Then SB 1062, like those type of things that, you know, different propositions that, one that doesn't allow me to go to state universities and the other one that I would get discriminated if going into a business type of place. Those kind of

things affect me because of my two different identities, one being undocumented the second one being queer. And then also with my family, the queer part, them not understanding me and accepting me for who I am.

For Julio, these laws targeted his queer and undocumented identities simultaneously, and rendered him vulnerable as an LGBTQ undocumented immigrant. Arizona Proposition 300, for example, provides that university students who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents, or who do not have lawful immigration status, are not eligible for in-state tuition status or financial aid that is funded or subsidized by state monies.

Arizona SB 1062, which was largely reported as targeting LGBTQ people, was a bill giving any individual or legal entity an exemption from any state law if it substantially burdened their exercise of religion. Experiencing social rejection inscribed by the threat of these policies, Julio described feeling displaced. Restrictive policy perpetuated the stigmatization of LGBTQ and immigrant communities, and placed restrictions on his ability to navigate the contradiction between his physical and social presence resultant from having an undocumented status; for example, accessing LGBTQ-friendly health resources.

When it comes to me, it's like, receiving medical care or information about health-related issues or getting those types of services, those are things that I can't because sometimes they ask for Social Security or they ask for residency or citizenship, things that I don't have. Or an ID, they ask for these things that I don't have. So, you know, these resources that are out there for LGBT people, sometimes I can't get a hold of them because I am who I am. I am undocumented.

The absence of social support services for undocumented immigrants made navigating facets of Julio’s LGBTQ identity difficult.

Franco, a 24-year-old DACA recipient from Arizona, similarly described this dilemma.

Being undocumented among the LGBTQ community, I feel like I am just this little magnet walking around just waiting for anything to fall on me, like any sickness or anything. And that's scary. Being undocumented and not easily being able to turn out to a program, it is hard. And aside from the health care system, housing and shelters. There is none. There is none here within our state... There is no flexibility, there is no programs that really cater to the undocumented queer community. I think it's because of propositions in place, like legislation placed in the state of Arizona, which is Proposition 200. It really limits the reach for the undocumented community.

Given the material limitations of being undocumented, as facilitated by anti-immigrant state policies, Franco described feeling unrecognized and unprotected—particularly because his immigration status similarly prevented him from accessing LGBTQ-specific public resources. Arizona Proposition 200 requires state and local agencies to verify the identity and eligibility, based on immigration status, of applicants for non-federally mandated state public benefits. These included homeless shelters, identification cards and health resources, for example. As Bianca, a 24-year-old *transmujer*⁵ from New York, described, “no tienes acceso ni siquiera para el seguro medico, ni tratas de visitar al doctor, o te da miedo salir a calles, no, o viajar...te da como pánico...” “*you don’t have*

⁵ *Transmujer* is the Spanish translation for transwoman.

access not even to medical insurance, so you don't visit the doctor, or you are afraid to be out in the streets. Or even traveling...it makes you like panic....” Bianca described undocuqueer as being vulnerable to the state, given the ways her immigration status prevented her from accessing medical resources pertinent to her gender identity and sexuality. It imposed unwarranted fear, strife and uncertainty in her every day life.

Julian, a 21-year-old cisgender man from North Carolina, shared a similar experience, but more so coping with the constant state of vulnerability he faced as a non DACA-eligible immigrant.

...when it comes to me, it's like receiving medical care or information about health-related issues or getting those type of services, those are things that I can't [access] because sometimes they ask for Social Security or they ask for residency or citizenship, things that I don't have. Or an ID, they ask for these things that I don't have. So, you know, these resources that are out there for LGBT people, sometimes I can't get a hold of them because I am who I am. I am undocumented. And also, you know, marriage is something, but it's something that is not really concerning me now. Something concerning me now is getting a legal status so that I don't have to fear for myself, being sent back to a country where, you know, people are not as open-minded or as accepting. These are the things that I struggle with day-to-day.

The vulnerability imposed by both social and material limitations highlighted Julian's daily struggles for persistence. Not qualifying for DACA as a result of his U.S. arrival date made the prospect of deportation all the more real for him, as unlike his DACA-eligible peers, he was not protected. Hence, being deported to a country that he barely

remembered and that was less tolerant of LGBTQ people posed a formidable threat that shaped his every day life.

Other participants talked about undocumented as increasing their susceptibility to discrimination not only based on their gender, sexuality and immigration status, but also other forms of discrimination tied to their embodied culture. Bianca, for example, described the uncertainty she experienced living at the cultural intersection of gender identity, sexuality and immigration status. She described being vulnerable to employment discrimination for being transgender, as well as labor rights violations for not speaking English and not having papers.

...nosotras como comunidad LGBT, aparte de que somos parte de la comunidad LGBT, somos Latino, somos personas que no hablamos el Ingles. Cuando conseguimos un trabajo, no nos pagan bien, y no nos dan trabajo por no tener documentos, como también en veces por ser transgenero en la comunidad LGBT. Y no, no lo dan. Asi que somos las personas que mas sufrimos, no?...Sabemos que son dos temas que afectan a la comunidad indocumentada, pero si eres una persona LGBT, te va afectar el doble.

Apart from being part of the LGBT community, we are Latinos/as, we are people that do not speak English. When we find work, they don't pay us well, and they don't give us work for not having papers, and sometimes even for being transgender within the LGBT community. They just don't. So we are the ones that suffer the most, no?... We know these are two issues that affect the undocumented community, but if you identify as LGBT, it is going to doubly affect you.

Labor rights violations and employment discrimination were most relevant to Bianca's experience as an *transmujer*. Bianca's experience positioned her at a cultural intersection with language, where her inability to speak English subjected her to exploitation and employment discrimination as an undocumented *transmujer*. Though Bianca was able to resolve her immigration status and now holds legal permanent residency, she continues to self-identify as undocuqueer because she continues to feel the same level of oppression she previously felt when she did not have papers. Though her legal permanent residency has alleviated the criminalization she experienced as an undocumented immigrant, it did nothing to resolve the criminalization and policing she continues to experience as a Latina *transmujer* in New York.

Elias, a 23-year-old genderqueer immigrant from Washington, similarly shared his difficulties just getting passed the job interview given his undocumented status and gender nonconformance. Though Elias attributed the lack of job opportunities to his inability to show proof of documentation, he also internalized the culpability of his gender expression for the decreased opportunities. He described undocuqueer as being simultaneously vulnerable to multiple forms of discrimination.

In many ways, I would say there are times where like getting a job is kind of hard. And there was a time when I was like without a job for five months because I couldn't find anything. And, you know me, I wear makeup, I don't care. Like, I get however I want and stuff. I was depressed for a minute because I was like, oh I'm undocumented, I don't have papers, I can't work here, I don't have a job. And then I thought it was an issue that I was gay too. I was like, I'm gay. Like, I don't think people want to hire me. I didn't feel wanted. I didn't feel like I fit in.

Deeply rooted anti-immigrant sentiment and the inherent prejudice toward LGBTQ folk prevented participants like Elias from securing employment opportunities that enabled them to sustain their living and support their families. While DACA enabled eligible participants to temporarily disassociate from the inherent stigma towards “illegality”, the prospect of employment forced several to discipline and negotiate the expression of their sexual and gender identities. The simultaneity of these subtle forms of oppression, hence, served to further marginalize non-DACA eligible immigrants (i.e., “bad” immigrants), and the visibility of their queerness as undesirable or bad.

Other participants described the ways their gender identity and expression, sexuality and undocumented status sensitized them to the legal and social repercussions of their identities. Jesse, a 23-year-old DACA recipient from Arizona, for example, described how the vulnerability imposed by his identities made him hyper-aware of his environment.

So even waking up every single day and walking out, it is scary to be either identity. Like if I walk too late, am I going to get killed because I am gay? Or is the police going to stop me because I am Mexican and question something? And if they take me in, what is that going to mean because I am queer? It's a lot of these things that people don't have to think about, but everything that we do...like the fact that you were holding [your boyfriend's] hand or that I was like grabbing your arm. In spaces like that, what does that mean like for us to have a hate crime, and if it wasn't a hate crime when it comes down to like, oh you are undocumented, you have DACA, it's going to affect your everything. So I think every day it's like, it's a higher stress level of everything that we do that we have

to double think. Instead of just doing it, like you have to think about it even more to really explore the idea of what does this mean.

Jesse described how homophobia and policing affected the way he navigated his everyday interactions. He described having to tread lightly around the intersection of his identities in order to mitigate the risks of potential negative legal and social consequences. Jesse, as well as other participants, described internalizing the institutionalized discrimination and allowing these exclusions to discipline the *outness* and expression of his social identities.

Felix, a 28-year-old DACA recipient from Florida, similarly described being constantly afraid, given both the legal and social repercussions of being LGBTQ and undocumented. He described both the tangible and intangible consequences of living at the liminal borderland of undocuqueer resultant from both anti-LGBTQ and anti-immigrant sentiment.

You know, it just makes everything different and everything very difficult. Like, you know, I always felt like I had to work 10 times harder for anything that I wanted just because I didn't have papers. And then the fact that I had to constantly be afraid of being rejected by my family when I was younger, it just made everything much worse. Not only because, I mean, there are tangible things like, oh you can't get a driver's license. That is very tangible, right, and then there are all the intangible things like, you can't date if you are in the *closet*. You can't have a normal teenage experience when you are constantly afraid of your family, and then you're constantly afraid of the state. Like there is no safe haven for you. And then there are other things, right, like I felt like for a long time that I was

constantly afraid of people just beating me up. Because, I don't know, like I was constantly trying to look more “straight,” and I felt like I wasn't. Or that I wasn't straight-acting, I guess. I was also afraid of my peers. I had this overwhelming fear on every sector of my life.

While internalized fear overwhelmingly affected the way Felix performed his gender and ensued the *coming out* process as LGBTQ, his inability to qualify for particular state benefits (e.g., marriage, ID, license, college, financial aid, healthcare etc.) as a result of his immigration status engrossed the unnecessary hardship he experienced. His vulnerability to the state, hence, similarly had implications for the ways he interacted and worked within the intersection of undocuqueer, given pervasive anti-LGBTQ and anti-immigrant sentiment.

Exclusion within spaces of belonging. Participants additionally described how their illegibility as undocumented immigrants similarly had a direct impact on the ways they experienced their LGBTQ identity. Due to their lack of access to state IDs and driver's licenses, for example, participants were often unable to access LGBTQ spaces, like nightclubs, where they were able to engage with other folks based on their shared LGBTQ identity. Tommy, a 24-year-old DACA recipient from California, described the importance of LGBTQ social spaces for his identity development, and recounted his increased vulnerability to rejection as a result of not being able to demonstrate a standard state-issued ID at the door.

Well, and I think I see that as, as queer people one of the biggest things that we are introduced to from the beginning is this scene of like clubs and the spaces that centers where we all like come together like just as who we are, not as outsiders

like in our normal lives and the general society where queer people are not that visible. You come to the space and you're introduced to it. Part of the process in going in is proving that you are of age and you have to give your identification. Some people don't have state IDs, these plastic things that are really tiny, right. You have to start taking this like huge passport and getting these looks, and mostly when you go into the spaces that are not really of color, we would get these looks, so why do you have this passport? Why do you show me a passport instead of a state ID? And also thinking about the fact that sometimes we were denied entrance to the spaces, it created a sense of disempowerment, because you're supposed to be out having fun with friends or whoever you want and then this happened. Oh we can't get into the club... And it's not just going out necessarily that requires you to show a state ID. Part of being queer is just like also being visible. Presenting what you have to do and showing whatever type of identification that is required at certain places, and so it's a constant bashing of your undocumented self.

Having to present their *matriculas*⁶ or DACA cards and being rejected because they were not considered valid forms of ID, participants described the sense of vulnerability they felt as a result of their exclusion. Draco, a 26-year-old cisgender man from Arizona, for example, described feeling anxious about going into LGBTQ social spaces with his passport, given the scrutiny he constantly underwent. He described undocuqueer as increasing his chances of being rejected within both the mainstream LGBTQ and immigrant communities.

⁶ *Matriculas* are consular identification cards, a form of identification accepted by several states, municipalities, and businesses.

For the longest time I didn't want to go to the club either or I would wait until everybody would kind of go in because I would have my big old passport from Mexico, right, and I was like, I'm giving myself away. So I guess it impacted my social life in that way. Not only in being able to talk to men but also choosing what clubs I wanted to go to. And for the longest time I avoided [specific clubs] because I didn't know how they were going to react my passport, right.

Draco's susceptibility to rejection not only dictated the type of spaces he chose to partake in, but also the men he decided to engage with. He described feeling most comfortable going to spaces where showing a passport at the door was not uncommon. He described seeking out people of color spaces, where he was able to engage with people that looked like him.

I think in the beginning of me *coming out* as queer I really put up a wall when it came to talking to people, especially men about my status. And I guess I was being racist, racially profiling people like, oh he's brown, he probably understands what I'm going through, right. I would be so scared of like White people. To tell them that I was undocumented was very scary for me. And for the longest time, I avoided really getting into any relationship with anyone that I didn't know was undocumented because I was afraid of how they were going to take it.

Draco shared how he felt most comfortable engaging with other Latino men because of their perceived relatability to the immigrant experience. For Draco, surrounding himself with others who shared his experience was safer than making himself vulnerable to anti-immigrant sentiment perpetuated by dissimilar others. Aware of the social implications of

his undocumented status, Draco was most concerned with mitigating points of tension with potential partners by eliminating the risk of rejection involved with self-disclosure.

Alex, a 20-year-old DACA recipient from Connecticut, similarly described his experience negotiating the liminal space between concealing his undocumented status and self-disclosing within LGBTQ spaces.

Queer spaces are predominantly White where I come from, so it was really hard to find queer people that were of color. So when I did find queer people of color and I came out as undocumented to them, they were a lot more accepting. So I felt like when there was other White people, I just always had to decide if I wanted to *come out* as undocumented in those queer spaces because I was like, you know, I can tell them that I'm undocumented but they're not going to offer the support or they might not react the way that I want, so it's mostly just a way of me trying to protect myself.

Distrust for institutions and dissimilar others subjugated participants to often dissemble their undocumented status. Their status invoked a certain level of vulnerability that resulted in a heightened level of sensitivity for sharing personal information. Hence, the risks of *coming out* often outweighed the benefits, given the prospect of social rejection, targeting and lack of understanding.

Joel, a 30-year-old DACA recipient from California, described the impact of the inaccessibility of LGBTQ social spaces on his sense of self. He described opting out of participating in these spaces for much of his coming-of-age due to prior experiences with rejection and exclusion.

I really didn't start going out to clubs and dancing and drinking until I was like 23-24, and it was because when I was 18, I had a very, you know, unfortunate and painful situation where I was in line, I was getting ready to go in and I had my *matricula*, and I wasn't allowed to go in. And it was just so unfortunate and I think it really traumatized me to a certain degree, and I didn't want to deal with that anymore.

Being rejected from LGBTQ social spaces as a result of his undocumented status, and not being able to do anything about it, he described feeling unwelcome to partake in LGBTQ culture. His experience tainted his sense of belonging within the LGBTQ community, and delayed his development of comfort engaging LGBTQ culture.

Matriculas are often the only form of identification undocumented immigrants had access to besides DACA, which only a small segment of the undocumented population was eligible for. For this reason, when businesses opted to not accept them as a form of proper identification, it constituted a form of discrimination against undocumented immigrants. As Josh, a 25-year-old DACA recipient from California, stated:

Even when they don't take your fucking *matricula* at the club. They be like, oh I am sorry you cannot get in. I'm like, dude I live in San Francisco you are supposed to be like a progressive city and you don't let undocumented people in your club? Because allegedly queers are not undocumented? I don't understand. And it's not even just about the club. It is more about how people perceive you as something of a lesser level than them simply because of that.

For Josh, as well as other participants, nightclubs represented the only available safe spaces for them to truly liberate their LGBTQ identities. Hence, when they were denied entry, they were left socially displaced and without recourse to other LGBTQ safe spaces conducive to their sexual identity development.

Recognizing their vulnerability to exclusion even within LGBTQ spaces, participants described not feeling part of the broader LGBTQ community. For eligible participants, DACA resolved some of these tensions by providing them legal presence and extending eligibility to some state public benefits (e.g., ID and driver's license) that allowed them easier entry into these spaces. However, because DACA did not supplant state-issued identification cards, in states where state IDs and drivers' licenses were denied to DACA recipients (e.g., Arizona and Nebraska), undocuqueers continued to experience the same type of exclusion from LGBTQ social spaces as they did before. For non-DACA-eligible participants, their ineligibility for state IDs and driver's licenses in most states (except California, New Mexico, Washington, Utah) continued to subject them to unwarranted scrutiny. Obtaining a state ID and driver's license, for many, helped facilitate their ability to celebrate their sexuality within LGBTQ spaces.

Managing interpersonal experiences. Participants also described the ways in which their sexuality and immigration status interestingly impacted interpersonal relationships. They described recognizing the implications of their sexuality and immigration status on their ability to manage relationships, and obtain the support they needed.

Camilo, a 20-year-old cisgender man from Massachusetts, described trying to navigate the barriers to higher education as an undocumented student, while

simultaneously trying to develop a positive self-concept as a gay man. Overcome with a sense of silence, as inflicted by each of these identities and others' lack of understanding, Camilo described having to cope with this simultaneous process in utter reclusion.

... at the same time that I was going through this moment of crisis with college applications where I was hanging off a cliff—you know, I was in this moment where I was like you need to tell someone and ask for help, or you are not going get this done, which like I said was the single most defeating period of my life. At the same time, I was going through a really tumultuous relationship in which I felt completely isolated, which was completely secret for 99% of the duration—a year and three months. And that completely went hand-in-hand. My inability to talk about my undocumented status and my inability to be completely open and secure in this relationship had just a really completely detrimental effect physically, mentally, and emotionally. It completely wore me out and it resulted in unfortunate consequences for the relationship. And I had no doubt in my mind that if I was not undocumented or the circumstances had been set up to where I had the support that I needed even as an undocumented immigrant that relationship would have continued in an incredibly healthy direction.

Camilo described feeling completely isolated, as though there was no one that could truly understand or support him. Feeling unable to ask for help during the college admissions process without revealing his undocumented status, he described feeling helpless.

Simultaneously, having to maintain his relationship a secret, Camilo described not being able to truly rely on others for emotional support.

As a result of my undocumented status I grew up with a sense of complete independence—not entirely the good kind. The kind where you feel that there is no one that can help you or truly understands what your situation is, even when that is not true. Even when that is actually quite irrational. You know, I think that as an undocumented individual, you tend to apply that to every single scenario in your life. I found that particularly for me, it rendered me unable to ask for help, which I absolutely think impacted my queerness. In the sense that you are already isolated in either of those identities. Imagine combining them, and the isolation and the inability to reach out to people, and the inability to feel like anybody truly understands where you are coming from.

The sense of silence perpetuated by the compartmentalization of his undocuqueer identity, given the stigma attached to being LGBTQ and undocumented, pushed Camilo to navigate these experiences on his own.

Mario, a 28-year-old DACA recipient from Florida, shared a similar experience coming to terms with his LGBTQ identity during the same time that he was confronted with the barriers to higher education as an undocumented student. He described dealing with the psychological turmoil of *coming out* to his family, while simultaneously navigating a relationship, and feeling stuck struggling to find an institution that would allow him an opportunity based on his merit, not his immigration status.

Both things hit me really hard my senior year of high school. I was reaching graduation and this was the point that all the differences kind of accumulated and compounded. I didn't have a life since I didn't have a Social Security, my friends were applying for study abroad, my friends were applying to college, my friends

had cars, my friends were seeking a better life in the future, and I was stuck. And at the same time, I was trying to figure out the future with me and my boyfriend, if like I don't know what my future is and he is moving on with his future. So as it happens, my second semester of my senior year in high school I was with my boyfriend for Valentine's Day and then someone caught us together, my sister, and she pretty much chased him out of the house and started crying. And the *coming out* process with my sister was extraordinarily difficult because she was not accepting whatsoever. She was really devastated, she said she was very disappointed.

Mario described how the educational limitations imposed by his undocumented status created uncertainty for the future of his relationship with his partner, as his partner was moving forward with his plans, while Mario felt stuck. At the same time, the cultural stigma invoked by the visibility of his relationship fractured and strained the relationship he had with his family, who refused to accept Mario as gay. Navigating the liminal space at the intersection of his undocuqueer experience forced Mario to almost immediately lose two reliable sources of support that he was dependent of for navigating the different facets of his experience.

Other participants described how their inability to qualify for state public benefits affected their relationships with their partners. Much of it had to do with their partners' inability to fully understand the state of vulnerability imposed by participants' undocumented status. Antonia, a 32 year old genderqueer immigrant from Arizona, for example, described constantly being aware of the limitations of her status, and how those

limitations strained the sustainability of her relationship with her girlfriend, given the unnecessary strain on their lives.

She always knew my status, but she didn't understand it. So when she came out as a Marine, you know, proud and wanting to take me to her military days, that's when she really got to understand what it meant to be undocumented. She didn't know. She thought that I could do everything she could. She wanted to show me off with her officers like, this is my girlfriend. She's the one that supported me, pero right there we felt like trapped. She wanted me to go visit her at boot camp and right away I told her, no, I can't. No, they are going to ask me for una identificación I don't have. All I have is my Mexican passport. It was kind of frustrating just at those points. And for me she was living over there [in California] and I was living in Arizona, and just to cross that little line [the state border] it was dangerous.

Antonia described not being able to partake in significant moments of her partner's life due to her inability to qualify for an ID or driver's license in the state of Arizona. She also described constantly being afraid of getting pulled over when she would visit her partner across the state border, given border patrol inspections. Having to deal with the vulnerability imposed by her social limitations, and the pervasive sense of fear invoked by her undocumented status, Antonia ended her relationship after two and a half years. Her undocumented status made it very difficult to maintain a mixed-status relationship.

Social limitations not only affected participants within relationships, but also the way participants approached interactions with others. Dating, in general, was a process that participants approached with ambivalence, as the implications imposed by their

undocumented status, specifically, always invoked the need for self-disclosure. For participants, the need to divulge their undocumented status as a disclaimer to a relationship was a vulnerable process in and of itself. Joel, for example, described his undocumented status as unnecessary baggage that interrupted the organic flow of dating.

I think, you know, in terms of dating, it definitely plays a big role, right, in choosing who to date knowing that you are undocumented, and in this burden that is placed on you to educate your partners about, you know, what does it mean to be undocumented, what's that reality like, and some of the dynamics that your partner needs to be aware of, right, given that you are undocumented. I think that for me, it was very draining. It was very heavy. It was this process of when do I tell people that I'm undocumented. Is it the first time that we are talking? Is it on the first date? On the third date? Is it before we have sex, right? So I think that it really chipped away really having an authentic experience with a partner, whether it was just dating or being boyfriends with someone, or just meeting someone at club and then, you know, having sex with this person.

Given the potential barriers to a future relationship, Joel described the burden placed on him to constantly have to *come out* when interacting with prospective partners. He shared how though he had no control over the limitations of his status, he did have control over the meaning he ascribed to his experiences and how he responded to these situations.

Hence, redefining what it meant to be undocumented really allowed him to take ownership of how he experienced dating processes.

It wasn't until later when I was able to definitely, you know, start going clubbing and enjoying that, you know, that part of being young for me. And now I feel I

have a better understanding of how the system works and what these identities and experiences and moments mean to me that I'm able to sort of now really take ownership of who I date, why I date, and when do I have sex, and who do I have sex with. You know, I feel like I'm in a place of more control and more of a, I decide how those things happen and with who. But it has definitely impacted me, and it has taken me a while to say, you know, like hey, being undocumented should not impact, it shouldn't have an effect on these type of situations, right. And that they might, right, still have an impact, but now I'm in a place of choosing.

Like Joel, Daniel, a 21-year-old DACA recipient from Connecticut, similarly described his undocumented status as a scarlet letter. He regarded it as something that was crucial for his partners to be able to understand, as it ultimately shaped and influenced Daniel's ability to interact within a relationship.

I mean, in terms of like potential partners or potential boyfriends or whatever, my status is going to be in the back of my mind. And sort of having to come out to another person, that gets kind of messy so I try not to dabble into that. But assuming they may not know about any immigrant rights issues or the consequences of my status, that may be something that could potentially be a barrier to a future relationship or at least be a challenge or bridge or even just another *coming out*. Because, I mean, at least at this point in my life, I'm kind of pretty open about those things, but I'm not going to, I don't know, well I might mention it on our first date, but it's still something that I'm kind of tired of doing, but that I know I will need to keep doing in the foreseeable future.

Daniel described *coming out* as a never-ending process. The unresolved nature of his status forced him to constantly have to educate others about its implications on his ability to sustain a relationship. In this sense, it was not necessarily that being undocumented ruined the potential in a relationship, but rather that having to constantly explain what that meant, and significant others never quite fully understanding was discouraging. As Julian described:

So there's a lot of explaining to do to someone once they find out that I am actually undocumented. I guess for me it kind of ruins the relationship because it becomes this conversation of like having to explain everything. And of course you always think about one day we will go to Paris or we will go somewhere, but at the back of your head you're always thinking I cannot go because I am undocumented. I cannot go because I will not be able to get back. So it kind of brings this extra thing into the relationship where you have to explain everything.

Navigating the intersection of sexuality and undocumented status placed the onus on participants to have to educate significant others about the implications of their status. Because partners were unable to fully understand what it meant to be undocumented, unless they themselves were undocumented, participants were often discouraged from engaging with dissimilar others.

Maria, a 23-year-old DACA recipient from Florida, described power dynamics resultant from her positionality as a queer undocumented woman. Given the interplay of gender, sexuality and immigration status in her life, she described her experience as vulnerable.

I think being undocumented has also influenced my ability to develop intimate relationships with people, which is very interesting because when we often think about immigration, we think about the role that the state has, we think of the role that policymakers have, or even the role that imperialism has, but we don't really talk about sexuality and immigration and the power that can come about when you are a woman and you're undocumented and you're in a relationship with somebody. Because regardless of who that person is, if they had papers, there is a power dynamic there. So it has definitely affected my life because I don't have a problem finding people, it's just that I am very cautious with whom I get involved with because I think being undocumented gives you this sort of innate protective nature, and also with being a woman, I don't trust most men to begin with. So there is a lot of things there.

Maria shared the overwhelming sense of vulnerability she experienced engaging in relationships with others as a result of her undocumented status. This feeling was in response to the marginalization she experienced as an undocuqueer woman, and the fear she carried resultant from the animus against LGBTQ and undocumented immigrants inscribed by law.

Mario similarly talked about the way his undocumented status and sexuality were previously used against him within the context of dating. Mario's positionality as a gay undocumented man invoked a power differential within his mixed-status relationship that made him increasingly vulnerable to subjugation and manipulation.

So I think that the biggest factor that plays into being a gay man and being undocumented is relationships because in many of my relationships, it was a

strain on the relationship for me. The frustration and feeling that my self-worth was not there. My frustration was there and they both kind of poisoned past relationships. Well, more than that it was also used in many of my relationships as a factor to hold me down. To tether me to a bad relationship or another. For instance, I had a boyfriend that I was dating for two and a half years, and that boyfriend ended up cheating, and he told me, you can't leave me because who else is going to marry you for your papers? He also had said, if you leave I'm going to call the police. I left anyways. I wasn't going to be tethered to that kind of emotional abuse that he was placing me under, but for many individuals who do not understand that, when you are living in a conservative community, and a community that doesn't embrace either community, LGBT or undocumented people, but also when you're placed in a vulnerable spot with individuals who try to use your undocumented status against you, that's when it all builds up against you.

Mario described how his undocumented status influenced his inability to protect himself during his two and half year relationship. The legal and social repercussions of his undocuqueer identity threatened his safety and well being, and further perpetuated the low sense of self he described experiencing as a result of his multiply-marginalized identity.

Darcy, a 21-year-old recent legal permanent resident from North Carolina, similarly described the simultaneity of her oppression at the intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status. A survivor of sexual assault, she shared her

vulnerability as a bisexual, undocumented woman, and described the ways that her multiply-marginalized identity contributed to her targeting.

I remember that I was raped in college and I was scared that, you know, if I went to the police then they would ask me about my status. I don't know, I feel like it would be my fault that if I was deported I would leave my family. I would be the one that caused my little brother to lose his sister, I would be the one that caused my parents to like go through pain after all the hard work that they put for me to come to the states. So I didn't go to the hospital. I thought that I couldn't go and I was scared and I didn't tell them. And it just so happens, that in that particular incident I was targeted because I was perceived to be bi[sexual]. There was a lot of sexual exploitation going on, but a lot of abuse because of my sexual identity and my immigration status because he knew that I didn't have papers. He knew that I was queer and that I was trying to find a space to *come out*. And I thought it was a good space to come out to him, but things just didn't work out that way.

Darcy was very aware of the ways that her gender and sexuality, compounded with her undocumented status, influenced her positionality during that experience. She alluded to the power differentials inflicted by her multiply-marginalized identity, and described her subjugation as an undocuqueer woman.

Well so, it was definitely used against me so many countless times, but it was different in the sense that me as a woman, me as a queer woman, like I was sexually harassed, I was sexually exploited in ways that men generally aren't... But you know there is a whole sexual experience to it that has to do a lot with harassment, abuse, and exploitation that I never would have experienced if I had

papers. I would've never had to worry that there was a looming threat of deportation or looming threat of being separated, because I don't think what worried me the most was being deported. What worried me the most was being separated from like my little brother, from my family and from my mom and from my dad, and having to go to Costa Rica and explain everything to my family back in Costa Rica. Like, that would have forced me to *come out* to them and that would've forced me to, you know, that's not something that I think I will ever be ready for because that means that I will be cut off from my family.

Darcy's narrative highlights the way her identities were interconnected and how they contributed to her vulnerability as an undocuqueer woman. Because her undocumented status forced her to consider the reality of deportation and the consequences of family rejection as related to her LGBTQ identity, she bypassed opportunities to report the incident in order to mitigate the risks. She, like other participants, described how the threat of being deported to a country less tolerant of LGBTQ people prevented her from seeking out the support she needed as a survivor of oppression.

Complexity: Developing Complex Self-Definitions

Recognizing their vulnerability to anti-immigrant, xenophobic and heterosexist power structures, participants developed a tolerance for living in a world that is not rigid. Their positionality challenged participants to (re)create their own self-definitions as complex and intersectional beings (i.e., undocuqueer). It enabled them to develop comfort living in a third space (Anzaldúa, 1987) where they were simultaneously LGBTQ and undocumented, not just one or the other. Hence, they described the

intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience as being complexly intertwined. As Franco described:

So undocuqueer is the two identities that intersect, and one of them is undocumented and all the issues that come along with that. And the other is being queer, and all the issues that come along with that. At the same time, because I am both identities, I identify as undocuqueer. Always I identify with one of each, but I never stop being one or the other. So that is what I take pride in, and I also become aware to what those issues are and how to fight against them. Just come to more of a liberty of my identity.

For Franco, undocuqueer meant indivisibility. It meant living at the intersection of two social identities. He described how his undocumented status made, impacted and influenced his LGBTQ identity—and vice versa—in a way that allowed his undocuqueer identity to become more expansive and rich.

Joel similarly shared how his undocuqueer identity broadened his understanding of what it means to be undocumented and LGBTQ within the context of the U.S.

...if I had been born here or if I had gained some sort of residency, citizenship in this country at an early age, it's hard for me to think that I would have this critical analysis of these two identities and the systems that oppress both identities separately, but also interconnectedly. So to me it's like, not that I'm glad, right, but I'm just grateful that I have allowed my undocumented immigrant status to complicate my queer identity and allowing for that to happen even in moments when I don't understand what it really means. And so it is almost like, maybe if I hadn't been undocumented, maybe I would've been stuck in the sort of very

narrow queer, more gay identity where marriage equality, [is] as far as I would've gotten... and I think maybe the opposite too, right. That may be if I had been a resident or citizen or had been given some sort of [lawful] immigration status at an early age, maybe I would've had a more narrow concept and understanding of immigrant rights in this country. So I feel like these two identities definitely complicate each other, make things a lot messier for me, but also allow me to really experience a more rich understanding and view of what the world means to me, given these two identities that I have fully taken ownership of and have challenged and have given different meanings to in the different stages of my life. Being positioned at the intersection of sexuality and immigration status allowed participants like Joel to better understand the ways systems of oppression are interlocked and interrelated. His experience ultimately forced him to develop a more critical analysis of his identity and the systems he simultaneously interacted within.

Undocuqueer to several participants signified comprehensively addressing themselves, and no longer having to check any of their identities at the door. It represented an opportunity for participants to fully embrace their experience as LGBTQ and undocumented, and confront institutionalized oppression not in silos, but intersectionally. Patricia, a 25-year-old DACA recipient from Texas, described how her embodied complexity influenced the way she approached different spaces from a more intersectional lens.

I come to work and I'm like, I'm a queer immigrant woman that cares about workers rights, or cares about immigrants rights, who cares about LGBTQ rights, who wants to make sure that people feel empowered either through civic

engagement or a community. So that's how I generally try to intersect all the identities that I have. That's exactly it. I can't separate my identities, so why would I do that in other spaces? Because that's not building, I feel. That's why it's very important that in every space that you go to that all of these identities are claimed, so that we are able to start thinking through the many lenses that people have, even though we may not have that experience.

Participants believed that as queer and trans immigrants of color in this country, their work, organizing, politics, and values should be informed by their lives. Being undocuqueer represented one of the most complex, interestingly intertwined, and radical identities to be out as, given the social and legal repercussions associated with each identity, and the polarization of our country around LGBTQ and immigrant rights issues. For this reason, Patricia advocated for more complex understandings of identity reflective of her own complex self-definitions.

Daniel similarly discussed how in order for others to begin to understand him, he too needed to understand himself complexly in a way that was not divided, but rather very intentionally hyphenated and very intentionally together.

I think it allows people to become critical thinkers, to become radical intersectional thinkers; to consciously challenge the norms that are constantly being reproduced around them and in front of them. I think it sort of allows people to have an openness that is arguably unparalleled to any comparable sort of situation...

Daniel sought to create spaces that were more radical, less normative, and more intersectional. Understanding himself complexly was a way of becoming more aware of

the systems of oppression simultaneously working against and within his communities. Without acknowledging our privilege and oppression within the different spaces we occupy, we cannot escape the oppressive, normative and abusive qualities of both communities.

Resisting simplistic conceptions of identity. In line with the complexity participants attributed to their lived experiences, participants worked hard to develop their own public narrative outside of LGBTQ and immigrant rights frameworks. They rejected discourse that they felt harmed them, and combated the consistent erasure of their experiences within the larger LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements. Living outside of the margins of what it means to be LGBTQ and what it means to be undocumented within the social movement context of the U.S. imposed unwarranted vulnerability for undocuqueer activists that effectively denied their existence within either or both movements.

Jesse reflected on his positionality as an undocuqueer activist, and described the ways in which his complexity was often deemed expendable by the mainstream LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements.

You can be ignorant or blinded like how I was, saying that one thing does not affect the other, but if you sit down and really analyze it, like how it affects your every single day—and it affects it so much! As an LGBT mainstream movement you are not recognized. As an immigrant movement, you are not recognized. And you are the negotiating piece.... We are always the negotiating piece, and our lives are not to be negotiated. Why is it that we are always the negotiating piece, and why is it that in our lives we have to be okay with that? And I think it was very

present to me during this past Obama announcement, where I wanted to be happy because my parents were not queer and were benefiting from it, but the negotiating piece. Nowhere in that [announcement] LGBT lives are acknowledged whatsoever.

Jesse described feeling constantly excluded from administrative efforts aimed at improving the social condition of his communities. Pervasive normative assumptions and rhetoric exclusive of his positionality continued to exploit his body as one of the 28,500 binational same-sex couples dependent on marriage equality, or one of the more than 11.2 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in need of some type of relief, yet never as one of the 267,000 LGBTQ-identified undocumented immigrants displaced from both social movements due to their marginality (Gates, 2013). Participants, hence, described their undocuqueer identity as a symbol of resistance to and liberation from normative discourses of sexuality and immigration that reduced their experiences to single identity politics. As Lalo, a 27-year-old DACA recipient from California, stated,

I think that if there wasn't an undocuqueer movement I don't think there would be a push back like against the criminalization of our trans brothers and sisters. I don't think people would be fighting for deportation cases of an open gay male or female that is incarcerated for a minor crime. Injustices for these folks would not be out there. People would not know that injustices are happening.

Participants described intentionally bringing undocuqueer to the forefront in an effort to complicate the conversations around what it means to be undocumented and also what it means to be LGBTQ—a complexity that single identity politics obscured and neglected.

Joe, a 22-year-old DACA recipient from Nevada, described his undocuqueer identity as a way to resist simplistic conceptions of identity, and hold movements accountable to broader inclusion.

I think it helps people say, yes we are all undocumented, but we need to recognize that some of us are going to be needing a little bit more in terms of rights than just citizenship. The LGBT community... I think it helps hold them accountable in saying like, if you're going to advocate for marriage and advocate for all these things that are going to help the LGBT community, then you better be advocating for immigrant rights because that's an LGBT issue as well.

For Joe, immigrant rights were LGBTQ rights, and LGBTQ rights were immigrant rights.

His existence within both communities is what brought the two issues together.

Identifying as both LGBTQ and undocumented, Joe described how he never stopped being one or the other, and resisted the pressures to divide his identity within mainstream LGBTQ and immigrant rights frameworks. Undocuqueer signified acknowledging the diverse identities that exist within our communities, and doing work inclusive of their voices and experiences.

Patricia similarly described her experience resisting the separation of her identities within the different spaces she occupied. She described how the recognition of her own complexity enabled her to advocate for the inclusion of other marginalized perspectives.

I saw how my immigration status was being discussed in one space, and then we were told, don't talk about your sexual identity, don't mention it. And in LGBT spaces, I'm like, why are we not talking about these other identities that folks

have, whether it's their immigration status or whether it's their socioeconomic background, that limit them to have resources in terms of what it means to be LGBT? I think it's just both of them pushed me to never divorce them at all. For Patricia, being undocuqueer meant resisting the impulse to hide certain facets of her experience in order to conform to single identity frameworks. She discussed having to own every single one of her identities in order to bring visibility to her non-normativity and incite conversations about how those identities were intertwined.

Mark, a 27-year-old DACA recipient from California, associated undocuqueer with liberation. For him, it was about resisting the prescribed standards of what it means to be LGBTQ and what it means to be undocumented, and being able to express himself holistically as an LGBTQ undocumented man without feeling scrutinized for not conforming to the prescribed standards set forth by his LGBTQ or immigrant communities.

Y pos a la misma ves, decir undocuqueer, decir que yo soy undocuqueer también significa mi liberación. Sentirme libre de ser quien soy, ya ser una persona gay o indocumentada, y no sentirme juzgado o criticado ya sea por la comunidad inmigrante o la comunidad LGBT.

And well at the same time, saying undocuqueer, saying that I am undocuqueer also signifies my liberation. Me feeling free to be who I am, whether it be being gay or undocumented, and not feeling judged or criticized by the immigrant or LGBT communities.

Participants generally talked about the need to challenge normative scripts of collective identity within LGBTQ and immigrant discourses in order to deconstruct essentialized

conceptions of identity, and uplift their non-normative experiences as undocuqueer.

Santos, a 30-year-old DACA recipient from Arizona, shared this sentiment, and described undocuqueer as important for dismantling the stigma attached to both (homo)sexuality and being undocumented.

...I felt that my whole life, my whole childhood, I needed to hide a certain part of myself because of I was afraid if people knew who I was I wouldn't be liked. So there is fear in *coming out* because you basically feel like as long as you are hiding you'll be safe. So for me, *coming out* meant not hiding anymore and giving people a chance to know me for who I am, and if they choose to love me and be my friends they will do so knowing who I am, not because I projected a certain part of me and I hid a certain other.

Coming out as undocuqueer helped Santos participate in safe spaces more intentionally, and without the need to have to choose one identity over another.

Daniel best summarized this sentiment, proposing that safe spaces not go un-interrogated.

... the truth is that a lot of queer spaces remain racist and xenophobic and classist, and I think it's important to call out a space to challenge that. Similarly, I think a lot of immigrant spaces, in general, a lot of immigration organizations remain homophobic and sexist and possibly trans-phobic. And so I think it's important to talk about these, again, to challenge that.

LGBTQ and immigrant spaces were often regarded as safe spaces where participants could identify with others based on their shared LGBTQ or undocumented identity. The impulse to build collective identity with distinct group boundaries, however, often

perpetuated the consistent erasure of undocuqueer experiences at the overlapping margins of identity. Hence, Daniel proposed moving away from the oppressive, normative and abusive qualities of the larger LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements, and instead creating spaces of resistance, where participants challenged normative assumptions and simplistic conceptions of what it means to be LGBTQ and undocumented. Undocuqueer as a form of resistance to essentialized identity discourses was evidenced along heteronormative, homonormative, and DREAMer narratives.

Heteronormativity. The emphasis placed on issues of family separation (i.e., deportation) within immigrant rights frameworks placed undue emphasis on heteronormative relationships that helped suppress participants' LGBTQ identities. While family separation and deportation were certainly relevant to undocuqueer immigrants, as they too had families (chosen and/or biological), the unintended consequence of solely organizing around heterosexual relationships was that it reinscribed heteronormativity. Camilo, for example, described how heteronormative scripts within the immigrant rights discourses essentialized undocumented immigrants' experiences, and marginalized LGBTQ experiences, including his own.

I think that I walked into a very heteronormative environment, which isn't to say that it was a hostile environment, because that is not actually the sense that I got. It wasn't hostile. It wasn't aggressive, you know, but it was heteronormative. The interesting thing about heteronormativity is that it's not particularly overt. It does not necessarily have to be aggressive and it does not necessarily have to be intentionally hurtful or oppressive, but it is.

Camilo described not having a space to explore and critically reflect on his LGBTQ identity, given the lack of visibility of LGBTQ issues within immigrant rights frameworks. The stories and narratives of LGBTQ immigrants were often not included within immigrant rights advocacy efforts, and that exclusion consequently made safe spaces unsafe for him, given his non-conformance to heterosexual standards.

...when I walked into the spaces in 2011-2012 and up until very recently, it felt not safe at all for me to be able to express both of my identities. I think it is important to also note that it may not have completely been reality. But I think it was part of the trauma that I had experienced as a young person and in high school that I felt that way, even though it may not necessarily have been the reality, even though folks may have been quite open to it or would not have reacted in any negative way, the trauma I think—I think this is very true—the trauma, it colors, it tints your subsequent experiences so that you find it quite difficult to experience reality as it fully is, because your experience and your perception of reality is distorted by trauma.

Camilo described his uneasiness trusting his environment. He described the way his experiences with oppression had influenced the way he interacted within different spaces. For Camilo, trauma invoked a sense of insecurity in identifying as both LGBTQ and undocumented. He had grown up with a fear of rejection as a result of his LGBTQ identity that those experiences affected the way he approached even immigrant spaces.

Ester, a 26-year-old transgender DACA recipient from Washington D.C., described a similar experience becoming aware of heteronormativity within immigrant

spaces. For her, it was more about coming to the realization of her perceived difference even within safe spaces.

...in terms of identity, it's something that took place actually by entering Latino immigrants spaces that were meant to address my immigrant self, but neglected my queer self. So that's when I really was confronted with like, okay, because at LGBTQ places I would enter queer, and people would hear my immigration rhetoric and background and not prioritize it, not try to understand it, but it wasn't an issue that I was an immigrant and queer. As opposed to many Latino immigrant spaces, it was an issue that I was queer. So that's when I was actually confronted with like, what am I?

Ester highlighted some of the ways in which heteronormativity manifested itself as transphobia and the general exclusion of LGBTQ experiences within immigrant rights advocacy work. This exclusion forced her to reconceptualize her own self-definition, and resist the compartmentalization of her embodied complexity. *Coming out* as undocumented and trans, hence, enabled her to disrupt taken-for-granted heteronormativity within immigrant spaces.

Draco similarly resisted heteronormativity within organizing spaces by adopting an undocuqueer identity that challenged the invisibility of queer immigrants.

I see constantly, and it pisses me off, how the undocuqueer story is pushed to the side, and just brushed to the side because there is not a lot of undocuqueer presence in these organizations and a lot of these actions are being led by faith organizations. And I think when we are talking about immigration, or some type

of relief, we need to keep in mind that not everyone has a family, and families look different, let's be honest.

Draco described recognizing the exclusivity of immigrant rights discourses when it came to LGBTQ concerns. Immigrant rights strategies often did not take into consideration issues of family rejection, the inaccessibility of marriage, and barriers to adoption that implicate undocuqueer immigrants' ability to benefit from heteronormative family-based immigration processes and deferred action programs (e.g., DAPA). This erasure of LGBTQ experiences incited him to *come out* as undocuqueer and resist essentialized conceptions of undocumented immigrants as strictly heterosexual.

Joel identified a similar experience, and confronted the heteronormativity undergirding immigrant rights work by highlighting the presence and leadership of LGBTQ folk, as well as the blatant disregard for their experiences within existing frameworks.

I started to see that there were other queer people or people part of the LGBTQ community, but no one brought that up. People just kept talking about their undocumented identity. To me it was very intriguing to see that identity, that energy, and those faces, but no one really vocalizing it and acknowledging it until I sort of started questioning, you know, myself and those folks around me. And so I felt that the only way that I could, in a way, open up the space for that identity to become acknowledged was for me to sort of say, hey like I'm not just undocumented, I'm also gay, also queer, and we need to figure out ways to bring that in, and to start to integrate that type of work and those identities and experiences.

For Joel, sharing his undocuqueer identity created opportunities for others to develop and critically reflect on their sexual identities. *Coming out* resisted the underlining heteronormativity that unitary identity politics generated within immigrant rights frameworks.

Homonormativity. Participants also highlighted how the mainstream LGBTQ rights movement tended to the experiences of a particular LGBTQ demographic that did not necessarily include undocumented folk. Many felt that this demographic consisted primarily of White, citizen, gay males, even though the movement often claimed to represent the entire LGBTQ spectrum. Josh, for example, shared how he did not necessarily feel recognized as part of the LGBTQ community.

I feel like the immigrant rights movement has been a little bit more receptive. I don't know about necessarily the gay movement people. I don't necessarily know if that is something that we are recognized as part of the community too, like, oh there is undocumented queers? I don't necessarily feel like that is how it's been. I feel like that movement represents a certain demographic of people that don't really associate themselves with us.

To help reshape the mainstream LGBTQ narrative, participants actively sought opportunities to increase the mainstream LGBTQ community's awareness of undocuqueers. Lalo, for example, used his undocuqueer identity to challenge homonormative scripts that did not necessarily address his identity as an undocumented immigrant within the LGBTQ community.

It has also been discussions about the criminalization of queers, and not just specifically undocuqueers, but anybody that is queer. I feel that the value of

undocuqueer work is high, leading all of the same issues that a lot of the LGBT nonprofits do, but adding this extra layer of undocumented, the undocumented population, and adding this extra layer of how being undocumented puts you at a higher risk of all these other things that all these other organizations work for. For Lalo, it was more about highlighting the exclusion of undocuqueer folk when conversations about LGBTQ issues did not take into account the undocumented experience. It was about highlighting the diversity within the LGBTQ community that mainstream narratives were not taking into account.

Tommy utilized his personal story as a tool for challenging the homonormativity of the LGBTQ rights movement, as well as the community's perception of what it means to be undocuqueer.

As an undocumented person I think it was feeling like when we were in queer spaces that are dominated by a non-immigrant narrative, that I can use those feelings of being undocumented and share them or that I could share those experiences with those communities that are not aware of immigrant folk who are also queer.

For Tommy, sharing his story was particularly important for creating awareness of the homonormativity underlining current LGBTQ advocacy efforts. Highlighting undocuqueers' systematic exclusion from LGBTQ victories was important for dispelling essentialized notions of what LGBTQ rights are. Particularly frustrating for Jesse was the fact that undocuqueer immigrants were consistently glossed over by the broader LGBTQ rights movement. He described his exclusion as follows:

...it's supposed to be the home of the LGBT, fighting for our rights, but the fact that you are undocumented, or even bigger, the fact that you're an immigrant or person of color, being left out of this vision is what I think affects me more, because any win that we have gotten as queer people most of the time has not been a win for myself or my community.

Jesse experienced his LGBTQ and undocumented identity as interconnected. Situated at the overlapping margins of two socially repressed identities, it was almost impossible for him to benefit from the victories of the LGBTQ rights movement, given his undocumented status.

For example, call marriage a win, like something that I still don't benefit from because I can marry all I want, I can fall in love tomorrow and say, let's get married, and even if he was a citizen, I would still not benefit from him because of the immigration laws. And if he wasn't, nothing assures me that our marriage is going to be there because any day I could get deported. Any day I could be taken away. And then you have the Executive Order of ENDA, that's a win for the gay community. Like, that's a win for discrimination, but that's not a win for me or my community because tomorrow we can wake up, DACA ends and we have no job. Discrimination or not in the workplace, it's not going to happen because we won't be in the workplace. And that's minimal to the reality that we're facing. You are celebrating these wins that are not wins for the whole community that you're claiming to represent.

Julio shared a similar sentiment.

And also you know, marriage is something, but it's something that is not really concerning me now. Something concerning me now is getting a legal status so that I don't have to fear for myself, being sent back to a country where you know people are not as open-minded or as accepting. These are the things that I struggle with day-to-day.

Julio described discourses around marriage as a privilege that he was unable to celebrate given the salience of his undocumented status on his every day life. The ability to get married did not relieve the ongoing criminalization of his undocumented community nor absolve the fear of deportation imposed by his immigration status. Mainstream LGBTQ advocacy work, hence, did not speak to his experience holistically, and reduced the complexity of his undocuqueer identity to just LGBTQ.

For Patricia, creating undocuqueer spaces meant refusing to assimilate into a selectively homonormative social movement that does not address her intersectional experience. She, among other participants, highlighted the value of undocuqueer as developing a space of belonging. It signified resisting the impulse to compromise an aspect of her identity for the sake of embracing another.

I feel that within undocuqueerness, we need to have our own space. We don't need to necessarily fall into any organization or rhetoric about what it means to be queer. Just for example, I go to pride events, but I acknowledge that pride really just talks about White males, you know. So it's like knowing that whatever space has been there before in terms of identity, that you don't necessarily have to go into it. You can just create your own space.

The mutual exclusivity of LGBTQ and immigrant rights frameworks compelled participants to embrace the complexity of their undocuqueer identities, and develop their own public narrative outside of LGBTQ and immigrant rights discourses. Creating their own spaces, undocuqueers challenged the consistent erasure of their experiences at the overlapping margins of two single-variable identity-based social movements. It was a way of blurring and deconstructing group boundaries, while simultaneously building bridges across movements.

DREAMer. Identifying as undocuqueer also represented a shift away from the DREAMer narrative. While all participants in this study identified as undocuqueer, only a few of them who met the eligibility criteria simultaneously identified as DREAMers. Participants described how identifying as a DREAMer was their doorway into activism. DREAMer as an identity was better than “illegal,” when they began to advocate for the passage of the DREAM Act. Over time, however, their politization and critique of the systems in place incited them to identify instead with a more complex identity moniker reflective of their lived experiences—undocuqueer.

Mark, for example, reflected on his shift from identifying as a DREAMer earlier during his involvement in the immigrant rights movement, to now identifying as undocuqueer. For Mark, adopting an undocuqueer identity complicated the conversation around immigrant rights, and more directly spoke to his experience at the intersection of sexuality and immigration status.

En algún momento si me identifique con el término DREAMer, pero pienso que hoy en día no me identifico como DREAMer. Más que nada si me identifico como undocuqueer porque pienso que DREAMer es una palabra más

generalizada. It's a lot more broad, whereas undocuqueer is very direct and really speaks about my two identities.

At one point, I did identify with the term DREAMer, but I think that nowadays I don't identify as a DREAMer. More than anything, I do identify as undocuqueer because I think that DREAMer is a very broad word. It's a lot more broad, whereas undocuqueer is very direct and really speaks about my two identities.

Mark described how DREAMer simplified his identity, and did not necessarily capture the ways his sexuality implicated his everyday life as an undocumented immigrant. The DREAMer identity was incomplete and did not accurately reflect the complexity of his lived experience. For this reason, he opted for a more complex self-definition reflective of his everyday struggle.

Patricia similarly described how the “good immigrant” student identity purported by the DREAMer narrative did not account for other salient facets of her identity that were deemed less desirable by normalized American ideals. For example, working under the table and being LGBTQ.

I remember being in 2010, and I was like, oh why are we only claiming the student identity when, you know, we are also working? Like a lot of us are workers, we are under the table, so why don't we claim that we-are-making-the-economy-run identity? Or why are we not claiming this I-am-LGBTQ identity? So I just saw that when I came into the movement in 2010, I felt like it was still very young... I felt that a lot of people, including myself, saw how following a talking point or just claiming one identity or framing the “good immigrant” versus

the “bad immigrant” wasn't something that we should be doing just because of the fact that it was still affecting our community in so many levels.

For Patricia, immigrant rights went well beyond just the student identity. She described recognizing the diversity of experiences within her immigrant community, and how positioning DREAMers as somehow more worthy of a pathway to citizenship simultaneously defined who was not. The politics of deservingness, as influenced by American ideals, hence, continued the perpetual criminalization of undocumented immigrants, and punished non-DREAMer archetypes.

By opting for a more complex intersectional identity, participants also resisted the DREAMer narrative's portrayal of undocumented immigrants as normal people, according to American ideals. Joe, for example, discussed how the DREAMer narrative invoked certain assumptions about what it means to be a normal American, and how that narrative in the current context did not include identifying as LGBTQ.

If you watch the President, as a prime example, in his speeches when he talks about undocumented immigrants and DREAMers, there is a very clear message that is being portrayed, and like I talked about earlier, it is very heteronormative and you hear these ideas of, these are people that just want to be American they are just like us. It's a very normative kind of saying. It's like saying they are normal too. I think what undocuqueer does, it's a critique of the normal saying that...you're portraying undocumented people as just normal people. But undocuqueer is saying, well actually, no. Let's critique that because that is coming from a place of like heteronormativity and only further perpetuates oppression in

every day because it takes people out of being not normal to normal, but it does nothing to critique why we think people are not normal in the first place. Because DREAMers are positioned in the backdrop of the default American profile (i.e., cis-gender and heterosexual), Joe felt further displaced as a queer man who did not nicely conform to that archetype. Undocuqueer, hence, meant having to create his own space, apart from DREAMers, in order to feel empowered as an LGBTQ-identified undocumented immigrant.

Julio shared a similar sentiment and discussed how the DREAMer identity did not quite speak to his experience.

Like some of us would say, I am not your typical DREAMer. The typical DREAMer, the one portrayed on TV. Unfortunately, mostly always the DREAMer that always excelled in class, always did extra credit, always was the teacher's pet, always did anything and everything they could to get an "A." Like I mentioned, I was different. I was gay and I was going through a lot of issues when I was in high school.

Beyond the challenges imposed by his undocumented status (e.g., ID, license, college, financial aid, and family separation), which other undocumented youth could relate to, Julio was also confronted by the added pressures of being gay, which included *coming out*, coping with issues of family acceptance, bullying, harassment, and never really feeling part of the DREAMer narrative. DREAMer, as an identity, did not fully capture the nuances of his multiply-marginalized experience.

Jesse similarly described the way being LGBTQ automatically positioned him outside of the “good immigrant” narrative. His critique of the DREAMer narrative was that it was hierarchal and not inclusive of non-student identities.

And I think as undocuqueers now, that's why most of us push back on the narrative of “good DREAMer” versus “bad DREAMer”, or “good immigrant” versus “bad immigrant” because if you are to analyze it and write it down, all undocuqueers fall either one way or another as a “bad immigrant”, however you want to write it. The fact that you love the same sex you are bad.

Jesse described how the sociopolitical context of the U.S. framed discourses around normativity, and how those discourses, unfortunately, did not include LGBTQ identities, given their perceived deviance from heterosexuality. Challenging these simplified conceptions of deservingness, participants opted for more complex self-definitions outside of the DREAMer narrative that better conveyed their positionality amidst anti-immigrant, xenophobic and heterosexist power structures simultaneously.

Resilience: When Thriving is (Im)Possible

Resisting heteronormativity, homonormativity and the DREAMer narrative, while simultaneously living within the vulnerable state of illegibility, participants described undocuqueer as resilience. Undocuqueer was a symbol of survival and a self-definition that enabled participants to resist normative discourses that tried to capture their experiences within categories they did not entirely fit in. Heteronormative, homonormative and DREAMer spaces provided the context by which undocuqueers assigned meaning to their experiences, and developed strategies for interacting and working within interlocking systems of oppression. As Mario described,

I think that throughout our movement, the thing that connects us together for the undocumented youth movement and the LGBT community is that piece of feeling stuck. Not being able to progress, like something is holding you back, and then pushing through it. Regardless of what is holding you back, you find a way to survive. You find a way to progress throughout all the obstacles, and I think that shows extraordinary resilience in our community. And that is the same type of resilience that many members of our LGBTQ community, whether they are undocumented, face too. So that is probably the factor that allows me to express to both communities our mutual connections and struggle. But also what we can look forward to win, a mutual liberation through our resilience and coming together in community.

Mario highlighted how the sociopolitical context of the U.S. inflicted many barriers and limitations based on his sexuality and immigration status. The simultaneity of this marginalization allowed him to better communicate with both the LGBTQ and immigrant communities, based on their shared resilience. Learning to cope through unjust systems that simultaneously targeted his LGBTQ and undocumented experience, Mario described resilience as the common denominator that helped bridge both movements together.

Maria similarly described undocuqueer as resilience. For her, undocuqueer involved strategically navigating the tangible and intangible limitations of being LGBTQ and undocumented simultaneously.

I mean, I have an incredible amount of resilience and I think maturity as well. Being undocuqueer makes you grow up pretty quickly because you have to confront different parts of your reality at a young age in order to like make things

happen in your life. So yes, resilience. I am very—I don't know how to say it—I am very shrewd. I think I have been living my life always trying to strategize to do everything that I wanted to do. Pretty much, like go to college, go on dates with women. Like I had to create all these little tricks and ways to get what I want all the time...

Maria described resilience as a survival mechanism she was forced to develop in order to navigate the spaces of impossibility generated by her social nonexistence. She described creating tricks to circumvent the social conditions of her LGBTQ and undocumented identity, and how these tricks enabled her to sidestep the limitations she experienced and the displacement she incurred being denied of legal personhood and civil rights otherwise afforded to documented heterosexual.

Josh described how the intersection of his multiply-marginalized identities not only incurred consequences for how he was impacted socially, but also how he physically, emotionally and psychologically responded to his subjugation, and learned to cope within these conditions.

I feel like if anything, that is what undocuqueer resembles. It is like a psychological battle, a spiritual psychological battle of trying to define a condition, an identity that is marginalized all the time, structurally and everything. Yeah, I am surprised people don't go bananas because it is a lot of pressure. If you think about it, dude this is fucked up. But there is always that resilience and that hope that we are striving to make things a little better.

Josh recognized the formidability of living at the overlapping margins of two social identities that were marginalized all the time. He described his experience as a process of coping with social pressures, and learning to survive.

But at the same time it definitely helped me build tough skin. Like, dude this is going to be the rest of my life that people are going to call me all kinds of names forever so I might as well, you know, focus on what I want to do and make it happen and prove them wrong. I think that is what definitely helped me come into that. Because it's hard. Now I am like, oh whatever being queer being undocumented is whatever to me, it's whatever, I don't really care about it. But I do acknowledge that it is hard, like the social pressures of identity, and the social pressures of not fitting in any of those molds, the social pressures of all that can really get to a person. It can really be very damaging.

Undocuqueer as resilience, for Josh, meant thriving even when the conditions made it impossible to do so. It represented learning to interact and work within the unique challenges of being multiply-marginalized by the intersection of gender (nonconformance), sexuality and immigration status.

Subjected to multiple forms of oppression, participants described their means of survival amidst the consequences of family rejection, employment discrimination, and their ineligibility for rights, resources and protections otherwise afforded to documented heterosexuals. Participants who lacked familial support often encountered the added burden of being kicked out of their homes, and were often driven to the margins of the informal economy. Coming to their self-definitions, even within conditions of

(im)possibility, was indicative of the resilience they ascribed to living within the overlapping margins of gender, sexuality and immigration status.

Surviving societal rejection. Prior to the passage of DACA, there were absolutely no opportunities for undocumented immigrants to gain lawful employment. Several participants described creating their own opportunities to make money in order to support their families and sustain their living. Alex, for example, shared how his undocumented status forced him to consider alternative outlets for employment that were exploitative of his sexuality.

I was a sex worker for a while, when I was like in high school. So yeah definitely being undocumented and not being able to work, and being queer opened up this idea in my head at a young age that I cannot work and I'm queer so like, what else do I have?

Alex shared the sense of desperation he felt trying to earn a living amidst the social limitations imposed by his undocumented status. Sex work, as a form of survival, was particularly prevalent amongst trans participants, who also shared how their opportunities for employment were further restricted as a result of their gender identity and expression. Not everyone offered transgender immigrants the same opportunities for employment as cisgender immigrants. Josefina, a 41-year-old *transmujer* from New York, for example, described the ways that employment discrimination pushed undocumented *transmujeres* to the streets, given the compounded difficulties in finding work.

Y por no tener papeles, tenemos la necesidad de hacer el trabajo sexual. Y del trabajo sexual, la policía nos arresta por andar, pero yo creo que nosotros no hacemos mal porque si no tenemos trabajo, nosotros tenemos, nosotros tenemos

que pagar renta, nosotros tenemos que pagar biles. A lo mejor tenemos papas, tíos que tenemos que mandarles dinero a nuestros países, pero de donde les vamos a mandar si no tenemos ningún trabajo? Ninguna entrada de economía, entonces que es lo que tenemos que hacer? Buscar el medio de cómo solventar nuestros gastos.

For not having papers, we have the necessity to do sex work. And from doing sex work, the police arrests us, but I don't think we are doing something bad because if we don't have work, we need to pay rent, we need to pay bills, and maybe we have parents or uncles whom we need to send money to in our home countries, but how are we going to send them money if we don't have any work? We have no income coming in, so what are we going to do? We find a way to earn a living.

Employment discrimination was not only apparent for individuals without legal authorization to work in the U.S., but was also evident for participants who did not nicely conform to normative conceptions of gender identity and gender expression. Josefina described often not being given the opportunity to work within the formal economy as a result of her undocumented status and/or perceived gender expression. As a result, she described turning to survival sex in order to sustain her living. Trading sex for money made her increasingly susceptible to policing and arrest, but she described having no other options for employment, given the susceptibility of her undocumented status, gender identity and gender expression. Being positioned at the intersection of gender identity, sexuality and immigration status meant learning to cope with and survive within the amalgam of being treated as criminals or deviants, and being able to eat.

Bianca similarly described turning to survival sex during her transition as a *transmujer*. Arriving to the U.S. as an unaccompanied minor after being kicked out of her home for *coming out* as LGBTQ, Bianca described survival sex as her means to financing her transition while simultaneously navigating the limitations of finding employment as an undocumented immigrant.

Se puede decir que emigre a los Estados Unidos y llegue aquí sola. Y como todas las personas, no tenía definida realmente mi sexualidad. En ese entonces me identificaba como un chico gay todavía. Después de estar casi 5 años de estando aquí en New York City, decidí empezar mi transición, eso fue lo que yo hice. Empecé con mi transición y después empecé a tomar hormonas, pastillas y todo. Después yo estuve trabajando en la calle por, se puede decir trabajo sexual por más de dos años.

I guess you can say I migrated to the U.S., and I came by myself. And like everyone else, I didn't yet have my sexuality well defined. At that time, I identified as a gay boy. After living here in New York City for almost 5 years, I decided to commence my transition, that's what I did. I started my transition and afterwards I started to take hormones, pills and everything. Afterwards, I started working in the streets. You can say I did sex work for more than two years.

Bianca highlighted the ways performing sex work as a means of survival enabled her to sustain her living and simultaneously finance her transition. Utilizing her trans identity, Bianca was able to create work for herself and mitigate the economic limitations imposed by her undocumented status.

Beyond issues of employment, trans participants also described access to hormones and medical care as an immediate concern. Josefina, for example, referenced the intersectionality of her gender identity and undocumented status as inhibiting her from being able to obtain hormones via medical prescription. Given disparities in employment and the lack of access to health resources, she described relying on the black market, as opposed to physicians and healthcare services, for her transitioning needs.

...como no tenemos Medicaid, tenemos la necesidad de andar comprando hormonas en el mercado negro, y yo creo que si tuviéramos papeles, si tuviéramos Medicaid, no anduviéramos haciendo esas cosas, donde los doctores o es casi en hospitales donde podríamos ir a recurrir a las hormonas gratuitas. Ósea yo creo que todas las chicas que quieren hacerse un proceso así tuviéramos oportunidad de tener, de convertirnos, de hacernos una mujer total como queremos serlo.

Since we don't have Medicaid, we have the need to purchase hormones from the black market, and I think that if we had papers, if we had Medicaid, we wouldn't be doing those things. It would be with doctors and in hospitals where we would be able to obtain hormones. I mean, I think all the girls that want to have a procedure done should have the opportunity to have one, to transform ourselves into the women we want to be.

Josefina described how the inaccessibility of healthcare forced her to rely on unlicensed health resources for her medically necessary treatments (e.g., hormone therapy). Without affordable health insurance coverage, she was forced to turn to the black market for her transitioning needs.

Valery, a 19-year-old transgender woman, similarly described having to resort to alternative methods for obtaining hormones that were more accessible and affordable.

I have to smuggle them to get them. But I am getting them, just not through the doctor. But like I said, again, I would love to have the prescription. To be the right hormones, you know, to get a check done to make sure everything is going good.

This is what the system is causing me to do.

Trans participants generally described many of the unique challenges transgender immigrants face in accessing the resources and affordable health care they need. Living at the intersection of multiply-marginalized communities, participants described turning to sex work and unlicensed health resources, which increasingly put their health and lives at risk. These modes of survival further subjected participants to increased surveillance from the police and perpetuated their criminalization. Participants, thus, faced increased risk of detention under dragnet policing and immigration enforcement policies that targeted their gender identity and expression, sexuality and immigration status.

Surviving familial rejection. Participants also described experiencing a period of homelessness, often as a result of family rejection, where they had to learn to fend for themselves. Bianca, for example, described migrating to the U.S. as an unaccompanied minor, after being kicked out of her home for *coming out* as LGBTQ. Her narrative highlights how she managed to survive despite being homeless and exploited as a result of her sexuality.

Me corrieron de la casa. No fue fácil para mi. Estuve casi como un mes durmiendo en las calles de México. Viaje a Tijuana. Y ahí fue donde a mis 14 años empecé a vender mi cuerpo porque una persona me obligaba a hacer eso. So

no se como le hice. Junte dinero para llegar a los Estados Unidos. Porque sabia que los Estados Unidos era un lugar libre donde tu podías ser lo que tu eres, y te aceptan tal como uno es.

I got kicked out of my house. It wasn't easy. I spent about a month sleeping on the streets of Mexico. I traveled to Tijuana. That's where, at age 14, I began to sell my body because an individual forced me to do so. So I don't know how I did it. I saved money to come to the U.S. because I knew that the U.S. was a free place where you could be whatever you wanted to be, and people would accept you for who you are.

Bianca described how homelessness, for her, was closely tied with sex work and issues of family acceptance. After being kicked out of her house at the age of 14, she was coerced into selling her body as a means of survival and a method of financing her migration to the U.S. Engaging in sex work was resultant of her experience navigating issues of homelessness as an unaccompanied minor.

Ester similarly described how her perceived gender nonconformance and sexual orientation not only subjected her to abuse, but also abandonment. Ester was similarly rejected by her family as a result of her perceived non-conformance to prescribed gender roles and expectations.

So at the age of 15, my sister *outed* me to my father, which preempted another beating, but this time the most severe of all beatings I ever underwent through my father. As he beat me up, he knew what my sexual orientation was and I continued for the first time to answer very honest to him that I was different. Not pleased with my answer, my parents decided to leave me in Houston, and moved

to Miami. Leaving me alone, you know, confronting all the challenges of a high school teenage student by myself. And by myself, I emphasize that, because I had to survive. I didn't have a place to stay, I had to work to live and work to eat, and take AP classes and honors classes, and adopt a language and a culture that was very foreign to me. And my English wasn't as solid as it is today, so that created a huge challenge.

Ester described having to work, while going to school, while simultaneously coping with familial rejection resultant from her perceived sexuality, gender identity and expression. For Ester, losing familial support implied losing her home, which both directly and indirectly impacted the way she was able to navigate everyday responsibilities (e.g., work, school).

Homelessness was an issue that disproportionately affected trans participants. Valery, for example, similarly described her experience becoming homeless after *coming out* to her family first as gay, then later as trans.

I came out as a gay boy and my parents were not accepting about it. My mom, she is very oppressed by my dad, and my dad kicked me out of the house the same day, so I had to leave the house at the age of 16. I started working, and then I met this one chick and she was trans. I had always just been like, oh I am gay. Very very basic knowledge about LGBTQ until I started getting informed about sexual orientation and gender identity, and the differences. That's when I was like, I feel more into this. This is how I feel. This is how I identify myself more. That was another *coming out* part when I started identifying not gay queer, but trans, because I honestly felt that I was not belonging. So eventually after a year, I was

at a family reunion and then I told my mom, hey I am not gay. And she was like, I am glad you changed your mind. I was like, yes I am trans. I tried to explain to her. My mom was a little bit more understanding of it, but then my family was not. They just thought I was in a phase. I was just being crazy or something. Then word got to my dad. Then he completely told me that I cannot step in the house. I accepted that. I haven't talked to my dad in like two years. I have very little communication with my mom.

Having experienced the loss of familial support as a result of her LGBTQ identity, Valery did not let her conditions impede the development of her trans identity. She continued to seek out information and develop her sense of self as a transwoman. Having strained her relationship with her family, Valery described how family acceptance intersects with issues of homelessness and functions as an obstacle to participants' commitment to survival.

The inaccessibility of housing and shelter represented another barrier. Restrictive state policies that limited state public benefits to citizens and legal permanent residents prevented participants from accessing services they would have otherwise been eligible for as LGBTQ citizens. Mario, for example, described running away from home after being *outed* by his sister. Not having recourse to public support, he was forced to understand his life and identity as tied to both the implications of his sexuality and immigration status.

I felt so ashamed that I would disappoint my mom that I ran away from home. I stopped going to school. I was homeless for about three months going from friend's place to friend's place. Many times just sleeping outdoors. It was a rough

period of time for me. I didn't have any help. When I talk about homeless youth, particularly homeless LGBT youth, the struggle for individuals who are both LGBT and undocumented is so severe because you can't even go to a shelter. You will be turned away from a shelter if you don't have pieces of information that you cannot give them. So that is what was going on with me.

Mario described running away from home out of fear of family rejection. Unable to turn to LGBTQ public services as a result of his undocumented status, Mario described feeling rejected as a result of both his sexuality and immigration status. He utilized friends and personal networks to navigate the period of homelessness he experienced.

The fear of family rejection was common amongst participants who recognized the important role that family (both chosen and biological) played in their life. Family often represented participants' only means of support, given the lack of opportunities afforded to them as a result of their undocumented status. Jesse, for example, who *came out* to his family at the age of 19, described the prospect of family rejection, and what that meant for him as an undocuqueer man in terms of survival.

Like our trans sisters who do sex work, people see that as bad, but they do not understand. And for me that is why I keep in mind, like even beyond our trans sisters, me as a gay boy, if I did not have the family that I have, and I would have been kicked out at the age of 19 in Arizona, like I don't know where I would have been now because I feel like at that moment I did not have friends to call and say, I am undocumented and I am gay and I just got kicked out of my house, I can't work. Or that I knew somebody. I think my destiny would have been either sex

work or death, like if my parents would not have accepted me or if they would have kicked me out.

Participants, generally, recognized the interrelation of issues of family acceptance and homelessness, as they pushed participants to the margins of the informal economy and contributed to their perpetual criminalization. The social and legal repercussions attached to their gender (non-conformance), sexuality and immigration status forced participants to contemplate remaining in the *closet* and in the *shadows* simultaneously in order to mitigate the risks involved with *coming out*.

Section 2: Interacting and Working Within

The meanings participants assigned to their experiences guided the ways they interacted and worked within the intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status. Interwoven throughout participants' narratives was the notion of simultaneously needing to navigate their social positioning. Being undocumented required participants to evaluate their environments, and determine appropriate means for interacting and working within. As Tommy stated, "it means being at the center of different identities, you trying to understand who you are, and other people perceiving you as a certain thing. I think it becomes a constant trying to navigate between those things...." For this reason, participants described identity negotiation and *coming out* as strategies for navigating the intersection of LGBTQ and undocumented experience amidst anti-LGBTQ and anti-immigrant sentiment.

Identity Negotiation

Identity negotiation referred to the *outness* of participants' individual identities for the purposes of safety, protection and/or visibility. Participants described concealing their LGBTQ and/or undocumented identities within different spaces in order to interact and work within hetero/homonormative spaces that otherwise refuted their intersectional complexity. Mario's narrative, for example, highlights the dilemma most participants attributed to simultaneously living in the *closet* and in the *shadows*.

I was coming to terms with my identity within a relationship, but also having to hide that component of my life was another *shadow* that I was living in because I was hiding it in a way from my family, and in a way from society, and I was

hiding away with my family from society as being undocumented. So it was living in both the *closet* and the *shadow*. That's how I grew up my whole life. At home, family represented one of the biggest obstructions to *coming out* as LGBTQ, while in society it was the prospect of rejection, discrimination, and deportation that kept participants from *coming out* as LGBTQ and/or undocumented. As Mario shared,

So from a very early age, I knew I was different, I knew I was undocumented, but I did not know what that word meant. I also knew that I had to hide pieces of myself—my identity—because people could use it against me or my family, and it would hurt them.

The tangible and intangible limitations associated with being LGBTQ and undocumented led several participants to negotiate identity disclosure within certain contexts. Participants unable or unwilling to dissemble their identities often faced the most severe consequences.

Camilo described identity negotiation as an injurious experience he had conditioned himself to, as a result of bullying, harassment, and the fear of dire consequences. He described deliberately suppressing his gender expression, and disciplining his body to reflect more normative conceptions of masculinity in order to avoid continuing to be harassed.

My gender expression had enabled me to completely go undetected and completely not targeted... And I'll say actually, not at the beginning of my life. If my memory serves me correct, between the ages of five, I would say up until the fifth/ sixth grade, I was very much targeted for my gender expression. And then I think that that led to a decision on my part. And I think that's the assimilation

patterns... I actually figured out a way to completely disassociate myself from that targeting. I figured out a way to pass and to act and to completely control and regulate and monitor my gender expression. Until recently, I hadn't thought about how tragic and unfortunate and just how completely heartbreaking that is. But I completely was able to monitor regulate and control to the tiniest degree my gender expression, such that from the sixth grade on, undetectable, undetectable completely.

Camilo described learning to suppress, regulate and control his gender expression in order to allow his sexual orientation to go undetected. This self-disciplining of his body created the conditions for him to feel as if he had to perform certain rigid tropes of his gender in order to be perceived as normal.

Participants often described living in the *closet* and in the *shadows* as a survival tactic. Being *out* in certain spaces while not in others represented a survival mechanism and protective strategy. They discussed not sharing personal information or aspects of their LGBTQ and undocumented identities in effort to protect themselves and their families from social targeting, family rejection, and the prospect of deportation. Identity negotiation was a strategy they used to interact and work within the overlapping margins of LGBTQ and undocumented.

Ester, for example, described concealing her undocumented status as a means of survival. She described how losing her family as a result of *coming out* as LGBTQ made her be more conforming of her undocumented identity, and the social conditions that her status subjected her to.

I just had a much more—how do you say that. I was more conforming of that identity. Not disclosing that to anybody. Because of that identity and because that I was homeless, I often times ended up working cleaning bathrooms for three dollars an hour and I ended up working restaurant jobs that were very underpaid and full of labor rights violations. So I was not unwarranted to the repercussions and the oppressive systems that come from being an undocumented person, but I never felt the need to fight back. I just internalized that as a reality because then, even if I was undocumented, I was living my dream of going to school, pursuing a career.

For Ester, concealing her undocumented identity allowed her to work and sustain her living while simultaneously going to school. Not having the support of her family, she understood how disclosing her status would implicate her life and make her increasingly susceptible to being deported to a country far less tolerant of LGBTQ lives.

Because immigration enforcement strategies at both the state and federal level reproduced the possibility and threat of deportation via apprehensions, raids, detentions, and deportations, participants' vulnerability to the state, as constructed by anti-immigrant laws, pushed them into the *shadows* as a protective strategy. Joe, for example, shared how seeing his dad get deported influenced the concealment of his undocumented identity.

Because when [my dad] was deported, you know, you already saw one of your family members be directly impacted, and your family be directly impacted by this, so it's like even more, there is more, you know, of a case for keeping that like in the *closet*.

Joe described identity dissemblance as a survival mechanism, an everyday strategy for protecting himself and his family from harm. He described negotiating the *outness* of his undocumented status within different contexts in order to mitigate the risks of deportation.

The prospect of societal acceptance through some type of immigration relief similarly influenced some participants' choice to stay in the *closet*. Maria, for example, described contemplating not *coming out* of the *closet* in order to retain her chances for legalization through marriage.

I feel like there was definitely some hesitancy in *coming out* at one point in my life because I didn't want to cancel out my opportunities to getting a green card through marriage, which is fucked up but that's a real thing, you know. You know, if you are openly out there and then you have a friend that comes along and wants to help you out, it's like, well what are you going to do now? Immigration is going to look up your background and see that you are queer. And yeah, they'll go on Facebook and see all my joto pictures. So that was a real thing because I was like, I want a green card. So that was a very real thing.

Several participants had contemplated marriage as a pathway to legalization at one point or another. That option kept several participants in the *closet* due to the inaccessibility of and stigma towards same-sex marriage in their states prior to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling for marriage equality. The possibility to resolve their immigration status pushed some participants to subconsciously discipline their LGBTQ identities and subscribe to heteropatriarchal norms often inculcated by family.

Felix, for example, described the ways in which being LGBTQ and undocumented influenced his decision to remain *closeted* for a large portion of his adolescent life.

Well, I was afraid of getting kicked out, and I was also—I mean that's the stuff about being at the intersection of two identities, right. I thought well, if I get kicked out, I don't have an ID, I'm going to end up in a homeless shelter, they are going to reject me and I'm going to end up in the street. What am I going to do? That is really what I was thinking about. And, you know, I felt like really hopeless because I couldn't get a job. I kept looking for jobs and it was really hard to get jobs. You know people didn't want to give me jobs because I didn't have papers. So, you know, I just felt like, well, I think this is not...I don't know, it just felt like I can't, I just can't do this. And I was really afraid.

Fear of family rejection, in addition to his material limitations as an undocumented immigrant, influenced Felix' decision to remain in the *closet* and not further complicate his life. This decision constituted a survival tactic that participants often referenced in response to the multiple forms of oppression they already encountered as immigrants to the U.S.

It was the way my undocumented status...that I didn't have the tools to protect myself, because I depended on my family. And then I thought if they turned their backs on me, then I'm fucked. As a queer person if I *came out* to them they would turn their backs on me, but as an undocumented person I didn't have the tools to protect myself because I couldn't get a job, I can't get a license, you know I was just trapped.

Felix stressed the sense of interdependence within his family unit, and how that also posed a barrier to his ability to *come out* as LGBTQ at home. *Coming out* involved constantly assessing the risks and weighing them against the benefits. It was about strategically navigating the intersection of his (homo)sexuality and undocumented status.

Xavier, a 20-year-old DACA recipient from Arizona, similarly described interacting within the liminal state of being in and out of the *closet*. Given the prospect of family rejection and his ineligibility for public social services as a result of his undocumented status, he described his ambivalence *coming out* as LGBTQ.

This really just goes back to the fundamentals of you *coming out*. Like I said, you are not accepted. Second choice would be a homeless shelter. And because you're not eligible for a homeless shelter, what's your third option? Me being hopefully at a friend's house or some very generous person's. After that, do you have a choice? These are the implications for *coming out* as undocumented and gay... But after that, really, you see a lot of prostitution. A lot of incarcerations, prison, death. To survive, or not to.

For Xavier, the prospect of family rejection meant homelessness, in addition to other conditions common amongst similarly situated individuals in his community: sex work, incarceration and suicide. Not qualifying for housing or shelter as a result of his undocumented status, he decided to remain in the *closet* in order to not create tension at home or risk losing familial support.

Every other facet of my life I am *out*, even at work, except my family. I even have a Facebook that I don't use. I have a fakebook. So this is the one where I have six friends, and they are all my family members. You would think it's smart, but it's

very draining. It makes every other thing very apparent. The fact that you are *closeted*, it's like I can say this here, but not there.

Being in the *closet* allowed Xavier to navigate certain aspects of his life more carefully until he was able to fully confront the consequences of *coming out*. The fear of losing immediate support forced him, as well as other participants, to maintain their social and familial lives separate.

Susana, a 25-year-old DACA recipient from Arizona, similarly described being *out* in certain spaces, but not quite *out* in other, like home. Given her already vulnerable state as an undocumented immigrant, she described fear of family rejection as a reason for maintaining her LGBTQ identity in the *closet*.

Pues el no ser abierta con mis padres. Decirles, ósea, que ellos lo sepan ya por completo que yo soy bisexual. Si a la vez me da mucho... tener que ser una persona con ciertas personas, al no serlo en mi casa...A veces pienso que algún día de estos exploto y le digo a mi familia, pero ando viendo una forma correcta para decirles a ellos para que ya no me afecte tanto...porque a veces siento que soy dos personas en una sola. Que en una soy yo misma, y en otra no lo soy, y quisiera seguir siendo yo misma en ambos lados para ya no estar escondida en un solo lugar.

Well, by not being open with my parents. Telling them, like, so they know that I am bisexual once and for all. It weighs heavily on me to have to be one person with certain people, not being that at home...Sometimes I think that one of these days I will explode and just tell my family, but I'm trying to figure out the correct way to tell them so that it does not affect me too bad...because sometimes I feel

that I am two people in one body. In one I am myself, and in the other I am not, and I would like to continue being myself but in both places so that I don't have to hide in any one place.

Susana's sense of *closetedness* within the sphere of home bifurcated her social identity as a queer undocumented woman. She described the stress of having to be two different people at once as draining, but necessary for upholding gendered, familial expectations that, in turn, allowed her to retain familial support.

Prior to the passage of DACA, participants viewed themselves as more dependent of their familial networks, given their inability to obtain or sustain continuous employment as a result of their undocumented status. They described the sense of interdependence they shared with their families as one of their major impediments for *coming out* as LGBTQ. Because family provided participants with an initial source of emotional and economic support that they often relied on to achieve their personal goals, *coming out* as LGBTQ jeopardized the availability of that support and drew limitations on its accessibility. Mario, who described running away from home out of fear of family rejection, for example, shared how part of the reconciliation process with his family involved having to push his (homo)sexuality back into the *closet* in order to regain their support.

She said the only way I could come back into our household was if I agreed to go to counseling with their priest. So I agreed, because at that point I was exhausted of running. And so I said, okay I will try to change. And that's what I told her, that was our agreement. I was fortunate enough that my mom opened the doors back up for me, but from that point on it was a struggle for me to catch up in school

and graduate in time, and go through the psychological turmoil of going through counseling and going through a period of time where individuals were just calling me a sinner, calling me wrong, telling you that it's a choice and that you have the opportunity to change, when I deep inside myself knew that I could not change.

This was just who I was.

Mario described identity negotiation as a necessary tactic for fulfilling familial expectations. Mitigating the expression of his (homo)sexuality enabled him to successfully navigate home culture without jeopardizing familial support. This was particularly important to him, given how he relied on his family to help finance his education.

... it was very difficult because I had to pay out-of-state international student fees, so I had to do lots of work, and then I had to rely even more on my family, which meant that I really just had to not talk about the things that really strained our relationship. So my identity with my family was hidden for a very long time, and suppressed.

Similarly situated, Ester described making a similar negotiation when her family welcomed her back into their lives, after previously rejecting her for identifying *as* LGBTQ.

They didn't come to my graduation, and it ended with me graduating with a full scholarship to [a university], which I did not take the offer because throughout the summer my family finally contacted me, apologized, and asked me to come back under the condition that we would not discuss my sexuality at home or under any circumstances, as a matter of fact. So when I made it to Miami it was very clear

that I missed them, and that my family plays an important role in my life. That *coming out* was more than one-person process, but it was a process for my family as well...

In her narrative, Ester described the reconciliation process for her and her family as a compromise. She compromised her *outness* at home and conceded to heteropatriarchal standards, while her family, in turn, reopened the doors of their home to her. Recognizing the important role that family played in her life, Ester choose to repress expressions of her sexuality and gender nonconformance at home in order to retain familial support. Navigating the liminal space of being *out*, but simultaneously not being *out*, hence, became essential for retaining familial presence and support in participants' everyday lives.

The prospect of employment discrimination similarly forced participants to negotiate the *outness* of their identities in order to navigate potential employment opportunities. This was particularly relevant for trans participants. Josefina, for example, described being fired after being *outed* as a *transmujer* in the workplace. Because she was undocumented, she felt helpless and with no recourse for filing a complaint.

Entonces me botaron del restauran por el hecho que un compañero me toco jugando, y me toco los senos, y pues fue y se lo conto al dueño. Y el dueño en ese momento, pues a los dos días, hablo conmigo, que tomara un mes de descanso y que él me llamaría para que yo regresara al mes a seguir trabajando. Ya después de ese mes no me llamaron. Y después llegue a saber que me habían despedido solamente por el hecho de mi expresión de género.

So they fired me from the restaurant for the fact that a colleague touched me playing around, and he touched my breasts, and well, he then went and told the owner. And the owner at that point, within two days, called me in and asked me to take a month-long break and that he would call me back in a month so I could continue working. After a month, nobody called me. And later I came to find out that I had been fired solely because of my gender expression.

As a result of this experience, she described having to conceal her trans identity in order to mitigate the risks of being denied employment as a result of her gender identity and expression.

Ósea, yo sabía que yo era una mujer indocumentada, pero también yo tenía que ocultar mi identidad en medio de mis trabajos por no decir que yo era una mujer transgenero porque pues no cualquiera les da trabajo a personas como nosotras. Like, I knew that I was an undocumented woman, but I also had to hide my identity as a transwoman between jobs because not everyone gives work to persons like us.

Santos similarly described having to conceal his LGBTQ identity in the workplace, given non-existent employment protections for LGBTQ workers in Arizona.

...now that I have DACA, if I were to get a job at a company, I have to be very careful whether I am out at my workplace or not because of the fear that it may have a negative impact for being out in my workplace.

For Santos, DACA provided the ability to work legally in the U.S., but having this privilege, he was forced to negotiate the *outness* of his (homo)sexuality in effort to maximize his job opportunities and mitigate the risks of retaliation.

Xavier similarly described how the absence of federal LGBTQ protections forced him to strategically discipline the *outness* of his sexual and gender identity in the workplace, as being openly gay had a potentially detrimental impact on his ability to maintain employment.

So you have to think about it, and then the choices, maybe big choices. Oh I am going to work undocumented. I'm gay. I'm at work. Okay, I'm just going to keep quiet. That's my first choice. Then I made the choice to talk to a girl about boys. Second choice. You have to think about it because there's so much more at stake than just like an income. This is my income. This is my livelihood. This is the money that I'm using towards my goal of going to school. This is towards a car. Maybe I will get a car, but I don't have a license. What if I work this hard for a car and then it's taken away from me? I just wasted months of saving up to have my car taken away from me. But I work here in Arizona, you can get fired for being gay!

Xavier described exercising exceptional caution and self-control navigating the *outness* of his social identities in the workplace. Being *out* in the workplace had consequences enforced by state policy (or the lack thereof) targeting his (homo)sexuality and immigration status.

Coming Out

Because gender identity and expression, sexuality and immigration status were disciplined by federal and state laws and policy, and resulted in tangible and intangible consequences for undocumented immigrants, navigating the concept of *coming out* was incredibly relevant for participants in this study. The forced invisibility, exclusion,

subjugation and repression of participants' identities led participants to *come out* as LGBTQ, undocumented, and undocuqueer at different points, often to resist the powers of institutionalized oppression. Their *coming out* came to symbolize a form of resilience amidst anti-immigrant, xenophobic and heterosexist power structures.

Julian, for example, described *coming out* to his parents as a form of release from the stress and anxiety associated with the educational limitations imposed by his undocumented status, in addition to the daily pressures of having to suppress his LGBTQ identity.

This was my senior year. And so it was really stressful and all my classes were requirements to graduate. And so my second semester, two weeks prior to graduation, I remember I was at a friend's house having a sleepover, and out of nowhere I told my friends that I was going to tell my parents next week. They were like, no don't do it. What's going to happen? They were kind of scared of what was going to happen to me. I told them I had to do it, just because I was dealing with going to college. Well, I actually got into five schools, but of course I wasn't able to pay for them. So I was like, what am I going to do? So I was like, I had to get something off my shoulders. And that was telling my parents that I was gay.

Elias similarly described *coming out* as a liberating experience that enabled him to release built-up stress imposed by the suppression of his gender expression and sexuality.

I wasn't happy with what I was doing. I was trying to be someone I wasn't and I was always trying to act super straight. I was hanging out with people and was basically trying to act like a bad ass, but it wasn't working for me. I was getting

really depressed. I didn't want to do anything. It just didn't feel right, so I decided to *come out*.

For participants, it was not until they decided to *come out* to others that they were able to challenge the suppressive powers of heterosexism, and resist the temptation to succumb to more acceptable expressions of gender (non-conformance) and sexuality.

Josh, who grew up in a predominately Latino neighborhood in California, described *coming out* as a symbol of his resilience to the perpetual silencing of his LGBTQ and undocumented experiences.

I'm small, so navigating this kind of life being perceived as this little feminine boy in this kind of like urban area and having to defend myself and fight people because they call me names, so it was a lot piled up when you're 16. And then, plus I don't have papers and I probably will never have papers, and that if I want to focus on my studies they are not going to pay me off because I cannot get a job with my studies. So navigating all those social pressures at 16 when I discovered poetry, it really helped me process and come to peace with the fact that this is my identity for the rest of my life and I would rather embrace it now or I am going to be a really crippled human being.

Through poetry, Josh described learning to embrace his undocumented status, (homo)sexuality and interpretations of femininity in order to cope with/through environmental factors. He attributed his ability to embrace his undocuqueer identity to his involvement in activism. Activism, as a form of expression, served as an antidote to the social and political marginalization he faced as an undocuqueer immigrant.

Mark similarly described how *coming out* as undocumented in support of a pathway to citizenship helped him to also *come out* as LGBTQ. He attributed his ability to embrace his undocuqueer identity to the empowerment he derived from activism, which subsequently also enabled him to *come out* to his family.

Si, pienso que para mí, eso fue lo que me ayudo. El activismo fue lo que en realidad me ayudo a poder en realidad to fully embrace being undocumented and also being queer and not be ashamed of either one of those identities. And after I was able to embrace that, it's after that that I was able to tell my parents, after that had happened.

Yeah, I think that for me, that is what helped me. Activism was what really helped me to fully embrace being undocumented and also being queer and not be ashamed of either one of those identities. And after I was able to embrace that, it's after that that I was able to tell my parents, after that had happened.

Mark described how connecting with similarly situated others and forging a sense of collective identity around their undocuqueer status enabled him to *come out* both to his family and society at large. *Coming out* marked his resistance to oppressive systems that aimed to silence the expression of his LGBTQ and undocumented identities. Being *out* symbolized his resilience amidst the institutionalized oppression.

For the majority of participants, the youth-led immigrant rights movement was their gateway into activism. They often attributed their ability to fully embrace their LGBTQ identity to the empowerment they developed as activists within the immigrant rights movement. As Jesse described,

... before that I was very oblivious because I didn't want to think about it. I didn't want to think about me being undocumented so I pretended not to be, and I was good at that, but the queer was like present. And in my mind I always thought that, oh being undocumented is going to change. Like in 2010, I thought it was going to change because I was like, oh we are going to get the DREAM Act and it's going to change. No one is ever going to find out that I was ever undocumented because I'm going to be able to do that. But in the other end, being queer was never going to change. So that is what I had more trouble accepting and figuring out, how to navigate what it meant within the spaces, until I got in the immigrant movement where I was like, wow this plays a big role in my life, and a lot of the identity that I have is because I am undocumented.

Rejecting the fear, shame and invisibility inherent in their undocumented status, participants were similarly able to challenge internalized conceptions of (homo)sexuality as deviant and wrong, and reshape them. Their self-acceptance propelled identity disclosure, and enabled them to demand greater inclusion within existing systems and structures. The student identity was the catalyst for much of this activism.

Because the majority of participants (22) had either graduated from, stopped out of or were currently enrolled at an institution of higher education, they also highlighted how college and the college process influenced their ability to *come out* as both LGBTQ and undocumented, often for the first time. This was particularly true for DACA recipients in my sample, as DACA recipients were overwhelmingly the only participants with at least some level of college education. Maria, for example, described how *coming out* as undocumented to gain access to higher education empowered her to *come out* as

queer, but not until she was able to surmount the barriers to higher education and feel safe. She described how her community environment prior to college was prohibitive of her LGBTQ self-exploration. For this reason, she described concealing her (homo)sexuality until she was able to achieve more pertinent goals—safety.

Eventually when I moved out of Florida and I moved out of my home, you know I was accepted into [my institution], and this is one of the top LGBT friendly schools in the country, so I think being in that space allowed me to be safe enough to *come out*. And, I mean, also in Lakeland, where I live, when you organize around immigrant rights there, not even talking about queer issues I would get letters from the KKK and stuff. That's the kind of place we lived at. You know, people are crazy. So I think safety was a big factor in me putting off *coming out* until very recently.

Maria described how her environment at an LGBTQ-friendly institution played a big role in her decision to *come out*. Prior to college, she described not feeling safe enough to explore her sexual identity because her environment required that she focus on her survival as an undocumented immigrant.

Growing up, I think I always understood that I liked women, and I was interested in men from time to time, but I think I really wanted to do everything within my power to not complicate my life. I was already living in this pretty conservative town where it wasn't even okay to be Latino, very much less being undocumented. And I think because I have been in survival mode for a very long time, thinking about even romantic relationships in the first place even with men

or with women or whomever, it just wasn't something that I was setting as a priority.

Given concerns for daily survival inflicted by her undocumented status, Maria described delaying sexual identity exploration until she felt safe enough to really engage those aspects of her core self. Choosing to not complicate her life more than she needed to, college provided an opportunity for her to confront suppressed facets of her undocuqueer identity, and *come out*.

For Xavier, college similarly represented an opportunity to explore his (homo)sexuality away from the confining constraints of home. Unfortunately, due to state policy that disqualified him from in-state tuition and state-based financial aid (i.e., AZ Proposition 300), he was unable to pursue a college education. He attributed his inability to *come out* to his family as LGBTQ to the inaccessibility of higher education for undocumented students in his state.

It's not that I'm scared of them knowing, because I'm pretty self-sufficient. It's just back then, if my family were to have known and had they not accepted me, I would not know what my plan would have been, since my plan B was going to college.

Xavier recognized that if he had the same opportunities as his citizen peers to go to college based solely on merit, he would not feel as trapped within the *closet* of his home. College represented an opportunity to *come out* of the *closet*. Being stripped of access to higher education, however, effectively removed the possibilities of escaping, and forced participants like Xavier to confront the limitations of their immigration status on their sexual identities.

Tommy similarly described being unable to even consider the possibility of *coming out* as LGBTQ until he got to college. He described being so entrenched by the salience of his undocumented status that he was unable to explore his sexuality until he was admitted into college and introduced to safe spaces on campus.

I think about this now, kind of in retrospect, I know now that my priorities were to pursue an education and it seemed like my identity, my queer identity was not at the top of that list. So it wasn't something like where I personally felt like I had to force it. It was just not a priority. I didn't address it because I had other things to think about. So I feel like that's something that happens, especially because I have a chance to work with youth now that I see. I guess it just doesn't have a priority outside of like personal identity. And it creates these really negative feelings that I think for me at that time I remember having different priorities and once I really had the capacity or the time to be like, okay, I really want to figure this out, figure this part of myself, I want to start figuring it out, that's when I was finally able to *come out*. And because I was introduced to spaces that were a welcoming space for people to *come out*, which I had not had in the past. Not so directly.

Given the imposed barriers to access to higher education, Tommy viewed his sexuality as a commodity nowhere near as salient as his undocumented status. Education was particularly important to him, given his parents' sacrifice: migrating to U.S. in pursuit of the American dream for their children. His parents had always prioritized Tommy's education. For this reason, Tommy described not disclosing his (homo)sexuality until college, when the barriers to higher education as predicated by his undocumented status had become surmountable.

Mark shared a similar sentiment. Because he recognized the barriers to higher education and financial aid as an undocumented student, he described focusing on the salience of his undocumented status and suppressing his (homo)sexuality until getting to college. He, too, viewed the implications of *coming out* as LGBTQ as potential inhibitors to his academic trajectory.

... estaba muy enfocado en la escuela, y en realidad quería ir a la universidad, y pienso que si me hubiera distraído no hubiera podido agarrar becas o ver hecho tan bien en la escuela. Fue lo que me ayudo a poder ir a la universidad después de la high school, a una universidad de cuatro años. Porque yo miraba que muchas personas que estaban en mi situación se iban a colegios comunitarios por lo del dinero, porque no podían pagarla. Y yo estaba en la misma situación, y de alguna manera no quería distraerme, y quería enfocarme más en mí mismo, en mi educación. Además, yo estaba batallando también mucho con el Ingles, y pues fue una manera para mi, no se no quería distracciones. Quería enfocarme en mi carrera. En mi mismo.

... I was very focused on school, and in reality I really wanted to go to the university, and I think that had I been distracted, I would not have been able to obtain scholarships or perform as well in school. That's what helped me go to a university straight out of high school—a four-year university. Because I would see many similarly situated individuals go to community college because of the money, because they could not afford it. And I was in the same situation, so I did not want to get distracted. I wanted to focus on myself, and my education. Plus, I

was struggling a lot with English, so it was also a way for me, I don't know, I did not want to be distracted. I wanted to focus on my career. On myself.

Because he was already challenged by the inaccessibility and unaffordability of a college education, Mark regarded his (homo)sexuality as an additional challenge that could deter him from being able to achieve access to a four-year public institution of higher education. For this reason, he decided to forestall exploring his (homo)sexuality until he got to college, when the salience of his undocumented status became less weighty.

Establishing a healthy LGBTQ identity, hence, was often regarded as a commodity, given participants' perception that being *out* as LGBTQ complicated their ability to interact and work within the limitations imposed by their immigration status.

Bridging Communities through Education

For participants, familial interdependence at home represented one of the biggest obstructions to *coming out* as LGBTQ, while in society it was the prospect of rejection, discrimination, detention and deportation that kept participants from *coming out* both as LGBTQ and undocumented. *Coming out*, hence, came to signify engaging their LGBTQ and immigrant communities in coalition building via the sharing of their stories. For Jesse, for example, education was essential both in and outside of the home. It was about helping his community understand the perspectives of undocuqueer lives, while simultaneously addressing issues of silence at home.

‘What does being queer have to do with you being immigrant? Like, why’d you have to tell them? Like, it is already bad that you are telling them that you are undocumented, why is it that you have to drop that you are gay there too?’ And [my parents] would hate it, and I think I would challenge them by sharing this and

showing them stuff. So it was like even in those spaces with the people that I was trying to convince on why it was important, it was that even when I went home, even my own parents who are my parents didn't see why it was important to have both identities or to call out both identities. So it's really hard when you are organizing at home and organizing out, and when you organize out and then you come home and you can't organize because you love the people and you don't want to like push it. That it's like, why are you really organizing? So that's when I was like, well if I am organizing over there I need to start from home.

The inherent sense of shame around (homo)sexuality and undocumented status within his own family was an impediment to the liberation Jesse sought. Doing work in the community while neglecting the sense of oppression often experienced at home was not a systematic approach toward dismantling heterosexism and internalized "illegality." For this reason, Jesse described undocuqueer as having a responsibility to the education of his family and community.

Ramon, a 23-year-old DACA recipient from Washington, shared a similar sentiment.

As an immigrant, on a personal note, I feel like it also has an added sense of education within my own family, especially after *coming out*. And not only within my family, but really within the scope of my immigrant community and the people we work with so closely. So, again, at least for me in the capacities that I've been affected, there is just an added need to educate my community about LGBTQ issues.

Informing his family and community about LGBTQ issues was particularly important due to the prospect of rejection. Family rejection as a result of *coming out* as LGBTQ was a common experience among participants. For some, rejection implied silence or discomfort around conversations regarding (homo)sexuality; while for others, rejection meant homelessness. Ramon described sharing the responsibility of making immigrant spaces safe enough for families to ask questions, and for others to *come out*.

There has been some resistance, right, in terms of when we are talking about queer issues when we are trying to fight for immigrant rights. I have had a couple of those conversations where somebody tells me like, why are we talking about this? And my response has always been, well, like, we are also affected by this issue and just like you, there is more than one identity that is affected by immigration status, which is partly why you have to be aware of these things. And I feel like, because your sexual orientation has been really private to some people, as advocates, we have to make it okay, we have to make it safe for other people to *come out*, right.

Participants often described education as a commodity for a lot of their parents. Given their on-going struggle to fulfill their basic needs (i.e., food, housing, safety), parents were described as often not having the opportunity to learn about things not pertinent to their daily survival. These things often included perspectives outside of their own struggles. As Josh explained,

I tend to be a little more, not forgiving, but understanding of their own homophobia. I kind of, like, understand the cultural context of the homophobia in them not as a direct blatant attack on who I am, but more of, like, an ignorance of

not understanding or like being the first one to be presented with that. So that's why. And also understanding as oppressed people, as people that are on the ground, on survival mode, a lot of time we do not have the luxury to critically analyze our behaviors. And my family, they say things too, but at the end of the day I know that they love me not because they embrace and understand everything that I am, but because they have always been there and they have always been your family.

The ability to invest time to learn about issues of irrelevance to their daily survival was a luxury that parents often did not have. As heads of their households, parents were often charged with putting food on the table, clothes on their backs and a roof over their heads. Participants perceived demanding greater cultural competency at home regarding LGBTQ issues was unfair, given their parents lack of exposure to issues outside of their own. Hence, educating their families about the relevance of LGBTQ issues within immigrant rights discourses meant meeting them where they were at, and allowing the process of family acceptance to take place over time.

Because the value of education lied in promoting family acceptance, having access to resources that better equipped them to educate themselves and their families as well as their Spanish-speaking communities about sex, gender, and sexuality, in particular, was invaluable. Participants described *coming out* to one's family as a difficult process due to not having accessible vocabulary in Spanish. For several participants, not having the contextual and historical terminology to communicate queerness, sexuality and gender non-conformance in Spanish represented a major impediment to their work

towards family acceptance. Jesse, for example, described his struggle finding the tools to better inform his family and Spanish-speaking community about his LGBTQ experience.

I think it is in changing the minds and acceptance of people, of like trying to explain everything in Spanish and not having the resources there...And more like on the acceptance. Like I said, the family acceptance, the organizational acceptance, like for them to release these taboo ideas or myths that they have and more like educating them, I think that is the bigger effect. It comes from like culture and tradition and trying to break that down and trying to find that stuff so I can explain this to you in Spanish, so you could better understand, and not having the resources or not having the education. I think that's one of the biggest impacts of being a queer man in an undocumented movement, as an immigrant. Trying to rearrange years and years of tradition and trying to do it for yourself and not having accessible resources to be like, here is a book or here's a thing. Here's what we are going through.

Jesse recognized that informing his community about LGBTQ issues in a language they understood was pertinent to challenging cultural misunderstandings of (homo)sexuality. Unlearning homo/transphobia was a process that required time, and was best accompanied by Spanish-speaking resources. The accessibility of the language was equally important, as many of participants' parents had low levels of exposure to education. Not having these resources readily available, participants described having to create their own resources. The resulting double *coming out* forums and family acceptance workshops enabled participants to engage their families, and create spaces that facilitated their ability to successfully interact and work within issues of

homo/transphobia, heterosexism and heteropatriarchy imposed by the intersection of gender identity and expression, sexuality and immigration status.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion, Implications and Conclusion

This study revealed how theoretical borderlands (Abes 2009, 2012) are necessary to better understand LGBTQ undocumented activists' meaning-making of the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience. Undocuqueer, as an identity, is deeply social and produced through and by participants' ecological surroundings. For this reason, a constructivist approach to Queer Intersectionality was used to facilitate the exploration of lived experience, and interrogate the privileges of citizenship and heterosexuality around the intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status. Intersectionality alone can downplay the oppression that exists in society by failing to deconstruct it. Queer Theory alone can overshadow participants' lived experiences. Queer Intersectionality, taken together, however, reveals how participants come to perceive the intersection of their gender, sexuality and immigration status as existing within the current sociopolitical context encompassing the state of their nonexistence.

In this study, Queer Intersectionality provided an analytic tool for deconstructing simplistic ideas about subjectivity and political action based on the lived experiences and subjectivities of LGBTQ undocumented immigrants. Because it recognizes the complexity and fluidity of experience, and the systems of power that produce it, Queer Intersectionality was used to (1) place the experiences of undocuqueer activists at the center of analysis; (2) explore the complexities of individual and collective identity; (3) reveal the ways interconnected domains of power organize and produce inequality and oppression; and (4) analyze the ways undocuqueer activists resist the normalizing tendencies of organizations and institutions. Queer Intersectionality was framed in this

way to explore how the intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status occurs for undocuqueer activists across individual, interpersonal and social structural levels.

Findings from this study revealed how participants ascribed three overarching self-meanings to the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience: Vulnerability, Complexity, and Resilience. Recognizing their vulnerability within a state of illegibility (Anzaldúa, 1987), participants described a sense of exclusion within spaces of belonging, and wariness managing relationships with others; opting for more complex self-definitions, they resisted simplistic conceptions of identity that rendered their social locations invisible (e.g., homonormativity, heteronormativity, DREAMer); and describing themselves as resilient, they described surviving societal as well as familial rejection even when surviving seemed impossible to do so.

Interacting and working within the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience, participants also described the consistent theme of identity negotiation. Participants utilized *coming out* as a form of resistance to institutionalized oppression, and resilience amidst simultaneous anti-immigrant, xenophobic and heterosexist power structures. Participants learned to live in multiple worlds at the same time and embrace the multiplicity of their undocuqueer identity while seeking to bridge their communities through stories, activism and peer education. The following section provides a discussion of the findings in more detail.

Discussion

Placing gender, sexuality and immigration status at the center of analysis, this study positions undocuqueer as an alternative formation of identity that resists the normative categorizations of LGBTQ and undocumented, and critiques dominant

LGBTQ and immigrant rights frameworks simultaneously. Working against the consistent erasure of their experiences at the overlapping margins of two single-variable identity-based social movements, undocuqueers dissent from dominant conceptualizations of collective identity, and reveal the ways gender, sexuality and immigration status are interconnected. Gender, sexuality and immigration status organize and produce inequality and oppression through state-sanctioned violence. The self-meanings participants ascribed to living within the overlapping margins of gender, sexuality and immigration status were shaped by their specific sociopolitical locations, and were defined by the (1) vulnerability they felt, (2) the complexity they embodied, and (3) the resilience they demonstrate.

Through their narratives, participants described undocuqueer as being in a constant state of vulnerability. Their vulnerability was imposed by the ways that they were simultaneously targeted and made invisible by restrictive anti-LGBTQ and anti-immigrant laws, policies and sentiment. The material consequences of being denied access to rights, resources and protections had an impact on their ability to participate in LGBTQ social spaces, and navigate the inherent power differentials within interpersonal relationships. Tommy, for example, recounted his vulnerability to rejection at an LGBTQ nightclub as a result of not being able to demonstrate a standard state-issued ID at the door, given his immigration status. For other participants, criminalization was the most blatant form of state-sponsored violence against LGBTQ undocumented immigrants. Bianca, for example, described being vulnerable to employment discrimination for being transgender, as well as labor rights violations for not speaking English and not having papers. Dragnet policing and immigration enforcement policies perpetuated participants'

criminalization, incarceration, and withdrawal of rights across different states, and contributed to the deprivation of safety and security participants often felt devoid of.

Due to the gendering of their experiences within the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience, participants inevitably also highlighted the salience of their gender identity and expression. Undocuqueer, as an identity, was constructed partly in response to the shared vulnerability participants experienced as targets of discrimination on the basis of their gender identity and expression, sexuality and immigration status. It was also responsive to the invisibility they experienced as marginalized members of LGBTQ and immigrant rights organizations. Jesse, for example, described the ways in which his complexity was often deemed expendable by the mainstream LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements. Unable to be easily located within normalized acceptable identities and categories, undocuqueers came together and developed their own self-definitions in order to reclaim their space within mainstream LGBTQ and immigrant spaces. This process of developing a third space (Anzaldúa, 1987) involved contesting and renegotiating the boundaries of their LGBTQ and undocumented identities, in addition to their normative cultures. Umbrella terms, such as LGBTQ and undocumented, did not account for the ways that other factors mediated the centrality of gender, sexuality and immigration status to their understanding of themselves. For this reason, participants chose to identify with a more complex moniker reflective of their lived realities, and the intractable challenge of managing multiple identities simultaneously. Mark, for example, described how adopting an undocuqueer identity complicated the conversation around immigrant rights, and more directly spoke to his experience at the intersection of sexuality and immigration status. Undocuqueer, to

several participants, signified comprehensively addressing themselves, and no longer having to check any of their identities at the door. Redefining themselves as undocuqueer, participants resisted simplistic conceptions of their identities that reduced their experiences to unitary identity constructs, and essentialized their experiences in accordance with dominant power structures (e.g., homonormativity, heteronormativity, and citizenship).

The self-definition participants partook in came to also symbolize their resilience amidst structural and disciplinary systems of oppression. Heteronormative, homonormative and DREAMer spaces provided the context by which undocuqueers assigned meaning to their experiences, and developed strategies for interacting and working within interlocking systems of oppression. Valery, for example, described her means of survival amidst the consequences of family rejection, employment discrimination, and her ineligibility for rights, resources and protections otherwise afforded to documented, cisgender heterosexuals. Josh, similarly, described how the intersection of his multiply-marginalized identities not only incurred consequences for how he was impacted socially, but also how he physically, emotionally and psychologically responded to his subjugation, and learned to cope within these conditions. Undocuqueer, as a form of resilience, hence, signified survival even when social conditions made it seem impossible to do so.

Exclusionary and restrictionist policy across states perpetuated the stigmatization of LGBTQ and undocumented communities, and pushed participants into the *closet* and into the *shadows*. Xavier, for example, described excising exceptional caution and self-control navigating the *outness* of his social identities in the workplace, given the potential

consequences enforced by state policy (or the lack thereof) targeting his (homo)sexuality and immigration status. Given the social and legal repercussions of being *out* as LGBTQ and/or undocumented, participants initially described a heightened level of sensitivity for disclosing their social locations. Being *out* in certain spaces, while *closeted* and/or in the *shadows* in others, represented a survival tactic and a common experience amongst participants. Participants' narratives highlighted how identity negotiation was often ensued for safety and self-protection, as well as for the purpose of interacting and working within the intersection of gender identity and expression, sexuality and immigration status. The outcome was this feeling of having more than one social identity, which made it difficult for participants to develop a unified sense of self. Ester, for example, described repressing expressions of her sexuality and gender nonconformance at home in order to retain the familial support she depended on. The contradiction between their physical and social presence as undocumented, in addition to the many covert inequalities and biases based on gender and sexuality, made the process of *coming out* particularly difficult for undocuqueers. The prospect of family rejection at home, and their susceptibility to discrimination, detention and deportation kept several participants from fully liberating their LGBTQ and undocumented identities within the multiple spaces they occupied.

Consistent with previous literature on LGBTQ migrants (Acosta, 2008; Anzaldúa, 1987; Cantú, 1999, 2009; Gopinath, 2005; Manalansan, 1994, 2003), the present study highlights how LGBTQ undocumented activists establish a hybrid culture through their undocuqueer identity, but not for the purpose of departing from LGBTQ and immigrant culture, rather for bridging them together. Ramon, for example, described undocuqueer as

having a responsibility to the education of his family and community regarding LGBTQ and immigration issues. Interlocked within heteronormative, homonormative and nativist discourses of belonging, participants described bringing their undocuqueer identity to the forefront in an effort to deconstruct essentialized notions of what it means to be undocumented and what it means to be LGBTQ within dominant LGBTQ and immigrant rights discourses. They often found themselves in the position of challenging oppressive norms internalized by the communities they otherwise felt a part of. Undocuqueer meant not only stimulating resistance, but also educating themselves and their communities about the intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status in order to build bridges between the LGBTQ and immigrant communities. Sharing their stories and deconstructing essentialized conceptions of identity created a pathway for working inside the dominant culture, while simultaneously critiquing it.

Participants' narratives highlight how undocuqueers encounter contentious environments with policies that range from inclusive, restrictive, or unstipulated stances around LGBTQ and immigrant rights issues. Hence, their sense making of the intersection of their LGBTQ and undocumented experience is shaped by the sociopolitical context of their states around LGBTQ and immigration issues. Scholars have argued that anti-immigrant and anti-LGBT political campaigns, in themselves, reflect, create, and sustain an environment that compromises the health and well-being of LGBTQ and undocumented individuals (Becerra, Androff, Cimino, Wagaman, & Blanchard, 2013; Levitt et al., 2009; Rotosky, Riggle, Horne, Denton, & Huellmeier, 2010; Rostosky, Riggle, Horne, & Miller, 2009; Russell, Bohan, McCarroll, & Smith, 2011; Russell & Richards, 2003; Salas, Ayón, & Gurrola, 2013). The results of this study

highlights how the simultaneity of these affects, as experienced by LGBTQ undocumented immigrants, results in the manifestation of numerous challenges endemic to their gender identity and expression, sexuality and immigration status.

As evidenced by participants' narratives, undocuqueers are not just concerned about family separation, a pathway to citizenship and access to higher education, as research on undocumented immigrants highlights (e.g., Diaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners, 2011; Gonzales, 2008; Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009; Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, 2011). Nor are they just concerned about non-accepting families, harassment and discrimination, as research on LGBTQ people highlights (e.g., Guarnero, 2007; Ibañez, Van Oss Marin, Flores, Millett, & Díaz, 2009; Rankin, 2003; Ryan et al., 2009; Sandford, Melendez, & Díaz, 2007). Rather, they are concerned with both, in addition to the social and legal repercussions of *coming out* both as undocumented and LGBTQ, and the ways that one identity affects the other's ability to qualify for administrative relief programs and community support resources, for example. Their positionality as LGBTQ undocumented immigrants within the overlapping margins of two single-variable identity-based social movements highlights the challenge that undocuqueer immigrants pose for LGBTQ and immigrant rights frameworks: they challenge and directly confront normalizing discourses of belonging undergirding LGBTQ and immigrant rights frameworks.

As members of at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas, undocuqueers do not fit the perimeters of citizenship and nationalism upheld by the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements. These concepts present LGBTQ and immigrant rights in terms oriented to the dominant culture, and justify access to

rights by measuring worthiness according to norms reflective of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy (Collins, 2009a). This is because dominant groups are still very much present in the LGBTQ (citizen) and immigrant rights (heterosexual) movements. Occupying a different position within gender, sexuality, and immigration status as intersecting systems of power, undocuqueers contest LGBTQ and immigrant rights organizations' plight for inclusion within exclusionary systems. They challenge the normative models of citizenship and nationalism that perpetuate the exclusion of LGBTQ and undocumented immigrants simultaneously within LGBTQ and immigrant rights discourses.

Doing so, undocuqueers defy the markers of "progress" handed down to us by mainstream LGBTQ and immigrant rights organizations that falsely perpetuate perceptions of equality: political recognition by officials and institutions that criminalize, incarcerate and deport members of our communities (Spade, 2013). Progress in the areas of marriage and citizenship do not comprehensively address issues of race, class, gender, sexuality and immigration status experienced by LGBTQ undocumented people of color. Hence, who are the folks in a position to declare progress? A more social justice agenda would entail not perpetuating the White supremacist, capitalist, heterosexist, patriarchal system that simultaneously oppresses LGBTQ people of color.

Because claims of progress mask the plurality of experiences and attributes of the members of an identity group, the visibility of undocuqueers within the political context of LGBTQ and immigrant rights problematizes the exclusionary repercussions of unitary-identity categorization that mostly benefit those who already have some structural privileges. Working against exclusive policy based on one identity elides the experiences

of another by glossing over the interlocking nature of systems of oppression. Most queer and trans undocumented immigrants, for example, reap no benefits from the surface change of formal legal equality. Their experiences help shed light on the systematic exclusion of LGBTQ undocumented immigrants within existing policy frameworks. Because assimilation mutes identity as much as diversity amplifies it by highlighting distinctions (Ghaziani, 2011), undocuqueers dispel notions of equality within collective identity frameworks. Intersecting LGBTQ and immigration politics reveal the fallacy of assuming that gender, sexuality and immigration status affect all in similar ways.

Implications

This study raises implications for further scholarship and applied policy/practice that is inclusive of intersectional approaches. The absence of an intersectional approach to the study of LGBTQ and undocumented populations has actual material manifestations that perpetuate inequality for LGBTQ undocumented immigrants in everyday life. Investigating gender (non-conformance), sexuality and immigration status from a queer intersectional approach, for example, highlights the exclusion of individuals positioned at the overlapping margins of two single-variable identity-based social movements. Failing to acknowledge their positionality perpetuates undocuqueers' systematic exclusion from heteronormative immigration processes and homonormative advocacy agendas. As activists and researchers, we need to be cognizant of the overlaps of identity; otherwise we will continue to discriminate others based on their dissent from collective identity frameworks.

Single-variable identity-based social movements perpetuate what they are constantly working against—inequality. There is no possibility of identifying as

undocuqueer if there is no visibility, exposure or representation of this positionality. For this reason, we must strive toward greater inclusion by listening to the people excluded from representation. We need to constantly define the undefinable and move away from mainstream debates where everyone is equal. Highlighting members of the community who possess multiply-oppressed identities and experiences that are otherwise glossed over by collective identity frameworks, we must resist the implicit suggestion that we cannot advocate for immigrants within LGBTQ rights discourses, and LGBTQ persons within immigrant rights discourses. In order to really address each issue, we have to simultaneously analyze and critique both, and treat them as interlocking.

Because immigrant rights are LGBTQ rights, Congress should pass an immigration reform that provides the more than 11.2 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. a pathway to citizenship (Krogstad & Passel, 2014). This reform should allow undocumented immigrants to become full members of society, and provide them with the legal certainty that they will not be torn away from their families and communities. LGBTQ undocumented immigrants, however, cannot continue to be the negotiating piece. We must get away from the framing that immigrant rights come at the expense of LGBTQ lives. Immigration reform should include a pathway to citizenship that recognizes the distinct barriers facing the more than 267,000 LGBTQ-identified undocumented immigrants in the U.S., and guarantees them access to relief (Burns, Garcia, & Wolgin, 2013; Gates, 2013). It should remove barriers that would disproportionately exclude LGBTQ immigrants.

Granting relief to only undocumented immigrants who have familial ties to the U.S., for example, unfairly impacts LGBTQ undocumented immigrants because they are

less likely to have children or be recognized as parents in many of the states where they live. Because the definition of family in U.S. immigration law presumes a heteronormative family structure and is limited to parents, spouses, and children of immigrants, it does not apply to more complex family structures responsive to the animus against LGBTQ people embodied by U.S. culture and law. Discriminatory laws (e.g., second-parent/stepparent adoption restrictions) make same-sex couples much less likely to have legally recognized relationships with their children. Similarly, issues of family rejection and homelessness complicate LGBTQ undocumented immigrants eligibility for relief based on family ties. Hence, without challenging the very definition of family and immigration law's reliance on it, as well as policies that restrict the rights of LGBTQ people across states, the acquisition of legal status is thereby more likely to result for those who already have some structural privileges (Chávez, 2010).

The passage of marriage equality through the courts has acknowledged equal protection to LGBTQ persons under the 14th amendment of the U.S. constitution, and remediated some of the issues of recognition confronting the LGBTQ community. However, LGBTQ undocumented immigrants need more than just relationship recognition. LGBTQ undocumented immigrants need the state to also recognize that they exist. Restrictive eligibility requirements and the limited number of visas available per year make LGBTQ undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. without inspection ineligible to adjust their immigration status, even if married to a U.S. citizen (see Arellano, 2012; Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996). For this reason, LGBTQ rights need to move beyond homonormative discourses in order to better respond to the needs of LGBTQ undocumented immigrants.

LGBTQ undocumented immigrants face discrimination and exploitation because of their immigration status, in addition to discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Though DACA has provided initial efforts to remediate the lack of formal employment opportunities available to DREAMers, the program is temporary and remains contingent upon restrictive eligibility criteria exclusive of the lived realities of being LGBTQ and undocumented within the context of the U.S. DACA requires that applicants not be convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, or three or more other misdemeanors. Hence, as marginalized members of society pushed into survival work, many LGBTQ undocumented immigrants would not qualify under the current deferred action programs because of low-level survival crimes, including sex work as well as others connected to homelessness and poverty (Ray, 2006). For this reason, even passing legislation that provides employment non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ workers on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity would not help LGBTQ undocumented immigrants obtain opportunities for formal employment, given their ineligibility for administrative relief. This is the same reality that would also disqualify many LGBTQ undocumented immigrants from a more permanent solution, such as immigration reform.

While DACA and DAPA paved a path for administrative relief for many people, it also created a new set of priorities for immigration enforcement that have resulted in thousands of people being profiled, detained, and deported. Deportation is not the answer to a broken immigration system when there are over 78 countries with criminal laws against sexual activity by LGBTQ people (Itaborahy & Zhu, 2014). The absence of criminalization (even within the U.S.) similarly does not demonstrate the absence of risk

of persecution and/or sufficiency of state protection for LGBTQ people. LGBTQ undocumented immigrants remain at risk of discrimination when their sexual orientation or gender identity and expression does not conform to prevailing cultural, political, or social norms. For this reason, it is critical that the U.S. remain a beacon of freedom and acceptance for LGBTQ undocumented immigrants.

A significant number of LGBTQ immigrants unable to obtain legal permission to migrate to the U.S. arrive as undocumented immigrants. Some of them come seeking refuge from structural violence, criminalization, persecution and discrimination faced in their home countries as a result of their sexuality, gender identity and gender expression. Others arrived as children, and live with ongoing fear of rejection, deportation and family separation as a result of their unresolved immigration status. Because identity is discursive, changing political contexts require researchers to continuously examine the shifting sociopolitical climate and its impact on lives of LGBTQ undocumented immigrants. Scholars should remain attentive to the ways that power—through representation, authorizing agents and discourse—legitimizes certain ways of being while invalidating and consequently marginalizing others. Uncertainty regarding their future, currently, places LGBTQ undocumented immigrants in an unpredictable political battle around issues of employment, healthcare, immigration and higher education. More research is needed regarding the types of obstacles and hardships LGBTQ undocumented immigrants experience as a result of their intersecting social identities and their shifting sociopolitical contexts in order to help convey the need for humane relief and LGBTQ liberation.

Because this study focused primarily on the intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status, future work should similarly explore the intersections of other salient identities (e.g., race, class, gender) that similarly impact undocumented immigrants' conceptualizations of their identities. This exploration would help us better understand how the centrality of gender, sexuality and immigration status to an individual's experience may be mediated by other factors that may be more salient in certain contexts. For example, in this study, all 31 participants self-identified as Latino/a, therefore it would be important to understand how the perceived climate toward non-Latinos/as in the U.S. differentially impacts non-Latino/a LGBTQ undocumented immigrants' understandings of their gender, sexuality and immigration status. Contextualizing gender, sexuality and immigration status with respect to individuals' racial and ethnic identities might help us better understand the nuances of U.S. race relations, as they interplay with other salient social identities.

In this study, there was also an imbalance in representation by gender. Seventeen of my participants identified as cisgender men, and my analysis was heavily influenced by their gendered experiences. The perspectives of womyn and other trans identities were overshadowed by the re-inscription of patriarchy and cisgender privilege even within undocumented immigrant spaces. Acknowledging these limitations, it is important to explore the perspectives of womyn and other trans identities within the intersection of gender, sexuality and immigration status in order to help dismantle the inherent patriarchal cisgender privilege that dominates heteronormative/ homonormative spaces. Accounting for these differences in experience may help provide a more complete snapshot of power and privilege within multiply-marginalized experiences.

Lastly, the majority of my participants (21) were DACA recipients, which suggests that they also benefited from the relative privilege of the “good immigrant” DREAMer narrative. Eligible for relief from deportation, renewable work permits, and temporary Social Security numbers, their bestowed legal presence enabled them to do things significantly different from those who did not meet the strict DACA eligibility requirements. Additional research exploring these specific differences should be conducted to account for the ways that LGBTQ experiences interplay, specifically, with DACA eligibility and the DREAMer identity.

Conclusion

Because undocuqueers are affected by both anti-immigrant and heterosexist power structures simultaneously, the stressors associated with their gender identity and expression, sexuality and immigration status illustrate how undocuqueer immigrants are constantly navigating multiple worlds. They work hard to develop their own public narrative, reject discourse they feel harms them, and combat the consistent erasure of their experiences at the overlapping margins of two single-variable identity-based social movements. Being both queer and undocumented has opened the path for undocuqueers to express their lives as one struggle. LGBTQ and immigrant rights are not parallel movements, but rather intersecting ones in the fight for social justice. For this reason, undocuqueers are challenging the traditional organizing ways of mainstream LGBTQ and immigrant rights organizations by defying single-issue politics, and demanding a place at the table as decisions that directly impact them are being made. They are building community, speaking out and mobilizing for the acknowledgement of their intersectional experiences. They seek to bring an end to the state violence inflicted upon their identities

by weaving threads of queer visibility, inclusion and liberation into the narrative fabric of immigration, and threads of transnationalism and immigration within the narrative fabric of LGBTQ rights. Protecting the unity of their immigrant families and the dignity of their LGBTQ communities is at the center of their organizing and advocacy efforts.

As Jesse, an undocuqueer activist from Arizona, highlighted in his narrative, the LGBTQ rights movement fails to include the challenges of being undocumented.

...it's supposed to be the home of the LGBT, fighting for our rights, but the fact that you are undocumented, or even bigger, the fact that you're an immigrant or person of color, being left out of this vision is what I think affects me more, because any win that we have gotten as queer people most of the time has not been a win for myself or my community.

Similarly, the movement towards immigration reform leaves untouched the needs of LGBTQ voices.

And I think it was very present to me during this past Obama announcement, where I wanted to be happy because my parents were not queer and were benefiting from it, but the negotiating piece. Nowhere in that [announcement] LGBT lives are acknowledged whatsoever.

Hence, LGBTQ undocumented immigrants rarely receive the attention or the space they deserve. As we look at issues of LGBT and immigrant rights separately, we do not quite get a glimpse of the lives or experiences of individuals outside of these normative conceptions of what it means to be LGBTQ and what it means to be undocumented. As long as issues of criminalization, poverty, and discrimination are left out of an agenda, the agenda is not really improving the conditions for all people within an identity

category, nor is it addressing the more pressing concerns of basic freedom and survival for queer and trans immigrants facing criminalization for poverty, participation in sex trade, homelessness, and the stigma of “illegality.”

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APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTED OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2014

Instrument

Introduction script:

Hello! Thank you so much for taking the time to share your story with me.

My name is Jesus Cisneros. I am a PhD candidate at Arizona State University and member of the Arizona chapter of the Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project (QUIP), and Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement. Today, I am interested in learning more about your involvement within the undocuqueer movement and your experiences as a self-identified undocuqueer activist.

Our coming out stories as queer and/or undocumented are tools we use to bring visibility to our lived experiences and build support. Today, I would like to hear your story.

The data collected will be used to inform advocacy efforts benefiting both the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements in the U.S.

To keep a record of your comments, I will be recording our discussion on this audio recorder and taking some notes. No one other than me will see or hear the raw records. Your identity will be kept confidential in all documentation, there will be no identifiers directly linking the audio files with transcripts, and your name will not appear in any report resulting from the study.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Let's get started.

Interview questions:

1. Can you share your story with me?
 - a. When did you first *come out* as LGBTQ?
 - i. How?
 - ii. Why?
 - iii. To Whom?
 - b. When did you first *come out* as undocumented?
 - i. How?
 - ii. Why?
 - iii. To whom?
 - c. When did you first *come out* as undocuqueer?
 - i. How?
 - ii. Why?
 - iii. To whom?

2. What does being undocuqueer mean to you?
3. How has being undocumented impacted your experience as LGBTQ?
4. How has being LGBTQ impacted your experience as undocumented?
5. What is the value of undocuqueer activism?
 - a. Why not just join existing LGBTQ or immigrant rights efforts?
6. When did you decide to get involved with undocuqueer activism?
 - b. What triggered your involvement?
 - c. How would you describe the way you have participated?
 - i. What are some examples?
 - ii. What was the purpose?
7. How did identifying as LGBTQ influence your participation in undocuqueer activism?
8. How did identifying as undocumented influence your participation in undocuqueer activism?
9. Ideally, what would you like to see happen within the LGBTQ and immigrant rights movements?

APPENDIX B

DATA COLLECTED OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2014

Consent Form

My name is Jesus Cisneros and I am a doctoral candidate at Arizona State University. I am collecting stories of the lived experiences of undocuqueer activists in the U.S., and would like to invite you to share your story with me, which involves a one to two hour face-to-face interview. During the interview you will be asked to fill out a confidential, brief demographical survey. To be eligible to participate, you must self-identify as undocumented and LGBTQ, be over the age of 18, and be involved in some form of undocuqueer activism.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You will not be penalized if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any point.

Though recounting your personal story may involve a certain level of emotions, there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

I would like to audio record this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know.

Your responses will be confidential and your name will not be included anywhere on the final report. Instead, we will use pseudonyms. During the interview, please do not use your name or mention others' names in responding to questions. Instead, refer to them as your partners, colleagues, friends etc. While the results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, your name will not be identified; results will be shared only in the aggregate form. Audio recordings will be transcribed and later deleted upon the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the researchers: Molly Ott (Molly.Ott@asu.edu) or Jesus Cisneros (jesuscisneros5@gmail.com)

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at (480) 965-6788.

Thank you so much for your cooperation! I appreciate your help with this effort.

By participating in the interview you are agreeing to take part in the study.