Community college policies affecting undocumented students

Emily Sara Logan
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Community college policies affecting undocumented students

by

Emily S. Logan

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education

Program of Study Committee:
Lorenzo Baber, Major Professor
Erin Doran
Janice Friedel
Rosemary Perez
Donna Niday

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2018

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I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Lorenzo Baber, my co-chair, Dr. Erin Doran, and my committee members, Dr. Janice Friedel, Dr. Rosemary Perez, and Dr. Donna Niday for their guidance and support throughout the course of this research. These committee members, other faculty, and fellow students at Iowa State University helped me grow as a scholar and human being. I also thank the participants in my study, who were willing to have uncomfortable conversations about a controversial topic. Without them, this study would not have been possible.

I am fortunate to have the support and comradery of people who loved and supported me through doctoral study’s peaks and valleys.

Joshua Hauschild, who loves me enough to be my rock, oftentimes without recognition or reward;

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John and Geri Hauschild, who exemplify devotion and kindness;

LaDrina Wilson, who challenges me to know better and do better.
This study examined community college policies and practices related to undocumented students in Iowa. Critical race theory’s tenet of interest convergence and the qualitative methods of phenomenological interviewing and document review were utilized to answer the following research questions: (a) What is the legislative and political policy discourse about undocumented students in Iowa? (b) What are the institutional policies and practices regarding undocumented community college students in Iowa? (c) How do institutional policies and practices differ among community colleges in Iowa? Findings indicate that community colleges attempt to respond to changing demographics and workforce needs, but practices regarding undocumented and DACA students are inconsistent and not rewarded at an institutional level. Institutions and their agents take calculated risks when serving undocumented students. Students and their families also navigate significant risks in processes of college-going. Analysis using the Critical Race Theory tenet of interest convergence leads to implications for policy and practice and recommendations for future research. An autoethnographic reflection is also presented.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Attending college is commonly viewed as the next step after high school. However, trends in U.S. higher education are a stark contrast to the notion of the “typical college student;” today’s college students may have post-secondary enrollment in common, but otherwise are a diverse group across demographic categories, life experience, and identities (Renn & Reason, 2013). This diversity spurs American colleges and universities to adapt to the needs and preferences of the students they hope to serve.

Access to higher education has widened since its establishment in American society (Renn & Reason, 2013). Once reserved for elite white males, college educations became available to the remainder of society thanks to policy shifts at the federal, state, and institutional levels. President Harry S. Truman established the 1947 President’s Commission on Higher Education in 1947, the first federal policy on higher education (Hutcheson, 2007, Gilbert & Heller, 2013). One of the commission’s recommendations was to expand access to higher education:

Equal opportunity for all persons, to the maximum of their individual abilities and without regard to economic status, race, creed, color, sex, national origin, or ancestry is a major goal of American democracy. Only an informed, thoughtful, tolerant people can develop and maintain a free society. (Higher Education for American Democracy, vol. 2, 3).

The Commission identified that cost is a barrier to college and, therefore, the government should play a more vital role in the financing of higher education (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). The relationship between economic development and higher education was emphasized leading the Commission to advocate for growth in higher education enrollments, from 2.4 million in 1947 to 4.6 million by 1960. The Commission recommended ending discrimination related to race, religion, and gender, as well as eliminating financial barriers to
expand higher education enrollments. Indeed, higher education enrollment increased, to 4.6 million by 1964. The National Defense of Education Act of 1958 addressed financial aid for higher enrollment shortly after the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik (Ainsworth, 2013, Gilbert & Heller, 2013). To further advance funding opportunities, the Higher Education Act of 1965 provided federal grants and low-interest loans for college students as well as providing funding to higher education institutions. Federal and state governments promoted junior, technical, and community colleges to broaden access to higher education for students with financial need or other barriers (Gilbert & Heller, 2013).

Related to the broadening access to higher education is the Brown v. Board of Education ruling in 1954 (Patterson, 1994). W.E.B. DuBois, sociologist and founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, expressed doubt that African Americans could receive an adequate education in white institutions in the 1930s (Patterson, 1994). However, the NAACP advocated for a desegregated society and education system while bringing attention to inequities in education (Patterson, 1994). NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall and his colleagues challenged racial segregation and inequality in schools, winning lower court cases and eventually Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 (Patterson, 1994). Optimists harkened the Brown decision as emblematic of technological advancement, educational achievement, and economic growth that positively impacted American culture (Patterson, 1994).

A casual surveyor of postsecondary opportunities could cite these national policies as evidence of broad accessibility and affordability, let alone the array of institutional types, financial aid, and high school preparation. However, a more careful critique of American higher education finds evidence of ongoing discriminatory practices, limited access, varying
levels of college readiness, and unaffordable increases in tuition, fees, books, and living costs. For example, minority students did not enroll at the same rates as white students after the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). Since the Brown decision, scholars have debated the impact and motivation for the ruling on education. Notable among these critiques is that of legal scholar Derrick Bell, Jr., the first African American faculty member to be tenured at Harvard School of Law (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Bell’s critical lens analysis of the Brown decision led to the development of Critical Race Theory by historically situating the legislation against dominant American policy and societal norms. Brown v. Board of Education came at a time when the United States sought credibility in its worldwide crusade against communism, providing a landmark Supreme Court ruling that emphasized the democratic notion of equality. Brown legitimized the pro-democracy and anti-communist policy agendas which propelled the Cold War (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Furthermore, the Brown decision offered reassurance to African Americans that the freedom and equality fought for during World War II extended to all Americans, not just white Americans (Ladson-Billings, 2009). The debate of the impact of the Brown decision is explored in Chapter 2 as well as history on Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) and Sweatt v. Painter (1950).

Another complicating factor is the relationship between postsecondary education and its significant funding sources: state and federal allocations. Public funding of higher education by local, state, and federal sources is decreasing (Renn & Reason, 2013). Institutions once well-supported by their state governments are scrambling to locate private support and partner with private industry, increase tuition and fees and reduce programs and courses of study to mitigate the loss in public investment, (Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt,
In some regions, post-secondary institutions compete for a shrinking pool of high school graduates and, generating a growing percentage of revenue from tuition, need students to survive (Iowa College Aid, 2018; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2018; Smith, 2018). Paying for higher education mostly falls upon student tuition and fees. These rising costs and decreased public funding of higher education contribute to increasing amounts of student debt: 68% of 2015 college graduates had student loan debt, an average of $30,100 per borrower (Institute for College Access & Success, 2017). With the prospect of incurring sizable debt, students may give pause to post-secondary enrollment and seek less expensive ways to complete a degree or credential.

Background of the Problem

Complex social, political, and economic forces influence the system of higher education in the United States. Federal policy shifts throughout the 20th century expanded access to higher education for historically excluded groups. While defacto access to higher education has seemingly improved since Brown, improved access does not tell the whole story. A current social issue affecting higher education institutions is the enrollment of non-U.S. citizens; specifically, the population often referred to as “Dreamers,” who came to the United States as a minor without documentation. The experiences of attending college can be markedly different for undocumented students (Peréz, 2011). Likewise, the process of enrolling undocumented students can be markedly different that enrolling citizens for institutions (Sanchez & Smith, 2017).

The issue of immigration is often politically situated, used as an emblem of social justice, workforce changes, and nationalism. Undocumented youth were granted free access
to K-12 education through the 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court decision (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982). “The Court also stated that educating children, regardless of their immigration status, is essential for creating individuals who can function in society and contribute to the development of the United States” (Peréz, 2012, p. 6). However, after high school, undocumented students’ access to higher education depends upon state policy, creating “uneven geography” for undocumented students in the United States (Gonzales, 2016, para 21).

The “uneven geography” might have been leveled by President Barack Obama’s 2012 executive order protecting approximately 1.9 million undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children from deportation (Gonzales, 2016). The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, or DACA, provided protection from deportation, temporary Social Security numbers, and two-year work permits for those who registered. While DACA did not provide access to federal student financial aid, many young undocumented immigrants found that DACA provided access to higher education through Social Security numbers and access to work. Likewise, some states provided additional benefits in the form of driver’s licenses, in-state tuition, and eligibility of state-sponsored scholarships to DACA-affected youth (Mueller, 2016). However, depending upon their state of residence, DACA students may or may not be granted in-state tuition, state-funded scholarships, or a driver’s license (Gonzales, 2016). The state of interest in this study, Iowa, has provided no such state benefits or protections to undocumented students.

Research conducted before DACA found undocumented students less likely to attend college than their native-born peers (Passel & Cohn, 2009). For those who attend college, specifically community colleges, students often must balance work and school, often
experiencing interruptions in college enrollment due to lack of money for tuition (Peréz, 2012).

Approximately 750,000 people are currently in the DACA program (Brannon & Albright, 2017; Mueller, 2016). Many DACA-eligible individuals have benefitted through the DACA-conferrered work permit (Gonzales, 2016). Work permits not only provide access to employment opportunities but also to jobs with wages that might help finance higher education (Gonzales, 2016).

The election of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States led to increasing uncertainty regarding immigration issues. Trump’s campaign rhetoric, often espoused by groups labeled “alt-right,” gave a more mainstream voice to anti-immigration, white supremacist, and nationalist ideologies. In February 2017, the Pew Research Center reported that 41% of Latinos expressed “serious concerns about their place in America” since Trump’s election (para 2). On August 3, 2017, President Donald Trump announced new limits on legal immigration, specifically DACA: the U.S. Department of Homeland Security no longer accepts new DACA applications. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s website changed to indict the Obama administration’s action and articulate the policy change:

The Obama administration chose to deploy DACA by Executive Branch memorandum – despite the fact that Congress affirmatively rejected such a program in the normal legislative process on multiple occasions. The constitutionality of this action has been widely questioned since its inception…the President was faced with a stark choice: do nothing and allow for the probability that the entire DACA program could be immediately enjoined by a court in a disruptive manner, or instead phase out the program in an orderly fashion (2017).

DACA-enrolled individuals in the United States were estimated to provide $280 billion in economic growth in the United States within the next decade (Brannon & Albright, 2017). The U.S.-born workforce has been in steady decline since the Baby Boom generation
began to retire (Passel & Cohn, 2017). Without future immigrants, the U.S. workforce (persons aged 25-64 years) will decline by 2035 (Colby & Ortman, 2017; Passel & Cohn, 2017). If these trends continue, immigrants and their U.S.-born children will make up 88% of population growth by 2065 (Passel & Cohn, 2017).

If immigrants will play such an important role in population growth and economic workforce, what is the impact on higher education? Peréz’s (2011) study on undocumented youth also reflected this question, “While unauthorized status and poverty are not the only factors that limit undocumented students’ postsecondary access, given the size and potential for vulnerability of this population, these numbers beg the attention of scholars and policymakers alike” (p.7). Undocumented families may continue to migrate to states providing expanded access to driver’s licenses, work permits, and tuition benefits (Baum & Flores, 2011; Nguyen & Serna, 2014). This migration trend will further impact states’ economic and employment outlook, especially as long as the federal policy remains in flux.

Public rhetoric emphasizes the need for an educated and skilled workforce in order to maintain a vibrant economy and a variety of philanthropic organizations promote these efforts (Gates Foundation, 2017; Lumina Foundation, 2017). In his 2018 State of the Union speech, President Trump indicated the need for increased vocational training, so much as to question whether community colleges should change their names to reflect their vocational and technical programs (White House, 2018).

These forces create consistent and persistent dilemmas for institutions of higher education and the students they serve. Who should be able to access what types of postsecondary education; how should education be funded; who should qualify for financial aid? These questions are relevant to all post-secondary institutions and students, but even
more so regarding undocumented students, whose very residence in the United States is a matter of political contention and fierce debate.

At the heart of this study is the desire to honor the experiences of undocumented students. While this research focuses on policies and practices within community colleges about undocumented students, CRT’s interest convergence frame seeks to identify and describe ways in which policies and practices related to undocumented students might be influenced by dominant and oppressive structures regarding notions of legal status, race, and ethnicity, especially in the tumultuous (post) DACA era. A contextual study highly informative in this research is Muñoz and Maldrando’s 2012 article on the experiences of undocumented Mexicana college students. CRT espouses the telling of counterstories to contest dominant narratives. Muñoz and Maldrando (2012) emphasized CRT’s perspective regarding marginalized groups and, specifically, undocumented Mexicana students, highlighting that they do not always resist oppression. In a higher education context, “students of color might also internalize racist, sexist, and classist ideologies and reinscribe oppressive discourses” (p. 296). Findings indicated higher education policies and practices must consider the diversity within undocumented Mexicana student experiences. “Educators and administrators must acknowledge that race, ethnicity, class, gender, and the timing and dynamics of immigration shape the experiences of students in unique ways. Furthermore, our analyses, educational practices, and policies must also explicitly account for legal status as a power relation and dynamic which affects the potential for college persistence – gendered, racialized, and classed as it is” (p. 309). Higher education institutions may reproduce the dominant, oppressive structures of broader society, thereby mirroring the notion of citizenship and legality in structures, policies, and practices on campus.
Muñoz and Maldrando also recommended that higher education administrators and faculty foster relationships with immigrant communities to support the experience of undocumented student populations to institutionalize efforts responsive to the unique needs of undocumented students. “If we are to enhance the quality of higher education for all educators, administrators, community members, and policy-makers need to ensure inclusion of the experiences, perspectives, needs, and potentials of immigrant students as much as other students” (p. 311).

Purpose of the Study

Policies related to undocumented students in higher education are inconsistent and in flux. This study will examine policy discourse and practices at Iowa community colleges regarding undocumented students to understand the implications on students, institutions, and stakeholders.

Research questions

1. What is the legislative and political policy discourse about undocumented students in Iowa?
2. What are the institutional policies and practices regarding undocumented community college students in Iowa?
3. How do institutional policies and practices differ among community colleges in Iowa?

Significance

Over the next decade, DACA-enrolled individuals in the United States are estimated to provide $280 billion in economic growth in the United States (Brannon & Albright, 2017).
The U.S.-born workforce has been in steady decline since Baby Boomers have begun to retire (Passel & Cohn, 2017). Without future immigrants, the U.S. workforce (persons aged 25-64 years) will decline by 2035 according to an analysis of census data (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Passel & Cohn, 2017). If these trends continue, immigrants and their U.S.-born children will make up 88% of population growth by 2065 (Passel & Cohn, 2017).

If immigrants will play such an important role in population growth and economic workforce, what is the impact on higher education? Pérez’s studies on undocumented youth (2012) also reflected this question, “While unauthorized status and poverty are not the only factors that limit undocumented students’ postsecondary access, given the size and potential for vulnerability of this population, these numbers beg the attention of scholars and policymakers alike” (p.7). Likewise, “in their pursuit of scholarship and policy, educators and administrators must attend to how the conditions and experiences of a diverse student body both shape and are shaped by contemporary configurations of inequality in the USA” (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012, p. 311). Therefore, an advanced understanding of policies and practices related to undocumented/DACA students in higher education may influence educational, economic, and other policy decisions. In the post-Obama era, in which federal policy appears to be moving toward more restriction, punishment, and deportation, undocumented students and the institutions in which they are enrolled will be greatly impacted. Therefore, Critical Race Theory and its tenet of interest convergence were selected to examine policies and practices at Iowa community colleges (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical Race Theory is applied to educational contexts because educational contexts are social structures that embody social norms and values. CRT scholars seek a deeper understanding of educational barriers for people of color, “as well as exploring how these
barriers are resisted and overcome” (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 9). Therefore, CRT applied to educational contexts assumes that racism is a real and powerful force on college campuses, despite defacto efforts toward equity and justice in educational contexts.

Research Methods

This study examines policies and practices related to undocumented student policies in Iowa. Interviews with community college personnel provided data to compare policies and practices at Iowa’s community colleges. Chapter 3 presents the qualitative methods employed for data collection and analysis. Documents were examined to provide context for the institutional-level policies and practices. Phenomenological interviewing techniques and document analysis informed the data collection process. Reflective memos and autoethnographic processes were also utilized.

Reflexivity

Critical Race Theory (CRT) examines power and domination, but being white exempted me from much of the experiences of those who are non-white. However, I experience resonance with the issues of power and marginalization related to gender. Brah and Phoenix (2009) explored the intersectionality of feminism and CRT. “One critical thematic of feminism that is perennially relevant is the important question of what it means to be a woman under different historical circumstances” (Brah & Phoenix, 2009, p. 247). Brah and Phoenix (2009) go on to acknowledge the “millions of women today who remain marginalized…women who themselves or their households are scattered across the globe as economic migrants, undocumented workers, as refugees and asylum seekers” (p. 250).
To explore my positionality as a white scholar, I consulted Hardiman’s White Identity Development Model for white racial identity identifies five stages of racial consciousness (1982). As a part of this qualitative research, I will explore my white identity with an awareness of the pervasive racism and nativism affecting social structures and interpersonal behavior. I am a white middle-class female; a mother; a social worker; a community college faculty member. In addition to teaching, I am involved with campus efforts focusing on student success. Through this work and my previous work in the social work profession, I came to know many individuals affected by their immigration status. However, I am not personally impacted by DACA or related immigration policy.

Limitations

This study serves as an exploratory analysis of policies and practices regarding undocumented community college students in Iowa. The colleges in this study are not necessarily representative of all community colleges or higher education institutions in Iowa, let alone institutions throughout the country. Furthermore, participants may not adequately reflect the policy discourse of all policymakers. Shifts in institutional policy and practice may contemporaneously occur with the evolving nature of higher education and immigration policies at federal and state levels. The dynamic interplay of societal factors during this research is a limitation, as findings may only be representative of this time and space.

Review of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter 2, the review of relevant literature, provides a context for the current study and the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory and its tenet of interest convergence.
Chapter 3 reviews qualitative inquiry, qualitative methodology, and my research design. Findings of my research are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings utilizing relevant literature and the theoretical framework, as well as implications for research, policy, and practice. Chapter 6 presents an autoethnographic reflection on the research experience.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Social, cultural and political forces impact higher education. Throughout U.S. history, immigration into the country has been met with varying degrees of acceptance, resulting in various degrees of assimilation into the ever-evolving yet somehow identifiable “American culture.” Many people, myself included, considered the Obama presidential era a marker of a post-racial society, where social justice prevailed, and racism and xenophobia were finally squelched. The 2016 presidential race particularly situated immigration in the political discourse since, when rivals used immigration issues as emblems of social justice, related workforce changes, and movements toward white supremacy and nationalism. Since 2016, many people, myself included, have been shocked, appalled, and deeply disturbed by the more public and presidentially supported movement toward nationalism, nativism, and white supremacy.

Higher education institutions cannot go unaffected by social and political movements. College campuses served as homes to some of the most notable protests during the turbulent 1960s and 1970s social movements toward racial and gender equality as well as anti-war movements. Most colleges are funded directly or indirectly by federal and state dollars, whether via direct support or through federal financial aid. The academy is made up of many agents, including administrators, staff, faculty, and, of course, a student body. Higher education contexts vary significantly between the elite Ivy League and private institutions and open access nature of the community college or technical schools. As the population of the United States has shifted, so have the student bodies of higher education institutions. While defacto access to higher education regardless of race and ethnicity has seemingly improved since Sweatt v. Painter (1950), a current social issue affecting higher education
institutions is the enrollment of non-U.S. citizens. The population of students who came to the United States as a minor without documentation, those whom we call undocumented students, is a growing population of potential college students. However, the experience of attending college can be markedly different for undocumented students as do the institutional processes of recruiting, enrolling and retaining undocumented students.

Undocumented youth were granted free access to K-12 education through the 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court decision (Plyler v. Doe, 1982). “The Court also stated that educating children, regardless of their immigration status, is essential for creating individuals who can function in society and contribute to the development of the United States” (Peréz, 2012, p. 6).

However, after high school, undocumented students’ access to higher education depends upon many factors, including state policy. There is a wide range of state laws related to undocumented students accessing higher education and state-level financial aid, creating “uneven geography” for undocumented students in the United States (Gonzales, 2016, para 21). President Obama’s 2012 Executive Order of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, hereafter referred to as DACA, issued a long-awaited federal policy to address the population of undocumented youth and young adults brought to the United States as minors. The program provided a shield from deportation for people under 30 years of age who arrived in the United States before the age 16 (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012; Passel & Lopez, 2012). DACA impacted not only the individuals eligible for protection but also the structures and systems with which this population is connected, including higher education. Research conducted before DACA found undocumented students already less likely to attend college than their native-born peers, 49% compared to 71% (Passel & Cohn, 2009).
The demographic shifts occurring across the United States accentuates the demand for institutions to shift policies and practices for students viewed as at-risk, undesirable, or non-traditional. Trends in higher education and population shifts converge; some experts deemed U.S. colleges and universities as in a crisis state related to declining enrollment over the past seven years (Jones, 2018). Falling U.S. birthrates forecast enrollment declines to continue. Some institutions are boosting recruitment of first-generation, minority, adult, and formerly-incarcerated students to increase enrollment. This trend may extend to undocumented and DACA students as well.

There is a large body of research on the experience of undocumented youth’s experiences in the United States, including experiences in educational contexts. Research on the experiences of undocumented students in higher education has focused on the southern and urban northeastern regions, but few studies have examined policy discourse about undocumented post-secondary students in the Midwest. Furthermore, the experience of undocumented community college students in the Midwest has been unexamined. Community colleges present an essential context for undocumented youth, as research indicates that undocumented students are more likely to attend community colleges than other higher education institutions due to lower tuition and open access (Valenzuela, Pérez, Pérez, Montiel, & Chaparro, 2015). There is potential for deeper understanding of the impact of policies on undocumented Midwestern students enrolling in higher educational institutions. Due to the inconsistency and uncertainty of federal and state policies relating to undocumented students in higher education, this study will examine policies and practices related to undocumented students in higher education, specifically undocumented community college students in Iowa.
Scope of the Literature Review

The intent in this chapter is to provide a context for the experiences of undocumented college students and how higher education systems and structures have responded to a rising undocumented student population. Presentation of immigration patterns specifically related to this study begins the chapter followed by a review of the research on undocumented students in higher education. Next, I introduce my theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory, including its history, evolution, and application to educational contexts. The Critical Race Theory tenet of interest convergence, including application to educational contexts, is presented. To conclude the literature review, I describe the immigration-related constructs of citizenship and nativism.

Immigration Related to This Study

To provide context for this study, immigration patterns related to this study are presented. Dominant and counter-story narratives present the history of immigration in the United States. For “a nation of immigrants,” it is notably ironic that the subjects of immigration and citizenship have always been controversial. As one of my favorite musicians, Jack White (2007), wrote:

White Americans, what?
Nothing better to do?
Why don’t you kick yourself out?
You’re an immigrant too?
Who’s usin’ who?
What should we do?
Well you can’t be a pimp
And a prostitute too.
The inconsistent policies and practices about immigration extend throughout the history of the United States. Immigration into the now-United States was mostly unrestricted until the late 1800s. It is estimated that as many as 10 million Native Americans lived on the land before Columbus’ arrival (Ewing, 2012). European settlements became more permanent with the Spanish settlements in the area we now know as Florida, Texas, and New Mexico in the late 1500s, as well as the English colony in Jamestown, now Virginia, in 1607 (Ewing, 2012).

Federal actions in the late 1800s excluded particular groups of immigrants as undesirable, such as criminals, prostitutes, and contract laborers (Ewing, 2012). For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 stopped the immigration of Chinese workers, forbade citizenship of Chinese immigrants, and formalized a deportation process for undocumented Chinese immigrants (Ewing, 2012). The Immigration Act of 1891 was the first comprehensive federal law on immigration. The Bureau of Immigration was created, which oversaw the deportation of unlawful immigrants, polygamists, and those infected with contagious diseases (Ewing, 2012). In 1882, this was expanded to include people deemed “lunatics” and likely to become a “public charge” (Ewing, 2012). Further restrictions on groups based on race, religion, disability, and political orientation expanded the list of exclusion (Ewing, 2012), as evidenced in the Anarchist Exclusion Act of 1903, The Immigration Act of 1907, and Immigration Act of 1917. According to Ewing (2012, p. 4), “the proliferation of exclusionary immigration laws coincided with unprecedented levels of immigration to the United States,” more than 30 million between 1870 and 1930, with the foreign-born population at 14.8% of the U.S. population in 1890, 14.7% in 1910, in contrast to 12.5% in 2009 (Ewing, 2012).
Contrarian policies and practices regarding Mexican immigration occurred during the World War I era when U.S. officials publicly criticized the existence of Mexican immigrants in the country while approving legislation to both facilitate Mexican immigration and protect employers hiring undocumented immigrants (Aguila, 2007). Employment of *braceros*, Mexican laborers allowed into the U.S. for seasonal labor, commonly occurred in agricultural, railroad, and mining industries in bordering states. The Bracero Program, which brought 4.6 million Mexicans the United States during World War II, filled the need for agricultural labor from 1942-1964 (Ewing, 2012; Funderberk, 2009; Hernandez, 2006). This program was also a means to prevent illegal migration, supported by both governments (Hernandez, 2006). Industrialization of Mexican agriculture, as well as food shortages and population growth, led to many Mexican rural laborers, *campesinos*, to migrate for survival (Hernandez, 2006). The Mexican government wanted to limit northern migration for fear of global exposure that the Mexican Revolution did not lead to employment and economic gains (Hernandez, 2006). Even though the Bracero Program provided temporary, legal entry into the U.S. for about two million Mexicans, many Mexican laborers – perhaps another 2.5 million – entered illegally (Ewing, 2012; Hernandez, 2006). Shifts in policy and practice occurred due to the Great Depression and heightened fears about available employment (Aguila, 2007; Hernandez, 2006). Thousands of Mexican workers entered the United States by legal and illegal means in the 1920s (Hernandez, 2006). However, inconsistencies in U.S. policy led to mass deportation and repatriation of Mexican workers with more Mexican migrants returning to Mexico than entering the United States (Ewing, 2012; Hernandez, 2006). Mexican and American sources estimate that between 500,000-850,000 Mexicans immigrated to the United States between 1910 and 1928, primarily due to employment
opportunities in the U.S. (Aguila, 2007). However, the U.S. Census reported over 1.4 million Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans living in the United States in 1930. Aguila (2007) argued that this phenomenon is an early example of the lack of accurate information about migration between Mexico and the United States.

Despite cooperative efforts between U.S. and Mexican border control officers, apprehensions by the U.S. Border Patrol rose from 279,379 in 1949 to 501,713 in 1951, to 827,440 in 1953 (Hernandez, 2006). These numbers do not account for multiple deportations of the same individual (Hernandez, 2006). At this time, World War II United States service members returned home, and economic recession hit. President Eisenhower established a commission to analyze the country’s economic condition which led to the conclusion that illegal immigration contributed to the nation’s economic woes (Funderberk, 2009). Attorney General Herbert Brownwell drafted a bill, approved by the United States Congress, to stop the illegal and undocumented migration of Mexicans into the United States and to punish those complicit in harboring the undocumented workers (Funderberk, 2009). Operation Wetback, a law enforcement effort to regulate undocumented Mexican nationals, began in 1954, the same year as the Brown ruling (Funderburk, 2009; Hernandez, 2006). Operation Wetback was a cooperative effort between the U.S. and Mexican governments with Mexican officials participating in the efforts to satisfy Mexico’s domestic interests (Hernandez, 2006). It is unknown how many immigrants stayed in the United States as a result of Operation Wetback, but approximately 1.3 million undocumented workers eventually left the country. Many workers were allowed back by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) when the need for cheap, agricultural labor remained (Funderberk, 2009).
Following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Immigration Act of 1965 abolished immigration restrictions based on national origin, race, or ancestry (Ewing, 2012). Restrictions were based on hemisphere: 170,000 annually from the Eastern Hemisphere and 120,000 for the Western Hemisphere (Ewing, 2012). In 1978, the restrictions were made worldwide at 290,000 immigrants annually (Ewing, 2012).

The 1980s brought increased controls on immigration. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act allowed unauthorized immigrants in the United States to apply for legal status but also created penalties for employers who hired unauthorized workers (Ewing, 2012). Border control efforts were increased as well, with substantial financial allocations spent on enforcing immigration laws (Ewing, 2012). The United States created H-2A visas for temporary agricultural laborers but the growing demand for immigrant labor exceeded the immigration quotas (Ewing, 2012). The limits decreased due to the 1990 Immigration Act, and grounds for exclusion and deportation were revised. The Attorney General could grant temporary, protected status to unauthorized immigrants from war-torn or disaster-ridden parts of the world. The law created H-1B visa for highly skilled temporary workers and H-2B visas for seasonal, non-agricultural workers (Ewing, 2012).

efforts increased with the hiring of border control agents and support personnel (Ewing, 2012; Fragomen, 1997). The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act often referred to as “Welfare Reform,” limited the public benefits for documented and undocumented immigrants (Berk, Schur, Chavez & Frankel, 2000; Ewing, 2012, Fragomen, 1997). Legal permanent residents became eligible for means-tested public benefits only after five years post-green card; and eligible for non-means tested benefits, such as Social Security, only after ten years post green card (Ewing, 2012; Fragomen, 1997). These restrictions arose from a general policy shift to restrict means- and non-means tested benefits in the United States, especially among those seen as less deserving, or “other” (Berk, et al., 2000). The belief that immigrants both legally and illegally immigrated to the United States for benefits was disputed in Berk, et al., 2000, but the appearance of restrictions proved politically useful to policymakers at the time.

In response to heightened concern about global and domestic terrorism, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act allowed non-U.S. citizens to be detained and deported with secret evidence, not made public even to the legal representation (Ewing, 2012). Asylum status became more restricted (Ewing, 2012; Fragomen, 1997). This policy movement led to increased concern about national security and border control, especially post September 11, 2001. The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, a national traumatic event, continues to impact federal and state policies regarding immigration. All 19 terrorists who committed the attacks were Muslim and legally in the United States, but the policy shifts did not focus solely on these factors (Chishti & Bergeron, 2011). A structural shift came by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 which reorganized the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) into the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), including Customs and Border Protection
(CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (USCIS, 2017b). Policies moved away from immigration caps based on nationality to regulation based on national security (Chishti & Bergeron, 2011).

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, or DREAM Act, was proposed in both houses of Congress in 2009 (American Immigration Council, 2010). The proposed legislation included the following provisions for undocumented youth:

- Those with a high school diploma or GED would be eligible for conditional lawful permanent resident (LPR) status if in the United States for five years and younger than 16 years of age when entering the country;
- LPR status would allow legal permit work, enrollment in the military and enrollment in postsecondary education;
- Conditional status to the LPR status would be removed after completing two years of a bachelor’s or higher degree or having served in the military for at least two years (American Immigration Council, 2010).

DREAM Act recipients would not be able to access federal grants to fund higher education, but would be eligible for work study and student loans. States would be able to provide state-level financial aid as well (American Immigration Council, 2010). Versions of the DREAM Act were proposed and debated multiple times in the House and Senate since 2001 and many political pledges were made during election time, but no comprehensive immigration reform has passed to date.

President Barack Obama encouraged prosecutorial discretion in immigration cases, with low priority enforcement placed on the 800,000 to 1.76 million who could have benefitted from the DREAM Act (Delahunty & Yoo, 2013). In June 2012, President Barack Obama
announced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, referred to as DACA (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). The program provides a shield from deportation for undocumented immigrants younger than 30 years of age who came to the United States before age 16 (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012; Passel & Lopez, 2012). These individuals were given access for temporary and renewable work permits. In 2012, the Pew Research Center estimated that 1.7 million of the 4.4 million unauthorized immigrants age 30 and under could qualify (Passel & Lopez, 2012). It was estimated that 85% of the 1.7 million eligible undocumented immigrants were Hispanic (Passel & Lopez, 2012).

Guidelines for DACA eligibility, first published by the Department of Homeland Security in August 2012, were modified slightly from the initial announcement. At the end of the Obama administration, the guidelines included:

1) Arrival in the United States before age 16;
2) Under the age of 31 years as of June 15, 2012;
3) Have lived continuously in the U.S. since June 15, 2007;
4) Physically present in the U.S. on June 15, 2012;
5) Enrolled in school, have a high school diploma or GED, or have been honorably discharged from the military or Coast Guard at the time of DACA application;
6) Free of felony convictions, a significant misdemeanor offense, or three or more other misdemeanors;
7) Do not present a threat to public safety or national security (Passel & Lopez, 2012; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2017).

One of the concerning aspects of DACA policy is the unclear documentation status of its participants. Even with the expanded opportunities of DACA, some DACA recipients
described the experience as being “legally, illegal,” characterized by inconsistent, contradictory policies creating obstacles and barriers to employment, education, and other spheres (Sahay, Thatcher, Núñez, & Lightfoot, 2016). Estimates range from 750,000 to 1.2 million applicants and/or enrollees in the DACA program from 2012 to 2017 (Brannon & Albright, 2017; Dickson, et al., 2017; Garcia de Mueller, 2016). It is speculated that a portion of eligible persons did not apply either out of fear or the inability to pay the application fees associated (Dickson, et al., 2017). Research indicates that the benefits of DACA enrollment included new employment, increased income, acquisition of a driver’s license, opening bank accounts, obtaining a credit card, and access to healthcare (Gonzales, Roth, Brant, Lee, & Valdivia, 2016).

**DACA in the post-Obama era**

Then-candidate, now President Donald Trump shocked many more establishment Republicans by winning the party’s presidential nomination. Trump’s presidential campaign was decorated with anti-immigrant rhetoric, including his promise to build a border wall between the United States and Mexico. After his victory, Trump began following through on his anti-immigrant promises, met with sharply different views (McHugh, 2018). The Trump administration announced a phasing out of the DACA on September 5, 2017. As of this announcement, 690,000 people held DACA status (Zong, Ruiz Soto, Batalova, Gelatt, & Capps, 2017). After this announcement, Trump offered one month for DACA recipients with expirations in the following six months to apply for extensions (McHugh, 2018). Trump challenged Congress to pass legislation related to DACAmented individuals, but bipartisan negotiations did not render such result. Federal court orders in January and February 2018
compelled the administration to resume accepting requests to renew DACA by current DACA-enrolled individuals. However, to date, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services’ webpage on DACA reads, “Archived Content: This page contains information that is no longer current but remains on our site for reference purposes” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2018). The website further explains,

Due to federal court orders, USCIS has resumed accepting requests to renew a grant of deferred action under DACA. USCIS is not accepting requests from individuals who have never before been granted deferred action under DACA. Until further notice, and unless otherwise provided in this guidance, the DACA policy will be operated on the terms in place before it was rescinded on Sept. 5, 2017 (para 1).

Migration Policy Institute’s recent publication succinctly summed up the current situation: “Differences in contexts of state and local reception and support for immigrants are growing ever sharper” in the age of Trump (McHugh, 2018). The federal government only has limited authority related to state and local policies and practices affecting undocumented immigrants. Therefore, the “uneven geography” described by Pérez in 2012 has only become more hazardous for undocumented college students. The divergent approaches to local enforcement of immigration-related laws create confusion and fear and leaves much up to organizational mission and one’s own personal values.

Immigration trends

Due to the nature of unauthorized immigration, reports vary about current trends in immigration. According to the Pew Research Center, approximately 43 million immigrants, also described as foreign-born, are residents in the United States in 2015, 13.4% of the population (Lopez & Radford, 2017). In contrast, only 5.4% of the population was foreign-
born in 1960 (Lopez & Radford, 2017). Of this group, 26.8% were born in Mexico, and
18.1% were White alone, not Hispanic (Pew Research Center, 2017). Less than half of this
group are United States citizens (48%), 51.6% of the group has graduated high school or less,
and 66% are in the labor force (Pew Research Center, 2017). A majority of the immigrant
population lives in California (24.7%). By region, the Midwest has the smallest immigrant
population (see Table 1). Of the total resident population in the United States, 34.4%
identify as Hispanic.

Table 1: Immigrant Population by U.S. Region, 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage of Immigrant Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Pew Research Center, 2017)

Table 2
Foreign-Born resident population, by region of birth in 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>11,576,253</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South and East Asia</td>
<td>11,615,903</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe/Canada</td>
<td>5,841,758</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>4,143,579</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>3,393,853</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>2,892,436</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>1,743,272</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>1,704,261</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>236,795</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Pew Research Center, 2017)
Table 3
U.S. resident population by nativity, race, and ethnicity, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>55,476,777</td>
<td>37,063,520</td>
<td>19,413,257</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, not Hispanic</td>
<td>197,553,955</td>
<td>189,722,351</td>
<td>7,831,604</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, not Hispanic</td>
<td>39,650,251</td>
<td>36,093,073</td>
<td>3,557,178</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, not Hispanic</td>
<td>17,097,490</td>
<td>5,616,018</td>
<td>11,481,472</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, not Hispanic</td>
<td>10,640,348</td>
<td>9,765,749</td>
<td>874,599</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>321,418,821</td>
<td>278,260,711</td>
<td>43,158,110</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Pew Research Center, 2017)

It is estimated that approximately 11 million unauthorized immigrants lived in the United States in 2015 (3.4% of the U.S. population), which is lower statistically than the 4.0% estimated in 2009 (Krogstad, Passel, & Cohn, 2017). Baum and Flores (2011) emphasize the need for post-secondary educational opportunity for immigrants despite many barriers including English language acquisition, finances, unfamiliarity with U.S. higher education, and discrimination. California, Florida, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois are home to 59% of the nation’s undocumented immigrants but undocumented individuals are believed to reside in all 50 states (Krogstad, et al., 2017; McHugh, 2018).

**DACA in the Trump era**

USCIS released data in September 2017 regarding DACA recipients, leading to organizations such as the Migration Policy Institute to enhance research on DACA recipients (Zong, et al., 2017). According to their July 2018 report, 793,026 individuals received
DACA status between August 15, 2012, and June 20, 2017. These individuals range in age from 15-32 years. As of September 4, 2017, DACA recipients numbered approximately 690,000 persons. As of October 2017, between 21,000 and 22,000 of the 154,000 people eligible to renew their DACA status had failed to do so (Colvin, 2017). The Migration Policy Institute estimated that 915 DACA recipients would lose status each day between March 6, 2018, and March 5, 2020 (Zong, et al., 2017) unless a branch of the federal government takes further action. The impact of these shifts can be entertained by examining the characteristics of DACA recipients. Most relevant to this study are educational and workforce characteristics listed here:

- 44% of DACA recipients completed high school but have not enrolled in college, compared to 19% of the total U.S. population of similar age.
- 18% of DACA recipients enrolled in college but have not yet completed a degree or credential.
- 4% of DACA recipients completed a bachelor’s degree as compared to 17% of the U.S. population of similar age.
- DACA-enrolled women were more likely to be enrolled in college than men (20.5 to 15%) but have similar completion rates.
- 64% of DACA recipients are in the workforce, 0.27% of the total U.S. labor force.
- One out of every three DACA recipients enrolled in school also work.
DACA recipients work in a variety of workplace settings, most commonly in middle-skilled industries including hospitality, retail, construction, education, health, and social services, and professional services (Zong, et al., 2017).

Immigration trends and DACA in Iowa

Despite Iowa’s being less diverse than the U.S. general population, the state’s K-12 students identifying as white, non-Hispanic/Latino, dropped from 87% in 2005 to 79% in 2016 (Iowa Student Aid, 2018). In Iowa’s K-12 public schools, minority student enrollment is increasing, currently at 24%, and even higher in the state’s largest public-school districts, 40%. Therefore, the population of college-eligible minority students in the state is growing. An estimated 182,66 Latinos live in Iowa, the state’s biggest ethnic minority, at 5.8% of the population (State Data Center of Iowa, 2017). From 2000-2016, there was a 121.4% change in the Latina/o population, a 100,133-person increase. The state’s projected Latina/o population is 439,414 by July 1, 2050, approximately 12.8% of the projected population. As of 2017, 38.2% (61,126 people) of Iowa’s foreign-born population was originally from Latin America (State Data Center of Iowa, 2017). Of Latinos living in Iowa, 33.1% were foreign-born (State Data Center of Iowa, 2017).

While not every Latino family has undocumented or DACA status, and not every undocumented or DACAmented individual is Latino, it is evident that the Latino population is young and growing in the state of Iowa. In the 2015-2016 school year, nearly 55,000 Latinos were enrolled in K-12 education, a 231.7% increase from 1999-2000 (State Data Center of Iowa, 2016). This number increased to 57,100 in 2017 (State Data Center of Iowa, 2017). Of the 34,197 Latino families with children, 76% include children 18 years of age or
younger (State Data Center of Iowa, 2017). Latino families in Iowa have one of the highest
centrations of preschool age children: 11.3% of the Iowa Latino population is under age
five years.

When comparing the educational attainment of Latinos and the total population,
Latinos fall behind: 60.9% of Latinos 25 years and older had at least a high school education,
versus 91.8% of the total population (State Data Center of Iowa, 2017). Only 12.4% of
Latinos in Iowa age 25 years and older have a bachelor’s degree or higher versus 34.5% of
the total population, yet the median age of the Latina/o population in Iowa is 23.5 years
(State Data Center of Iowa, 2017). These are remarkable educational disparities.

The Latino population varies widely among Iowa’s 99 counties. Nearly half (45.6%)
of the Latino population lives in the five counties of Polk, Woodbury, Scott, Marshall, and
Johnson (State Data Center of Iowa, 2017). Over half of the Latino population increase from
2000-2016 was in seven counties: Polk, Woodbury, Scott, Johnson, Linn, Marshall, and
Dallas. It should be noted that Polk and Dallas counties include the Des Moines metropolitan
area, the largest city in Iowa. Linn County is home to Cedar Rapids, the second largest city
in Iowa, Scott County is home to Davenport, the third largest city in Iowa, and Johnson
County to Iowa City, the fifth largest city in Iowa (State Data Center, 2017). See Appendices
A and B for county population data.

The Migration Policy Institute estimates 36,000 undocumented individuals live in
Iowa including 57% originally from Mexico and 9% from Guatemala (Migration Policy
Institute, 2018b). Individuals with origins from Mexico and Central America make up 71%
of the undocumented Iowa population, followed by 19% from Asia. Iowa was home to 2,540
DACA-enrolled individuals as of January 2018 (Migration Policy Institute, 2018a).
Approximately 4,000 individuals in the state meet DACA criteria, a 61% participation rate. Iowa’s participation rate is higher than the national average of 52%. Approximately 11,000 people, 30% of this group, are under 25 years of age. Only 12% of Iowa’s adult undocumented population holds an associate’s degree or completed some college; 15% completed a bachelor’s degree or higher. Therefore, 73% of the undocumented adult population in Iowa without any post-secondary education experience. Approximately 65% of undocumented individuals in Iowa age 16 and older are employed with manufacturing being the top industry of employment at 31%, far above the industries of hospitality (13%), construction (12%), educational, health and social services (10%), and agriculture (8%).

**Discourse in Iowa about undocumented and DACAmented Iowans**

Within the state of Iowa, opinions about DACA and immigration vary. Legislators’ reactions to the suspension of DACA have largely fallen along party lines with most Republicans supporting the Trump administration and most Democrats opposing (Noble, 2017). For example, Republican U.S. Senator Charles Grassley and Republican U.S. Senator Joni Ernst supported President Trump’s action to end DACA. Ernst issued a statement that supported a “compassionate” and “measured” legislative approach for DACA-eligible persons; Grassley’s statement identified the need to uphold the rule of law. U.S. Representative Steve King, also a Republican, has made many statements in support of Trump’s stances on DACA and immigration. At the time Trump announced the end of DACA, King expressed disapproval for the six-month delay before ending the program, suggesting it be ended immediately (Noble, 2017).
Representative King continues to be an outspoken supporter of the Trump administration’s policies. His statements are often well-publicized examples of support for Trumpian ideas. The examples of his statements are too many to include in full here, but it is imperative to convey the nature of King’s rhetoric and relationship to this study. On his official website, King has a page specific to his stances on immigration. It begins:

As a sovereign nature, we must control and secure our borders. It is troubling that the levels of illegal immigration continue to rise and that the Rule of Law is not being enforced. I believe we only encourage illegal immigration by discussing amnesty for the 12-20 million illegal immigrants living in the United States today (King, 2018, para 1).

He also suggests that “job magnets that encourage illegal immigrants to come to the United States” should be eliminated. Later in this statement, King iterates his support for immigrants who make a “valuable contribution to our nation. Through assimilation, immigrants will benefit from our shared American culture of individual freedom, personal responsibility, and patriotism” (para 5). King’s use of language regarding undocumented persons is notable both in the above statements and below, a portion of his August 16, 2018 statement in response to the release of the Government Accountability Office’s report, requested by King and Representative Pete Sessions of Texas in 2015:

This GAO report on criminal alien populations illustrates just how reckless and lax the Obama administration was when it came to enforcing our immigration laws. Further, it validates President Trump’s call to ‘Build the Wall!’ along our border with Mexico. Over 90% of criminal aliens in federal prisons are citizens of just six countries: Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Colombia, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic. The location of these countries leaves little doubt that criminal aliens are exploiting our porous Southern border to gain access to our country (King, 2018).

In addition to his public oral and written comments on immigration, King also shared his opinions about the white racial superiority, albeit somewhat nuanced (Graham, 2017). For
example, “We can’t restore our civilization with somebody else’s babies,” (Naylor, 2017, para 1). King’s comments have been linked to Daily Stormer, neo-Nazi figures Geert Wilders and Mark Collett, “alt-right” voices such as Richard Spencer, former KKK grand wizard David Duke (Naylor, 2017; Gomez, 2018).

King’s rhetoric and participation in the national anti-immigrant sentiments do not necessarily reflect the diversity of opinions within the state. Iowa Democratic Party Chair Troy Price offered a statement supporting DACA and stated, “Donald Trump is playing political games with their (immigrants’) lives” (Rynard, 2017, para 4). Immigrant rights organizations and some businesses with Iowa connections denounced President Trump’s decision to end DACA. Wells Fargo, a major employer of Iowans, stated, “Wells Fargo believes young, undocumented immigrants brought to American as children should have the opportunity to stay” (Rynard, 2017, para 7). The ACLU’s September 5, 2017 press release stated President Trump’s decision to end DACA is a “cruel development” and “damaging decision for all of us in Iowa and across America” (para 1). This statement approximated 3,000 DACA-enrolled Iowans and estimated Iowa would lose $188 million annually in Gross Domestic Product if the state loses DACA workers (ACLU, 2017). Workforce development remains a topic with high attention within the state of Iowa, specifically the governor’s Future Ready Iowa program. The stated goal of Iowa’s Future Ready Iowa initiative is for 70% of Iowa’s working population to have a post-secondary credential by 2025 (State of Iowa, 2018). While Future Ready Iowa has received only partial funding from the state legislature, community colleges are already coordinating programming and access related to the initiative, especially in counties in which the unemployment rate is very low.
In Iowa’s higher education system, institutional statements on immigration-related issues vary. Some of Iowa’s colleges and universities released statements related to the rescinding of DACA. Iowa State University’s Interim President Benjamin J. Allen released a letter to the Iowa State Community. It stated,

The DACA program has had a positive impact on our campus. The people who have benefited from this program are an important and valued part of our community. Accordingly, we are working through our national higher education associations to advocate for a legislative solution that promotes stability for individuals eligible through DACA. (Iowa State Office of the President, 2017, para 2)

Similarly, University of Northern Iowa President Mark A. Nook issued a statement on September 6, 2017, which stated, “I am writing to express our support for members of UNI who are concerned about yesterday’s announcement…of a six-month phase out of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals” (para 1). University of Iowa President Bruce Harreld echoed support for DACA as did the Iowa Board of Regents, who cited diversity and inclusion as core values of higher education in Iowa (Cedar Rapids Gazette, 2017). More on Iowa’s higher education system and its responses to the increased anti-immigrant political rhetoric is presented below. First, we will turn a wider lens of U.S. policy related to undocumented youth and education.

Undocumented Youth and Higher Education

Examining the relationship between the U.S. higher education system and undocumented youth is an important context for this study. There is a reciprocal, dynamic relationship between the contexts of national, state, and local policy, institutional policy and practice, and the experiences of undocumented students and their families.

The policy perspective
Global, national, state, and local events and political discourse inevitable impact social structures and systems. These complex, interwoven trends impact policies and practices in higher education. Many studies have highlighted the experience of undocumented students in higher education as well as the policies affecting undocumented students (Andrade, 2017; Dickson, Gindling, & Kitchin, 2017; Hernandez, Hernandez, Gadson, Huftalin, Ortiz, White, & Yocum-Gaffney, 2010; Jimenez-Arista & Koro-Ljungberg, 2017). Research on the experiences of undocumented persons is complicated due to the risk of undocumented individuals becoming known to authorities. Unethical research could lead to exposure, detection, and even deportation.

State-specific policies, sometimes referred to as state DREAM acts, affect access to and enrollment in higher education for undocumented students (Nguyen & Serna, 2014). California was the first state to legislate access to in-state tuition for undocumented students in 2001. Texas followed in the same year, soon to be joined by other states (Nguyen & Serna, 2014). Admitting undocumented students whether at in-state or out-of-state tuition rates is economically beneficial for postsecondary institutions, especially when tuition revenue plays an increasingly critical role in university budgets. The National Immigration Law Center (2014) posits that in-state tuition policies increase institutional revenue and, therefore, provides benefit to the institution as well as the student. Post-secondary institutions respond differently to undocumented students dependent on state law and local attitudes. Meeting the needs of undocumented students often involves navigating complex federal and state laws.

Barriers exist to a national, in-state tuition policy for undocumented college students. Legislators who oppose in-state tuition opportunities for undocumented students may argue that undocumented students are displacing other, deserving, citizen students from educational
opportunities (Nguyen & Serna (2014). This argument is difficult to prove but remains a popular sentiment. For example, in the case of the University of Connecticut, with a student body of 18,000 students, 33 undocumented students benefitted from in-state tuition, approximately 0.18% of the student population. Similarly, the 25,000 undergraduate student body at the University of California at Berkeley in 2014 included 250 undocumented students awarded in-state tuition 1% of the student body.

In-state tuition policies can reciprocally influence citizens’ attitudes toward undocumented students accessing higher education (Garibay, Herrera, Johnston-Guerrero, & Garcia, 2016). Public perception of undocumented students influences how states enact laws regarding undocumented students in the future. As reported above, the Midwest region has the smallest number of foreign-born residents (Lopez and Radford, 2017). Indeed, more attention has focused on the immigrants in the more densely populated states and regions. Less is known about the experience of immigrant and undocumented immigrant persons in the Midwest, indicating it as an emerging area of inquiry.

Undocumented students, even if benefitting from in-state tuition policies, still “live in the shadow” (Singh & Byrd, 2011). Institutional efforts can assist staff in ethically grounded decision making, to provide consistent support of undocumented students, and supportive resources to enhance persistence (Neinhusser, 2014). Research indicates that undocumented students experience microaggressions on campus and benefit from institutional sources of support (Neinhusser, Vega, & Carquin, 2016). Awareness and responsiveness to the job and family responsibilities of many undocumented students can help build institutional capacity to meet their needs (National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, 2012). Neinhusser (2014) identified that administrative inconsistencies lead to confusion among
staff and undocumented students. Similarly, a report by the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good found that “educators try to act responsibly within a treacherous set of pressures” (2012, p. 4). The National Forum on the Public Good established the University Leaders for Educational Access and Diversity Network (uLEAD) in 2013 (uLEAD, 2016). uLEAD advocates for postsecondary access for all students regardless of immigration status. Resources such as training modules, webinars, research, and reports are available through the uLEAD Network (uLEAD, 2016). uLEAD also publishes information about state-specific legislation on undocumented students’ ability to access in-state tuition for higher education (uLEAD, 2016). Institutional capacity, described as Institutional Undocu-Competence (IUC) by Valenzuela, et al., (2015), emerged from a critique of diversity and cultural competence initiatives in higher education. It is recommended that post-secondary institutions have clear, visible policies related to undocumented students to prevent isolation and stigmatization (Valenzuela, et al., 2015). Various methods of data collection and assessment of the data should be ongoing to respond to the changing federal and state policy landscapes and subsequent unique needs of the population (Valenzuela, et al., 2015). Provision of resources is another method of decreasing stigmatization and increasing access for undocumented students. Resources could include stipends, funds for books and materials, or scholarships (Pérez, et al., 2010; Valenzuela, et al., 2015). Student groups and organizations that engage undocumented students, build community and encourage advocacy is another mechanism of IUC (Valenzuela, et al. 2015). Other scholars recommend that institutions recognize the common yet unique experiences of undocumented students, as the perception of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and timing affect experiences (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012).
Providing postsecondary training and education for undocumented students can be framed as an issue of equity and social justice as well as economic development (Barnhardt, Ramos, & Reyes, 2013; Ngyuen & Serna, 2014; Núñez & Holthaus, 2017). In their policy analysis, Núñez & Holthaus (2017) utilize both social justice and economic arguments in the analysis of in-state tuition policies for undocumented students. The authors recommend the implementation of a national in-state tuition policy which duplicates successful state models. Such a national policy can address criteria for eligibility, such as the length of time the student has lived in the state, to ensure that recipients are deserving of this benefit. Furthermore, in-state tuition policy would further opportunities for national economic development, as well as social engagement and diminished risk of criminal justice system involvement by undocumented youth. “Creating pathways to access higher education for these students would create a more powerful economic system with a well-educated populace” (Núñez & Holthaus, 2017, p. 57).

Community colleges play an important role in access to higher education and have been described as the “primary gateway to higher education for undocumented students due to the significant savings in tuition costs and the flexibility of enrollment options” (Valenzuela, et al., 2015, p. 87). Community colleges are often considered to be highly responsive to community and state education and training needs, which may appeal to students seeking to enter the workforce as well as students planning to transfer to a four-year university. The accessibility and affordability of community colleges is especially attractive to undocumented students due to their inability to access financial aid.

Shifts in national policy discourse dramatically affected discourse about undocumented individuals in the United States. Shortly after the 2016 election, college and
university presidents from across the country signed a statement, later named “The Pomona Letter.” As of September 5, 2017, 703 presidents signed the letter beckoning the federal government to continue DACA and requesting business and non-profit sectors to join in this position (College & University Presidents, 2017). Sanctuary campus movements, in which colleges or universities would refuse to comply with immigration enforcement, erupted in the days and weeks post-election (Redden, 2017; Jaschik, 2016; Redden, 2016), but many institutions had to brave public disdain from an emboldened nationalist, anti-immigrant, and white supremacist movement in so doing. The term sanctuary became increasingly political, even described by Princeton University President Christopher Eisgruber as “counterproductive and potentially dangerous” (Redden, 2016, para 5), despite stating the “university would protect its undocumented immigrant students to the maximum extent the law allows” (para 4). Even advocates for undocumented college students voiced concern over the term sanctuary: Olivas (2016), then acting president at University of Houston Downtown campus, recommended that campuses concern themselves more with actions that support undocumented students rather than labels such as sanctuary.

Some post-secondary institutions acknowledged yet stepped back from official positions due to discordant community views. Saint John’s University President Michael Hemesath published an editorial in the student newspaper in February 2017 describing the dilemma of positioning an institution on the undocumented/DACAmented student issue (Hemesath, 2017). “Institutions don’t normally have opinions or positions, individuals do, and I do not feel it is my right or the University’s right to speak for those individuals on political or social issues where they naturally have their view and where thoughtful, well-intentioned Johnnies are likely to disagree” (Hemesath, 2017, para 5). As Hemesath
specifically advanced his concern about the impact on DACA on current St. John’s students, he concluded, “Sometimes no position is truly the best position” (para 9).

In addition to institutional and sector discourse, state-level policy discourse should be considered to understand the influence of state-level policies on undocumented students’ educational opportunities (Rodriguez & Monreal, 2017). Indicators such as political rhetoric, negative perceptions of the economy, and perceptions of criminality influence state-level policies regarding immigration. Policy problematization is one conceptual framework for understanding state-level policies that there are “hidden truths” and “false perceptions” about undocumented youth, that further lead to negative conditions. An example is the notion of “illegals” in South Carolina, which then led to the denial of undocumented youth into South Carolina high schools in 2015-16.

**The experience of undocumented college students**

A powerful way to understanding the undocumented college student experience is that of “triple minority status…ethnic origin, lack of documentation, and economic disadvantages” (Pérez, Cortés, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010). The vulnerability of this population creates difficulty in obtaining accurate data, as students have many reasons to withhold their citizenship status. However, it is important to shed light on the experiences of and hear the voices of undocumented students. In a study examining the differences between perceived academic obstacles for immigrant and non-immigrant students at public universities, immigrant students reported more obstacles including math and English skills, study skills, and mental health problems (Soria & Stebelton, 2013). Recommendations for increased student support services, including welcoming spaces on campus, goal-setting and
time management skill development, peer mentoring, learning communities. Faculty and
staff were identified as critical agents in immigrant student success.

Muñoz & Maldonado’s 2012 study specific to undocumented Mexicana students
echoed these findings and recommendations. Findings indicated that college persistence was
affected by dealing with one’s legal status, fear, and empowerment. Furthermore,
undocumented students may be navigating a culturally different and even hostile climate
while attending college. Peer support opportunities among undocumented students were
recommended. Furthermore, “in their pursuit of scholarship and policy, educators and
administrators must attend to how the conditions and experiences of a diverse student body
both shape and are shaped by contemporary configurations of inequality in the USA”
(Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012, p. 311). Hostile campus environments and anti-Latino
legislation affected University of Arizona students, yet students were able to persist (Mendez
& Cabrera, 2015). Recommendations included campus dialogue that critically analyzes
policies related to Latino/as students.

Undocumented students often share the experiences and specifically, barriers, with
other first-generation college students, sometimes framed as a lack of social capital (Baum &
Flores, 2011). Barriers include lack of information about higher education, non-familial
mentors, and high school preparation for college access. Students may feel competing
demands that complicate college enrollment and completion. “Many first-generation
undocumented college students feel conflicted between their own desires to pursue
postsecondary education and their sense of duty to be an integral part of their family
structures (Valenzuela, et al., 2015). The socio-emotional impact of being undocumented
influences undocumented students’ experiences in college, including acculturation issues,

Due to the level of stress and anxiety common in the undocumented student experience, both medical and mental health services build institutional capacity for undocumented students (Pérez, et al., 2010; Valenzuela, et al. 2015). Training for faculty and staff on cultural sensitivity is also recommended in order to better serve undocumented students (Pérez, et al., 2010). Andrade (2017) explored the reactions of undocumented and “DACAmented” community college students after the election of Donald J. Trump. Eighteen students at a Hispanic Serving Institution in Southern California in the two weeks post-election were interviewed. Most of the participants were originally from Mexico; all but two indicated Latin American countries of origin (Andrade, 2017). Based on the findings, Andrade (2017) recommended several actions of higher education institutions: learn about undocumented students’ experiences, modify classroom practices, and provide campus protections. Research indicated that students at the community college sought out advisors, counselors, and faculty to validate their post-election fears. As concluded by Linares, & Muñoz (2011), institutional agents can validate the experiences of undocumented and DACAmented students in this time of transition. Faculty, counselors, and advisors can validate undocumented students’ complex experiences and combat isolation and exclusion (Andrade, 2017; Valenzuela, et al., 2015), if institutional policies and campus culture allow for such. “Moreover, counselors, advisers, and administrators have a responsibility to use their institutional resources to bring legal counsel, psychological services, and even participate in protests that make students feel collectively welcomed, affirmed, and valued”
(Andrade, 2017, p. 13). If institutional agents have the power to validate student experiences in one-on-one or group gatherings, what of policy and institutional protections? An educator can change her language, such as abandoning the term “illegal” when describing immigration status (Andrade, 2017). An educator can also connect students to legal and mental health services. However, if the institution does not support such individual efforts, effects will be pocketed and minimal, especially in institutions which enroll a smaller proportion of undocumented/DACAmented students.

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory is a product not only of civil rights thinking but of critical thinking as well.

~ Daria Roithmayr, in Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999, p. 3)

Critical Race Theory and, specifically, CRT’s tenet of interest convergence, was employed in this study. I selected CRT as my study’s theoretical framework after consultation with members of my committee and a review of theoretical frameworks. Because I am not a person of color, it was of critical importance that I devoted myself to the study of CRT and, with the guidance of my committee and colleagues, worked diligently to honor the tradition of Critical Race Theory. Bell (1980) stated, “Those critical race theorists who are white are usually cognizant of and committed to the overthrow of their own racial privilege” (p. 40). Due to my positionality, I wrote reflective memos throughout the research process. I do not believe there is an absolute, positivistic, objective measure of whether or not I am cognizant of and committed to the overthrow of my racial privilege. However, I can affirm that I have explored various aspects of my racial privilege through the research
process and cannot imagine abandoning the critical lens to critique the status quo. After hours of reading, reflection, consultation, conversation, and writing, I submit my synthesis of the origins of Critical Race Theory, the tenets of CRT with specific attention to interest convergence, and CRT’s application to higher education contexts.

Foundations of Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory emerged from critical theories and, specifically, critical legal studies, to reveal the persistence of racism in society (Calmore, 1995). Critical Race Theory emerged as a critical theory in the early 1980s as an anti-subordination response (Bell, 1980). CRT scholars including the legal scholar Derrick Bell critiqued civil rights advances, color-blind rhetoric, and social perceptions of gains in access and equality for persons of color (Roithmayr, 1999). CRT evolved from critical legal studies, which focused on law policy analysis in the context of society and culture (Calmore, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Critical legal studies specifically critiqued mainstream law and policy (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Derrick Bell is a well-known early voice of critical legal studies, unique in that he was not a white constitutional law professor, as most of the civil rights law experts of the 1980s (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). Bell was a civil rights litigator who then became one of two faculty members at Harvard University (Crenshaw, et al., 1995). Bell (1980) critiqued the Brown v. Board of Education decision and resulting policy shift:

I contend the decision in Brown to break with the court’s long-held position on these issues cannot be understood without consideration of the decision’s value to whites, not simply those concerned about the immorality of racial inequality, but also those whites in policymaking positions able to see the economics and political advances at home and abroad that would follow abandonment of segregation. (p. 524)
An institutional struggle ensued at Harvard as a result of Bell’s critique of “meritocratic mythology” purported by Harvard courses (Crenshaw, et al., 1995, p. xxi). Some of Bell’s students joined his critique, leading to “The Alternative Course,” which focused on American law and policy through the lens of race (Crenshaw, et al., 1995). The emergence of Critical Race Theory, similar to other critical theories, emphasized how historical contexts affect social structures and individual experiences (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012). For example, policy shifts on school segregation, affirmative action, and workplace equity in the 1950s -1970s United States were signs of progress toward a less racist, biased, and sexist nation (Roithmayr, in Parker et al., 1999). CRT scholars unveiled how formal policy and institutional changes, which presumably provided equal access to all people, did not adequately consider the impact of racism woven into the fabric of social structures.

Critical Race Theory moved past its origins in critical legal studies to emphasize how racism is a fixture in American society and must be revealed from the veil of civil rights and affirmative action policies (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Critical race theory differs from critical legal studies due to its incorporation of experiential knowledge. The experience of being oppressed, whether due to race or sex, is also incorporated into the utilization of CRT. “To the extent that Whites (or in the case of sexism, men) experience forms of racial oppression, they may develop such a standpoint” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 12). This experiential knowledge gives access is critical in its contrast to a positivist notion that objectivity exists. Harris (1995), reflected on her grandmother’s experience as a fair-skinned, straight-haired woman who could “pass” as white. The phenomenon of passing provided economic and social privileges, yet “is a feature of race subordination in all societies structured around
white supremacy” (p. 277). Harris utilized this historical experience to connect race and whiteness as property: people as property was related to one’s race, as evidenced by the subjugation of slaves and Native Americans. The Naturalization Act of 1790 restricted citizenship to those who had lived in the country for two years and who were white. However, the Declaration of Independence, 14 years previously, stated: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (Declaration of Independence, 1776). It appears that those who were “created equal” were white males. Whiteness can be understood as property, a quality to be either with or without. “It does not mean all whites will win, but simply that they will not lose, if losing is defined as being on the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy – the position to which blacks have been consigned,” (Harris, 1995, p. 286). The social identity of whiteness continues to impact all social structures. Another way of stating this is that social structures are racialized (Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). Even affirmative action policies are critiqued for their “limited concessions” and “uneven implementation,” as well as the continuation of whiteness as an exclusive category (Harris, 1995, p. 289).

Critical Race Theory critiques liberalism and its efforts toward ending racism. Liberalism fails to adequately confront and change the social structures built with racist foundations. Furthermore, CRT purports that Whites have gained a great deal because of civil rights legislation, perhaps even more than persons of color. For example, white women experienced gains in the workforce due to affirmative action hiring policies (Ladson-Billings, 1999). In his book Silent Covenants, Bell (2004) stated, “In 1954, most black people did not notice that the Brown decision represented a convergence of black and the nation’s interest”
(p. 67). Bell deconstructs the commonly accepted notion that racial policies genuinely benefit persons of color through an explanation of interest convergence when the interests of oppressed groups converge with holders of power. More on interest convergence is written below.

Critical Race Theory’s critique of liberalism and civil rights advances may seem surprising and even ludicrous without a critical lens. Even children’s books on the history of the Civil Rights Movement support this simple story:

Dr. King was born in Georgia in 1929. When he was growing up, black people in the South did not have the same rights as white people. They could not go to the same schools. Dr. King’s hard work made a difference. New laws that protected civil rights were passed. Those laws made sure that all Americans are treated equally. (Herrington, Vargas, Bell, & Clidas, 2013).

Critical Race Theory’s scrutiny of shifts in U.S. civil rights, such as the end of slavery, voting rights, and affirmative action, are complex. However, Critical Race Theory applied to a post-Obama era unveils the limits of liberalism and the ongoing normality of racism in American society. CRT scholars Taylor, Gillborn, and Ladson-Billings reflected President Obama’s election: “Does the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States prove that critical race theory is not true, or at least has overstated its contrarian claims that racism is permanent?” (2009, Foreword). Did Obama’s election – and reelection – indicate the beginning of a new era in which people are valued not by the color (or absence of color) of their skin? Other signs of change, such as integrated schools and professional sports must be signs of equality, the end of institutional discrimination. Examples of “well-intended Whites” with open hearts and minds to the notion of equality of access and opportunity are easy to identify. However, a critical lens finds evidence that Obama’s presidency did not put out the fire of white supremacy, xenophobia, and racism. Efforts toward gender, racial, and
sexual equality are openly confronted with a resurgence of resistance (Coates, 2017; Kincheloe, 2008). Critical Race Theory looks past the overt examples of increased parity to uncover the covert intentions of “well-intended Whites” and implicitly oppressive social structures. As Ladson-Billings (1995) described, “The regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America” (p. xiii).

Critical Race Theory promotes not just knowledge but also action regarding power and domination with the specific goals to effect change in law and policy (Harris, 1995). One mechanism for effecting change is storytelling, specifically giving voice to people of color and their experience with racial injustice. “For the critical race theorist, social reality is constructed by the formulation and the exchange of stories about individual situations,” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p.15). Storytelling can free the oppressed from the internalized shame and guilt; storytelling can make meaning out of the experience of self-condemnation and the origins of the same. These stories can change the view of the oppressor who may have had little to no awareness of their propagation of and participation in racism and oppression (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Those telling the story may also include the scholars, who integrate their own experience with oppression into the work. Described as “authenticity,” critical race scholarship engages the scholar to be more than just a neutral or objective observer (Calmore, 1995, p. 321). CRT scholarship acknowledges not only that neutrality is unachievable, but also not required or desired. The requirement of authenticity coalesces with qualitative inquiry and informs my reflections on my positionality in this research.

The analysis of social, legal, and cultural texts is another method of confronting structural oppression (Calmore, 1995). Critical race scholarship does not just critique the
status quo but utilizes the critique to mobilize awareness and change. However, exposing the majoritariate to the stories of the oppressed does not necessarily activate empathy, for empathy requires one to see the world from another’s perspective. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) coined the term empathic fallacy: people tend to seek out narratives that resonate with their own cultural norms. While empathy is an aspiration of qualitative research, CRT scholars acknowledge that employing empathy is a choice, at least for majoritarian Whites.

Critical Race Theory includes basic tenets: (1) racism is ordinary and a common experience for many people of color in the United States; (2) racism benefits white people with power and the working-class white population, also known as “material determinism” or “interest convergence” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7); (3) the social construct of race and racism are not objective or biologically determined; (4) people have intersecting identities such as gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality; and (5) persons of color can give voice to the experience of racism and marginalization in ways that enlighten white persons and can effect change (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Interest convergence not only explains why discrimination continues but also how discrimination can benefit those with the power to discriminate. Bell’s book Silent Covenants focused on policy related to African Americans in the United States (2004). Bell defined silent covenants as the “unspoken convergences of interest and involuntary sacrifices of rights – which ensure that policies conform to priorities set by powerful policymakers” (Bell, 2004, p. 5). Silent Covenants extensively analyzes policies post-Civil War to the early 2000s. Bell deconstructs the commonly accepted notion that racial policies truly benefit persons of color. Interest convergence is exemplified in three covenants: northern abolition of slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation, and Civil War Amendments to the Constitution. Bell quotes
Alexis Tocqueville: “In the United States people abolish slavery for the sake not of the Negroes but of white men,” (Bell, 2004, p. 50).

Bell outlined two rules of interest-convergence (Bell, 2004). The first rule allows accommodation of racial equality only when such movement would converge with the interests of policy-making whites. Furthermore, it is more important to grant the impression of some relieve rather than to prove harm already inflicted. The second rule posits that such racial equality remedies are only employed as long as the superior status of policy-making whites is maintained. These rules result in African Americans being only “incidental” or “fortuitous” beneficiaries of policy change. Therefore, the interest-convergence application to undocumented/DACAmented individuals is that “…racial policy actions may be influenced, but are seldom determined, by the seriousness of the harm blacks are suffering…” (p. 71). Shifts in policy across all levels – federal, state, institutional – may mirror similar interest-convergence.

Another perspective on interest convergence relates to affirmative action. While the perception might be that African Americans benefitted most from the Brown decision, Bell argued that the decision served the ideological, national interests of the United States in foreign policy against communism. The Brown decision added credibility to the United States, a sign of the moral high ground of democracy. Ladson-Billings (1999) argues that White women benefitted from affirmative action policies by providing them with more opportunity in the workforce. This intersection of benefit is the notion of interest convergence (Bell, 1980). Social policy is unlikely to change unless there is an interest convergence in which White persons also experience benefit from policy change (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Those with power set the pace of social change (Baber, 2015).
Critical race theorists utilize interest convergence in legal analysis beyond *Brown*. Delgado’s (2006) article is a conversation with his alter ego, characterized as former student Rodrigo, about the *Hernandez v. Texas* ruling. The “conversation” is framed using interest-convergence. *Hernandez v. Texas*, which gave Latinos the right to sue for civil rights violations, was decided two weeks before *Brown*. Delgado (2011) wrote a reconsideration of this initial conversation. The person of “Rodrigo” offered a critique that the once progressive idea of colorblindness has been incorporated and utilized by the political right. Rodrigo stated, “And not long ago, our Latino friends were insisting that they were white and demanding that the authorities treat them as such and not assign their kids to segregated schools, make them enter restaurants by the back door, and use water fountains for blacks” (Delgado, 2011, p. 1254). Later, Delgado stated, “So, in a different time or a different place, what is radical and emancipatory can seem stuffy, backward, and illiberal” (Delgado, 2011, p. 1255). In a critique of the evolution (or lack of evolution) of CRT, intersectionality is discussed. Intersectionality, described the intersection of two or more categories or identities such as race and gender, sexuality and religion, is critiqued due to the infinite divisibility of categories and challenge of analysis when categories can shift and change (Delgado, 2011).

In an example of this critique, Delgado stated,

> Latinos complain that current immigration policies are unfair because they can lead to the deportation of law-abiding people who have been here for years and have children who are U.S. citizens. If the authorities send them back to their home country, the children will have to go with them, and so in effect, the children end up being deported too. Either that or the kids will have to stay in the United States and make their way somehow, perhaps never to see their parents again. (p. 1265-1266)

Delgado goes on to explain how the political right has launched a “campaign to abolish birthright citizenship” in response (p. 1266). Rodrigo replied, “In other words, when
progressives pointed out the plight of this intersectional group – children of undocumented parents – their adversaries seized on their predicament to urge solving it, but in a way progressives didn’t like” (p. 1266).

Related is another CRT tenet, intersectionality, described as a social construction by Delgado (2011). Interestingly, cases of employment discrimination are much more likely to fail based on intersectional claims regarding more than just one identity, such as race and gender, rather than just race or gender (Delgado, 2011). While intersectionality of identities might be a “real” social construction, its complex nature does not appear to have the same power as advocating for justice based on one category. Therefore, Delgado and Rodrigo encourage the use of united voice, such as a voice for people of color, rather than many voices of many identities. Alliances are necessary to speak to power because “most oppression, these days, emanates from broad social forces, not quarrels among friends and close relatives” (Delgado, 2011, p. 1281). Furthermore, focusing on the narrow categories espoused by intersectionality takes attention from the powerful force of white privilege (Delgado, 2011). This view of CRT begs the question of the value of the CRT tenet of intersectionality when speaking to power. Perhaps, based on these findings, it is more effective to advocate for a single population rather than a population of dissected identities. While intersectionality will not be the focus of this research, it is an essential consideration in the formation of policy and execution of practices related to undocumented students.

Critical Race Theory Applied to Education

Critical Race Theory emerged from a tradition of critical theories, including critical legal studies. Critical theories, including CRT, have been applied to educational contexts. I
will explore how educational contexts are examined with critical lenses including CRT and the tenet of interest convergence.

**Critical theories and educational contexts**

Critical theory applied to education contexts originated with intellectuals and philosophers in the 1920s at the Institute for Social Research in Germany (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). This group studied the social movement of Nazism and how ideology was used to maintain hierarchical systems (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). Eventually, many members of this group immigrated to the United States and integrated Nietzschean and Marxist critiques of modernity (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). One example of this group’s critique is that the Enlightenment betrayed itself, with science and reason becoming “tools for domination, control, and the fascist attempt to destroy an entire race of people,” (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009, p. 221). The critical philosophers identified the limits to positivism, along with the need to dig deeper into the ontology and psychology of human experience in the world (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). “Critical theorists are committed to penetrating objective appearance and exploring the underlying social relations the surface often conceals,” (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009, p. 224). More diverse forms of oppression and domination evolved, including critical theories such as feminist and critical social theory.

Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) bridged critical theory into the realm of education. Referred to as a critical intellectual, Torres and Van Heertum (2009) described Freire’s work as connecting politics to educational practice. Critical intellectuals are described as those who criticize conventional wisdom, knowledge and practices, including educational policies (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). “Critical theorists in this
sense use inquiry as a means for challenging forms of oppression and marginality that limit full and equitable participation in public life. Thus, a key contribution of critical theory in education is the belief that research ought to serve an emancipatory goal,” (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009, p.227).

Critical lenses are utilized to analyze institutional policy discourse (Fairclough, 1995). In Smith and Mayorga-Gallo (2017), the expression of both diversity ideology and colorblind ideology were critiqued to identify a gap between principle and policy. Findings indicated that whites employed both ideologies, leading to the sabotage of policy change at predominantly white institutions (Smith & Mayorga-Gallo, 2017). Specifically, millennial-generation respondents indicated support of diversity initiatives and the presence of people of color in white spaces (Smith & Mayorga-Gallo, 2017). However, whites did not necessarily support the policies that challenge white supremacy and privilege (Smith & Mayorga-Gallo, 2017). This cognitive dissonance, even among the millennial generation, highlights the ongoing gap between verbalizing support and effecting policy change.

In the 1990s, Jonathan Kozol described the “savage inequalities” between white middle-class students and poor African American and Latino students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). I recall reading Kozol’s work in 1996 when a college student living in a city for the first time. Reading Kozol, coupled with living in Chicago and working at the University of Illinois at Chicago, exposed me to the fallacies of majoritarian indoctrination about education in the United States: the myth of equality in access and opportunity post-Civil Rights Movement. Connecting these critical theories to education provides another grounding for Critical Race Theory in educational contexts.
Educational contexts are social structures that embody social norms and values. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) brought CRT to educational contexts when presenting a paper at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting. Ladson-Billings and Tate related CRT’s themes to education and proposed a further CRT-framed analysis of race and racism in education (Dixson, 2006). Critical Race scholars seek a deeper understanding of educational barriers for people of color, “as well as exploring how these barriers are resisted and overcome” (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 9). CRT applied to educational contexts assumes that racism is a real and powerful force, despite defacto efforts toward equity and justice in educational contexts. In Gillborn’s analysis of the English educational system, he considered “the role of education policy in the active structuring of racial inequality” (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 51). Connecting CRT to Critical Legal Studies, Yosso (2005) traced the genealogy of CRT applied to educational contexts.

![Figure 1. Intellectual genealogy of CRT applied to educational contexts](image-url)
Yosso (2005) applies CRT’s ability to frame implicit and explicit racism’s impact on social structures, practices, and discourses in an educational context. “Deficit thinking,” the assumption that minority students and families are to blame for poor academic performance because of a lack of cultural knowledge, skills, and values, is contrasted with cultural strengths, referred to as “community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). Yosso (2005) also emphasized that cultural wealth includes more than the Black/White binary, heavily emphasized in Critical Legal Studies. “Women and People of Color who felt their gendered, classed, sexual, immigrant, and language experiences and histories were being silenced challenged this tendency toward a Black/White binary” (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). Emphasis on the Black/White binary limits the understanding of racism and other forms of subordination as applied to educational contexts.

Ladson-Billings (1999) connected citizenship and race when understanding CRT. CRT scholars view the United States as a country built upon property rights, evidenced by the oppression committed by White males in colonization and enslavement (Ladson-Billings, 1999). African Americans were once considered property, the property of White Americans. Similarly, without citizenship, undocumented immigrants lack a necessary status to be considered “true” Americans. The 14th Amendment, for which “all persons born or naturalized in the United States...are citizens of the United States and State wherein they reside,” Bell confronted the realities that degraded citizenship opportunities for African Americans in the Reconstruction era (Bell, 2004, p. 11). Bell described an “implicit bargain” in which black Americans were expected to oppose communism in exchange for relief from discrimination. “In 1954, most black people did not notice that the Brown decision represented a convergence of black and the nation’s interest (Bell, 2004, p. 67, emphasis
mine). This implicit bargain or silent covenant may be at play in immigration policy, including DACA rescinding and DREAM Act debate. What silent covenant are immigrants and their allies expected to enter to have the hope of citizenship, much like African Americans post-Civil War?

Critical Race Theory in educational contexts is action-oriented. “Adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 27). Critical Race Theory also speaks to the work of teachers, administrators, and community members in the development and implementation of educational policies related to race (Villenas, Deyhle, & Parker, 1999).

**Critical Race Theory in higher education**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is utilized to examine higher education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Solórzano (1997) applied tenets of critical race theory to higher educational contexts. First, social constructions of race and racism are permanent and prevalent in U.S society, therefore societal structures. The construct of race also intersects with other identities such as gender, class, culture, citizenship status, language, and sexuality. Secondly, Critical Race Theory challenges dominant ideology including but not limited to the notions of equal opportunity, colorblindness, or race neutrality. Next, Critical Race Theory is committed to social justice and exposes that many gains for people of color converged with the interests with a white majoritarian population. The lived experience and knowledge gained by experience is valid; this relates to the power of counterstorytelling, narratives which may run counter to white majoritarian stories. Finally, Critical Race Theory is an
interdisciplinary approach, including elements of history, culture, and society, all of which affect and are affected by higher education systems and structures.

CRT is also used as a theoretical framework for understanding the experiences of students in higher education. Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solórzano (2009) described microaggressions experienced by Latina/o students at colleges and universities utilizing a CRT framework. Findings indicated that Latina/os often feel like outsiders on their campus, facing rejection and marginalization. Responses to these experiences include the building of communities and navigating the different worlds of community, academia, and family.

Furthermore, critical race theory is utilized to understand the impact of higher education structures, policies, and practices on students of color. CRT acknowledges that the structure of higher education is racialized (Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). If the structures of higher education are racialized, so too are the policies and practices forthwith. Solórzano, et al., (2005) found, “Despite increases in their enrollment rates, our data show that Latinas/os still remain underrepresented at almost every level of the educational pipeline” (p. 286).

The CRT tenet of interest convergence has also been used to examine educational policies and practices related to Latino immigrant populations (Aleman & Aleman, 2010). In his article on STEM educational opportunities using the interest-convergence framework, Baber (2015) stated, “Progress toward increasing postsecondary participation in the United States among traditionally underrepresented students, including students of color, will continue to be stagnant if the motivation of postsecondary policymakers and educators is primarily grounded in national economic prosperity” (p. 267).
Employing an interest convergence lens challenges the assumptions of equality in policy discourse and examines how the interests of students of color converge with institutions and their agents (Iverson, 2007). This raises the question of what or who are the drivers of policy; who wins and who loses as a result of policy; and what are the effects of the policy? Policies in higher education are dependent on many factors including the institution’s location, history, mission, constituents, and funding source. Therefore, policy discourse analysis through a CRT lens acknowledges the similarities and difference among higher education institutions across the United States (Iverson, 2007).

Examination of higher education policies through a critical race theoretical framework has several potential outcomes. Iverson (2007) identified counterstorytelling and facilitating dialogue with the counterstories as two potential benefits. The telling of these stories and the experience of dialogue can lead to discomfort and disruption, in which policies perhaps thought to be egalitarian are viewed through another lens, a lens through which White supremacy’s influence on policy is acknowledged. This provides higher education administrators opportunity to “be more informed and critical of how policy documents are discursively constituted and inspire opportunities for different discourses to be taken up” (Iverson, 2007, p. 606). Power, domination, and marginalization funneled through educational policy for undocumented students can produce similar outcomes (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005). “Critical race theory scholarship is grounded in a sense of reality that reflects the distinctive experiences of people of color” (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 8) and focuses on the intersectionality of gender, class, and other forms of insubordination, such as citizenship status (Taylor, et al., 2009). While citizenship status is the most salient issue in the subject of this study, other
forms of marginalization are likely factors in the policy discourse. For example, the majoritarian perception of Latinos as “White” or “people of color” can influence policy discourse. The critical lens of CRT and its tenet of interest convergence furthers the analysis of policies in higher education related to undocumented students.

Related Constructs

Several theoretical constructs related to immigration and civil rights provide further context to this study. The next sections will explore the notion of citizenship and nativism.

Citizenship

In 1857, the United States Supreme Court ruled that Americans of African descent were not American citizens, even if “free”, rather than enslaved in *Scott v. Stanford* (Library of Congress, 2015). The 13th and 14th Amendments nullified *Scott* (Sobel, 2016). The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution abolished slavery in 1865 (Library of Congress, 2018). The 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, granted citizenship to “all persons born or naturalized in the United States.” Former slaves, recently freed by the 13th Amendment, were included. Furthermore, states were not allowed to deny “life, liberty or property, without due process of law” or “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (Library of Congress, 2015). The 14th Amendment informed many court rulings since its ratification, including *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, the Supreme Court ruling that granted citizenship to children born in the United States to non-citizen parents. The construct of citizenship is not just legal status, but a contentious socio-political issue. As Sobel (2016) questioned, “What makes a right fundamental and a fundamental
right of citizenship? the notion of how civil rights are regarded is related to how one is, or assumed to be, a citizen” (p. 24). Citizenship, a birthright for some and a lengthy, bureaucratic process for others, is the construct that defines the population to be studied.

**United Statesian**

Another theoretical construct relevant to citizenship and undocumented youth is “United Statesian,” utilized in Castro-Salazar & Bagley’s book on undocumented Americans. A United Statesian is defined as “one who is culturally, linguistically, socioeconomically, emotionally, and spiritually *de facto* a citizen of the United States” (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012, p. 9-10). United Statesians “lack a U.S. birth certificate but possess all the intrinsic attributes of U.S. born citizens, have been educated in the U.S. system, and have grown up pledging allegiance to the U.S. flag. They are undocumented Americans” (p. 4-5). This construct begs the question of what makes a person an American, whether it is a birth certificate, a set of values, or residency, as well as who decides if one is an American. If a person is born in another country, has no recollection of that country, a person’s lived experience may be more of the country in which one lives, rather than country of birth. Undocumented youth may have little attachment to their country of birth, depending on the age at migration, leading to further acculturation into “American” childhood and young adulthood (American Immigration Council, 2017). Viewing undocumented immigrants as “other,” whether inferior or criminal in comparison to the white majority, is manifested in higher education contexts, just as it is in the larger society (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012). As evidenced in historical patterns of immigration and civil rights, how the majority positions itself against the minority, or “other,” is conditional upon power and opportunity.
Nativism

Nativism is the belief that immigrant groups are dangers to native-born individuals (Young, 2017). Recent manifestations for nativism are mostly directed toward undocumented immigrants and Muslim, espoused by rhetoric from the president, legislators, and their supporters (Scribner, 2017. Trump’s description of Mexican immigrants as rapists and criminals (Burns, 2015) as well as his statements about the death of Iowa college student Mollie Tibbetts (Cannon, 2018) are two specific examples. Nativism appears to reoccur over time: there are parallels between today’s manifestation of nativism and that of the United States in 1870-1930 when immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, Asia and Mexico (Young 2017). While the expected demographic shifts in the U.S. may help subdue the rhetoric of nativism, much depends upon the social and political movements related to immigration.

Conclusion

The contexts of United States immigration patterns and trends and access to higher education are critical to understanding the experiences of undocumented college students. Critical Race Theory’s tenet of interest convergence identifies differentials in power and how access and opportunity may be given to oppressed persons for the benefit of dominant groups. The complexities of policies and practices regarding undocumented students, analyzed through the framework of interest convergence, consider how inequalities exist in social and educational structures. Chapter 3 explores qualitative inquiry, methodology, and the study’s methods for data collection and analysis.
CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Educational research is a diverse field: we examine, analyze, critique and engage in quantitative and qualitative methods of research. There are strengths to each approach as well as to combining methods, often referred to as mixed methods. Qualitative inquiry resonates with my desire to understand how people make meaning out of everyday phenomena, including phenomena in educational contexts. The exploration of meaning cannot be divorced from its context(s). In this study, the policies and practices of community colleges in Iowa concerning undocumented students cannot be separated from the institutional, community, state, national, and global context of 2018. This study will examine policies and practices regarding undocumented community college students in Iowa, in order to understand the implications of discourse on students, institutions, and stakeholders.

Research Questions

1. What is the legislative and political policy discourse about undocumented students in Iowa?

2. What are the institutional policies and practices regarding undocumented community college students in Iowa?

3. How do institutional policies and practices differ among community colleges in Iowa?

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry seeks to understand contexts and the subjective experiences of individuals, groups, communities, and other social groups (Creswell, 2014). Words, rather than numbers, are data in qualitative inquiry. Qualitative methods were selected for this study
to provide thick descriptions that reveal phenomena (Geertz, 1973; Miles et al., 2015). A critical epistemological lens will be utilized in this study because of the multiple realities possible related to this issue and essential for consideration. Critical theories seek to empower human beings to transcend constraints placed on them due to a marginalized status (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, a critical lens will allow for multiple perspectives and recommendations for action regarding policies about undocumented students in Iowa community colleges.

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is a valued tool of the research process. The researcher positions herself to the research subject, thereby allowing personal values to influence her study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher is an instrument in data collection (Creswell, 2014). When comparing quantitative and qualitative methods, Stake (1995), stated, “Quantitative researchers have pressed for explanation and control; qualitative researchers have pressed for understanding the complex interrelationships among all that exist” (p. 37). Qualitative inquiry is interested in meaning and “rendering the complexity of a situation” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). Qualitative researchers draw conclusions through “vigorous interpretation” (Stake, 1995, p. 9). Other than positioning oneself to the research subject, qualitative researchers do not attempt to intervene but instead look for patterns of data to make sense of phenomena (Stake, 1995).

Who we are, not just what we do, is a part of qualitative inquiry. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identified the essential characteristics and competencies of qualitative researchers. These include possessing a high tolerance for ambiguity, a questioning eye for life and work, making careful observations, engaging in purposeful questioning, inductive thinking, and comfort with writing. Characteristics suggest a state of being; competencies suggest skills
improved over time. Perhaps both are important in rigorous qualitative inquiry: the researcher possesses at least minimum competencies that are challenged and stretched by the research process, writing, and colleagues. Then these competencies are grounded within the researcher to move toward meaning-making, inquiry, and complex interrelationships. Particularly compelling in understanding the role of the qualitative researcher is Stake’s (1995) attribution to Henrik von Wright’s (1971) *Explanation and Understanding* in which von Wright emphasizes empathy, interpretation, and thick description in qualitative inquiry. Instead of keeping ourselves emotionally distant, we acknowledge who we are in position to the research subject(s). Empathy provides a bridge of understanding, which leads to interpretation through detailed, nuanced description. The empathic bridging between researcher and subject acknowledges and understands the complexity of personal, professional, and institutional beliefs and behaviors related to undocumented students. This spirit guided my methodological decisions and analysis. I hope to bring you, the reader, on this journey.

**Philosophical assumptions**

It is important to entertain the philosophical assumptions of research and, specifically, qualitative inquiry. Philosophical underpinnings guide the research process from beginning to end. Because qualitative researchers are primary instruments of research, grounding myself in philosophy is vital to my methodology. Philosophy includes ontology, the nature of reality; epistemology, the nature of knowledge; and axiology, the role of values (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Epistemology, ontology, and axiology “are not entirely separable;” “they
build upon and inform each other” (Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2012, p. 22, 26). We will examine each individually.

Ontology is the consideration of the nature of reality. For example, Stake (1995) described qualitative inquiry as holistic, in contrast to a dualistic view of phenomenon (Pasque, et al., 2012). For inquiry to be holistic, including historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and personal factors must be considered (Stake, 1995). Unexpected patterns may be found and unexpected situations cannot always be anticipated and may be heavily influenced by the context of the study. As it relates to my study, contextualizing phenomenon was critical in the analysis of data, including international, national, and local events which occurred during the study.

Axiology pushes beyond the considerations of reality and integrates values and ethics into the nature of reality and knowledge (Pasque, et al., 2012). In qualitative inquiry, subjectivity is inherent, and the researcher’s values and ethics will affect the research (Stake, 1995). Therefore, researcher reflexivity and triangulation of methods are necessary. More on reflexivity and triangulation as it relates to this study will be discussed later in the chapter.

Epistemology is the consideration of knowledge and how knowledge is acquired (Pasque, et al., 2012). There are four main epistemological perspectives: positivist, constructivist, critical, and poststructural (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A positivist perspective assumes that reality is observable and measurable, such as experimental research, in which the outcome is either prediction or generalizability. Postpositivism is an evolution of positivism. Postpositivism uses empirical evidence to find the most plausible claims yet acknowledges that knowledge is relative.
A constructivist perspective, also described as interpretative, assumes reality is socially constructed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, multiple realities exist, not merely one reality or experience of an event to be discovered (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995). Researchers use interpretation and the gathering of interpretations to make conclusions about knowledge and reality while also giving the reader enough information for his/her conclusions (Stake, 1995).

Critical inquiry also considers multiple realities, as well as considering the social, political and cultural contexts of the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This research seeks to understand and challenge the status quo while also examining the counter-claims to traditional understandings of knowledge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Pasque, et al., 2012). Emancipation and empowerment are key purposes of critical research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Power, including how it is negotiated, distributed, and who has it, are areas of inquiry. Examples of the critical epistemological perspective include critical race theory, feminist theory, queer theory, and postcolonial theory.

A fourth epistemological perspective, poststructuralism, also called postmodernism, espouses that there are many truths, not one truth, which allows for a diverse perspective of views (Pasque, et al., 2012). Much of qualitative research is postmodern due to its focus on individual experiences, in contrast to quantitative research’s focus on generalizability. Postmodern frames reject that the modern world is explainable by rationality and certainty (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Postmodern/structural perspectives can be combined with critical approaches as both perspectives analyze forms of power (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), as can constructivism and critical theory (Kincheloe, 2008). Critical constructivism is another epistemological
perspective, grounded in social constructivism and integrated with critical theory. This epistemological perspective identifies how power affects the construction and validation of knowledge and “particularly interested in the ways these processes help privilege some people and marginalize others” (p. 3). Kincheloe (2008) argued that critical constructivism is also ontological, not just epistemological and theoretical and that the lines between the former two are blurred. There is an emancipatory element to critical constructivism in that humans can examine the social and historical construction of reality and self and reshape themselves by reconstructing consciousness and then reinterpret traditions and social structures. “Here we can see that critical constructivism is not some abstract philosophical position but a way of seeing that holds profound consequences for the way we live our lives and shape who we are” (p. 83). There is no disconnect between philosophy and action.

Critical constructivism is applied to various educational contexts so that we might explore the social, cognitive, and educational theories that shaped our systems and agents of education. Historical trends and cultural shifts are parts of our social realities. Kincheloe (2008) described how the “anti-colonial” and liberation activities of the 19th and 20th centuries, including the women’s movement, anti-war movement, and civil rights movements led to a counter-reaction in the years since “The politics, cultural wars, educational debates, policies and practices of the last three decades cannot be understood outside of these efforts to ‘recover’ white supremacy, patriarchy, class privilege, heterosexual ‘normality,’ Christian dominance, and the European intellectual canon” (p. 88). This notion is consistent with the theoretical framing and methodology of my study: that the community college policies and practices related to undocumented students are inextricably connected to the social and historical realities on a global, national, state, community, and institutional level.
Qualitative Methodological Approaches

Despite the shared assumptions of qualitative inquiry, there are variances in the traditions of qualitative inquiry, including tradition’s roots, design, and intent (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Methodology refers to the various strategies of inquiry or how the inquiry should be conducted (Pasque, et al., 2012). Approaches to research include not only a philosophical worldview, but also design and research methods (Creswell, 2014). Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales (2007) wrote to the scholar seeking to understand and select an approach from the “baffling array of options.” Indeed, there are many considerations, from audience as well as researcher preference (Creswell, et al., 2007). To wisely select a methodological approach to study institutional policies and practices related to undocumented students in community colleges, let us review the various qualitative methodological approaches.

Narrative research is one type of qualitative design. In this research, participants tell their story to the researcher. Akin to narrative therapy, the use of storytelling as well as the participant’s experience of being heard provides insight and understanding regarding a person or phenomena. Types of narrative inquiry include life history, oral history, and biography (Jones, et al., 2014). Chronology and meaning are critical to understanding the phenomena due to the contextual factors necessary in qualitative inquiry. Data is often collected through document analysis and interviews (Creswell, et al., 2007).

Grounded theory is another qualitative research methodology, rooted in sociology (Jones, et al., 2014). The researcher uses an inductive process to find meaning and develop a theory that is “grounded” in the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers use questions
to understand a process or stages of experiences over time, often using convenience sampling (Creswell, et al., 2007; Jones, et al., 2014). Researchers make constant comparisons to analyze the data, also referred to as coding the data (Jones, et al., 2014).

Participatory action research is a methodology in which community issues are examined related to an issue with the goal that research findings would lead to change (Creswell, et al., 2007). Participatory action researchers utilize qualitative and/or quantitative data collection methods. There is collaboration between researchers and the community so that condition(s) in the community can be improved (Creswell, et al., 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Ethnography is another form of qualitative inquiry, rooted in the discipline of anthropology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ethnography is both a process and a product; its focus is on culture and society (Jones, et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers must establish a trusting relationship with the object(s) of study in order to gain admission into the culture (Jones, et al., 2014). Detailed description, also referred to as “thick description,” bring the reader into the cultural experience. Autoethnography, the personal narrative of the researcher’s experience, can be used in conjunction or separate from ethnographic research. Because immersion is a necessary condition of ethnographic inquiry, autoethnographic exercises such as journaling can provide additional sources of meaning and experience from the research.

The qualitative approach of case study research involves the exploration of an issue or phenomenon. Best suited for this design is a case bounded by time or place that informs the problem. The unit of analysis can include an event, program, or more than one individual. “Many case studies focus on an issue with the case (individual, multiple individuals,
In-depth and contextual understanding is important (similar to narrative research), but case study is more focused on context. (Creswell, et al., 2007). There are variations in case study methods. According to Stake (1995), case study research earns its name by what is to be studied, not how it is studied; a noun rather than a verb. Other scholars, including Yin (2014), describe case study as a strategy or mode of inquiry (Creswell, et al., 2007). Those embarking on case study research must thoughtfully consider their conceptualization of “case” and, therefore, the study of such.

The qualitative research methodology of phenomenology seeks to explore the essence of an experience, such as one or more individuals’ lived experiences about a phenomenon. Careful descriptions explore how people make meaning from ordinary phenomenon (Jones, et al., 2014). “Phenomenology is always anchored in the lifeworld of the individual and the meaning making associated with being-in-the-world,” (Jones, et al., 2014, p. 88). In phenomenological work, meaning making is not as important as “uncovering an essential structure of a particular phenomenon that resonates with many individuals” (Jones, et al., 2014, p. 91). Interviews are the primary form of data collection; art, documents, and observation may also be used (Creswell, et al., 2007). The researcher may also explore her experience related to the phenomenon to address bias and assumptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Research Design

Due to the variety of qualitative traditions, it can be challenging to select a single tradition. It is possible to justify more than one mode of inquiry for one’s research questions. As a novice researcher, considerations include the influence of scholarly mentorship,
personal resonance, and audience. I strongly considered case study and specifically Stake’s instrumental case study for this research. With continued reading and conversations with my committee, I decided to use a variety of methods shared by more than one qualitative tradition: phenomenological interviewing, document analysis, and critical autoethnographic exploration.

Because of the quickly shifting nature of federal policy related to immigration and DACA, a constant acknowledgment of the relationship between power, knowledge, and discourse shall be at the forefront of the study (Gildersleeve, 2017). “Understanding policy as discourse assumes that policy produces particular truths (albeit dynamic and unstable) and possible knowledges (albeit tentative and historically-bound)” (Gildersleeve, 2017, p. 5). This analysis provides an important macro-level context that may inform the individual experiences of undocumented community college students, as well as why decisions are made at state- and institutional-levels (Rogers, et al., 2005). The critical lens can challenge the dominant narratives that inform policy and are informed by policy, including the “why” of resource allocation and decision-making in policy (Metcalf, 2015; Rogers, et al., 2005). Similarly, the counternarratives of marginalized persons provide alternatives to the dominant narrative associated with policy (Metcalf, 2015). “Repositioning the role of policy studies to that of interpretation and interrogation instead of consultation provides researchers with a new voice with which to talk to policymakers” (Metcalf, in Martinez-Aleman, Pusser, & Bensimon, 2015, p. 221). Therefore, the critical lens examines and investigates policy with the intent to influence future policy decisions.
Data sources

The landscape of higher education in the United States includes a diverse array of institutional types with additional variations related to geographical location, mission, funding, programs, and student life ((Renn & Reason, 2013). The sources of data for this study include several community colleges in the state of Iowa, interviews with community college administrator and staff, and documents related to higher education and immigration in the state of Iowa.

The context of community colleges in Iowa

Iowa recognizes 15 community colleges throughout the state, established by the 1965 Merged Area Schools Act (Varner, in Friedel, Killacky, Miller & Katsinas, 2014). Community colleges evolved from vocational schools and junior colleges first operated by school districts to accommodate the demand for higher education by the baby boomer generation. The mission of the community college broadened from vocational training to include transfer programs and continuing/community education, leading to the designation as “comprehensive community colleges” (p. 108). Today, Iowa’s community colleges offer this range of educational opportunities as well as high school equivalency programs, developmental education, distance education, and continuing education as required by state licensing boards. In 1983, legislation linked Iowa community colleges to state efforts at economic development. Increasing numbers of partnerships between community colleges and local industry ensued, leading to a current-day strong connection between state economic development, business and industry, and the local community college.
Today, Iowa’s community colleges are subject to Iowa Code Section 260C.1, in which community colleges are directed to include the following activities in their mission:

- The first two years of college coursework
- Vocational and technical training
- In-service training and retraining of workers
- High school completion programs for persons older than high school age
- Vocational and technical training for high school students and for those not enrolled in high school
- Advanced college placement courses for high school students
- Developmental education for students unprepared for higher education
- Student personnel services
- Community services
- Vocational education for persons with academic, socioeconomic, or other barriers that might prevent success in other vocational education programs
- Training or retraining for employment

Community college governance includes a board of trustees elected by the college’s service area (Varner, 2014). The local board appoints the president or chancellor as well as development and enforcement of policies, curricula, and tuition. Community colleges are given “substantial autonomy” in order to meet the needs of their local communities (Varner, 2014, p. 107). The Iowa Department of Education’s Division of Community Colleges provides oversight from the state-level. Two other bodies, the Iowa Association of Community College Trustees (IACCT) and the Iowa Association of Community College
Presidents (IACCP) provide collaboration amongst the colleges regarding legislative advocacy and programming. These collaborative efforts bring forward the needs specific to the community college, including the challenges facing state funding. Iowa’s community colleges are largely funded by state general aid, tuition, and fees. Additional funding sources include local property taxes, federal grants, and other income sources. Decreases in state general aid allocation to community colleges increase the burden on other sources of revenue, most commonly the raising of tuition and fees (IAACT, 2018). In FY 1967, tuition and fees made up 14.2% of general fund revenue compared to 52.0% in FY2017. Iowa’s community colleges offer lower tuition rates than public and private four-year institutions.

The dilemma is described by Varner, 2014, p. 111:

Since state investments have not kept pace with cost inflation, the colleges have been prevented from fully realizing their broad mandate. That said, the colleges continue to maintain open access, deliver high quality services, and improve the quality of life for thousands of Iowans – the vast majority of which remain in the state.

Iowa funds higher education institutions on a per-pupil basis, but community colleges receive the lowest allocation of $2,607 per student compared to $10,386 for Regents institutions and $4,204 for private colleges (IAACT, 2018). While community colleges are not the only institutions to receive decreased funding, community colleges already receive significantly less than all of institutions types in the state.

Community college enrollment in Iowa has declined over the last five years (Iowa College Aid, 2018). In the fiscal year 2012, credit enrollment reached over 152,000 and noncredit enrollment to almost 250,000 (Varner, 2014). In 2017, enrollment decreased to 132,694 credit students and 214,817 noncredit students (IAACT, 2018). Eighty-one percent of community college students stay in Iowa upon completion (IACCT, 2018), a data point
Iowa Association of Community College Trustees uses for legislative advocacy. Iowa’s high school students make up one out of every four community college students, often referred to as dual or concurrent enrollment (Varner, 2014). This population of college students is notable for many reasons but for this study, specifically unique due to the *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) ruling which provides education up through 12th grade to undocumented youth. The policies, practices, and experiences related to this specific subgroup are not explored in this study but are important when considering the context of Iowa community colleges as related to undocumented students. Table 4 presents Iowa’s community colleges (IAACT, 2018).

**Table 4: Iowa Community Colleges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Main Campus</th>
<th>Other campus/center locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Des Moines Area Community College</td>
<td>Ankeny</td>
<td>Ames, Boone, Capitol, Carroll, Evelyn Davis, Newton, Perry, Southridge, Urban, West Des Moines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Iowa Community College District (Clinton, Muscatine, and Scott Community Colleges)</td>
<td>Davenport (Scott Community College)</td>
<td>Clinton, Columbus Junction, Maquoketa, Muscatine, West Liberty, Wilton, Urban (Davenport)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkeye Community College</td>
<td>Waterloo</td>
<td>Cedar Falls, Metro (Waterloo), Independence, Western Outreach (Holland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Hills Community College</td>
<td>Ottumwa</td>
<td>Centerville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Main Campus</td>
<td>Other campus/center locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa Central Community College</td>
<td>Fort Dodge</td>
<td>Eagle Grove, Storm Lake, Webster City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa Western Community College</td>
<td>Council Bluffs</td>
<td>Cass County (Atlantic), Clarinda, Page/Fremont County (Shenandoah), Shelby County (Harlan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Iowa Area Community College</td>
<td>Mason City</td>
<td>Charles City, Garner, Hampton, Lake Mills, Osage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northeast Iowa Community College</td>
<td>Calmar</td>
<td>Cresco, Dubuque, Manchester, New Hampton, Peosta, Oelwein, Waukon</td>
</tr>
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<td>Sheldon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern Community College</td>
<td>West Burlington</td>
<td>Keokuk, Mount Pleasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwestern Community College</td>
<td>Creston</td>
<td>Osceola, Red Oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Iowa Tech Community College</td>
<td>Sioux City</td>
<td>Denison, Cherokee, LeMars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participating institutions

Information about participating institutions is offered to provide a more specific context for this study’s participants. Descriptions are intentionally brief and limited in order to keep participants’ identities and their community college affiliations confidential.

Mission Valley Community College serves a seven-county region through multiple campuses and centers. Founded over 50 years ago, Mission Valley Community College offers over 120 degrees, diplomas, and certificates and serves about 20,000 credit students.

Also founded over 50 years ago, Van Buren Community College offers 252 degrees, programs, and certificates. Approximately 37,000 credit students are enrolled at the college, with courses offered on its main campus and multiple campuses and learning centers throughout its service area.

Sunrise Valley Community College is one of the oldest two-year colleges in Iowa. In addition to its campus location, Sunrise Valley Community College has various community education centers throughout its service area. The college offers about 40 programs of study and enrollment is approximately 3,000 credit students.

Newbold Community College District includes two colleges as well as multiple centers throughout its service area. Credit student enrollment is approximately 3,000 students. Newbold Community College offers approximately 55 programs of study.

One other institution was contacted for the study, but no interviews were conducted at Turkey River Community College. I initially contacted their IRB coordinator via email on April 12, 2018, and immediately received an out-of-office reply in return. After no contact, I left a voice mail message for the contact on April 17 and within the day I received an email
with the required IRB application. On the same day I sent a reply and on April 18, 2018, submitted the requested materials via email. After three weeks, I left a voice mail message again for the contact and on May 15, 2018, received an email that read as follows:

Emily, the [Turkey River Community College] Institutional Research Board has chosen not to approve your request for this research project at [Turkey River Community College.]

While I was disappointed not to be able to conduct interviews with administrators at Turkey River Community College, I felt surprised not only by the rejection but also by the lack of explanation. I attempted to make sense of the curt rejection through consultation with my major professors and writing reflective memos. While I have no clear answers for the decision of the Turkey River Community College IRB, I noted the state law which was approved by the Iowa legislature on April 5, 2018, Senate File 481, compelling local law enforcement to comply with USCIS and orders that state funding be cut off from any sanctuary city or county in Iowa (Pfannenstiel, 2018). As previously described, regular anti-immigration rhetoric by state and national leaders was typical during this month.

Participants.

To answer my research questions, I conducted interviews with 14 community college administrators and staff throughout the state of Iowa. Participants were recruited in a variety of ways. In accessing 12 of the 14 participants, IRB approval was received at three different Iowa community colleges located in Central and Eastern Iowa. This process began by utilizing my relationships with community college administrators, faculty, and staff. Once I identified the primary IRB contact at each institution, I sent an email using the IRB-approved recruitment script. Each email was followed with at least one telephone or in-person
conversation. Each institution requested a completed IRB application as well as copies of Iowa State’s IRB paperwork.

Consistent with the recommendations in Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014), the following materials will be retained and saved in CyBox, Iowa State University’s secure storage:

- Notes before, during, and after interviews;
- Audio recordings of interviews;
- Processed data, including transcripts and cleaned versions;
- Coding scheme and codebook;
- Data displays, such as concept maps or matrices;
- A chronological log of data collection and analysis.

Of the five community colleges contacted, four approved my request. After I received notification of approvals, I initiated email contact with institutional administrators I had learned about via word of mouth, referral by another professional, or college’s website. Participating administrators from all three colleges assisted the snowball sampling of additional participants.

Mid- and high-level administrators were selected due to the policymaking nature as well as intra- and inter-institutional influence off their positions. Many administrators participate in state- and national boards, associates, and conferences. Therefore, these individuals were likely to have knowledge not only about their institution's policies and practices, but also the influences of the local community, state policies, and federal policies related to students. The participants who are not administrators were selected based on the specific referral of one or more administrators.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First name (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Highest degree earned</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Administrative Status</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deena</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>White, Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shawn</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Declined</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>Declined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelley</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phenomenological interviewing**

I utilized the phenomenological approach as described in Bevan (2014). This method of interviewing provided structure to my interview protocol while also allowing an opportunity to reimagine and explore the unexpected findings which may arise.

Phenomenological approaches to interviewing apply “questions based on themes of experience contextualization, apprehending the phenomenon and its clarification” (Bevan,
The goal of the phenomenological interviews was to understand the phenomenon of community college policies and practices related to undocumented students. Creswell (2014) outlines the data analysis process in qualitative research, starting with raw data. In this study, raw data includes transcripts from interviews and documents.

The process was similar to Maramba, Sule, & Winkle-Wagner (2015):

1. In the first cycle, two to three-word phrases were coded using the stakeholder’s own words, similar to In Vivo Coding (Saldaña, 2016).

2. The emerging codes were combined into high-level codes or patterns in the second cycle (Saldaña, 2016).

3. Patterns were combined to form themes analyzed using CRT, specifically interest convergence, which acknowledges racism, power, and oppression in policy discourse (Harper, 2012; Pasque, et al., 2012; Rogers, et al., 2005). Guiding questions included: How is interest convergence evident in this narrative? What social contexts might affect the discourse?

4. During the analysis process, I began reading about racial fortuity and found it to be useful in data analysis. Additional description of racial fortuity and its resonance with my findings is presented in subsequent chapters.

Interviews were conducted at a location of the participant’s choosing, most frequently the office of the participant or another private location chosen by the participant. Once informed consent was obtained, I used a semi-structured interview protocol. The semi-structured protocol provided organization to my interview questions and assisted me in
staying on topic, asking a consistent set of questions interview to interview and monitor my use of time. The semi-structured interview protocol also allowed me the flexibility to ask follow up questions.

Participants selected the location of the interview, most frequently in the office of the participant or another private location chosen by the participant. Once informed consent was obtained, I used a semi-structured interview protocol. The semi-structured protocol provided organization to my interview questions and assisted me in staying on topic, asking a consistent set of questions interview to interview, and monitor my use of time. The semi-structured interview protocol also allowed me flexibility to ask follow up questions, explore unexpected topics, and engage in a more in-depth conversation. I met with each participant once. Interview lengths varied from 30 minutes to the expected 60 minutes, to nearly two hours. Each interview was audio-recorded after I verbally requested consent and stopped after interview questions concluded. One participant requested I turn off the recording for a period during the interview due to the sensitive nature of the disclosure; I resumed recording when she verbalized consent. I sent handwritten notes to thank each participant after their interview.

Document analysis

The term “document” is used an umbrella term for written, digital, visual, and photographic material relevant to my study on undocumented community college students in Iowa (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Documents provide stable, cost-effective, and non-reactive data for research. Public events and discourse are typically recorded with official records. Documents can provide an array of time and events to broaden the understanding of
the phenomena’s context (Bowen, 2009). Many of these documents existed before the initiation of my research. However, documents published contemporaneously were also included. With the prevalent political rhetoric on DACA and immigration, there were many sources from which to draw information about the context(s) of this study. For the document analysis, I developed a priori codes consistent with Bowen (2009) and Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006). The analysis process included scanning, reading, and interpretation. “Content analysis is the process of organizing information into categories related to the central questions of the research” (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). After reading through the data, at least twice, I began coding by hand to identify patterns and themes.

Document analysis is also used for triangulation of data. I utilized Bowen (2009) to guide document selection and analysis. Document analysis is a process that includes both objectivity and sensitivity. Some of the documents were reviewed with the intent to verify information shared by participants; some documents were provided and recommended by participants as applicable to my study. I analyzed a variety of documents to triangulate findings from interviews. As Bowen (2009) recommended, I did not assume that documents were without error. Each document was reviewed carefully for both content and omissions of content in relationship to data gathered from participant interviews. I used a constant comparison method to identify patterns in the data. Finally, the lens of interest convergence was applied in the document review.
### Table 6. Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Title</th>
<th>Type/Source</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)</td>
<td>Webpage</td>
<td>Van Buren Community College</td>
<td>Suggested by participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQ for DACA and Dreamers</td>
<td>Webpage</td>
<td>Van Buren Community College</td>
<td>Suggested by participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House File 265 – Introduced</td>
<td>House File/Webpage</td>
<td>State of Iowa Committee on Public Safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative Services Agency Fiscal Note</td>
<td>Fiscal Note/Webpage</td>
<td>Iowa Legislature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Scholar Award Application</td>
<td>Printed document; provided by participant</td>
<td>Sunrise Valley Community College</td>
<td>Omission of title intentional to protect privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship Application</td>
<td>Webpage</td>
<td>Newbold Community College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>Webpage</td>
<td>Mission Valley Community College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Iowa House Journal, April 5, 2018</td>
<td>Webpage</td>
<td>State of Iowa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Analysis Techniques

I recorded each interview on an Apple tablet or phone. I transcribed each interview in within a few days or several weeks. While lengthy and tedious, I found the transcription process extremely valuable in capturing the participants’ voices, listening for previously
unnoticed details, and pondering communication through signs, pauses, curt answers, and laughter. While conclusions may not be drawn from a single nonverbal or verbal response, the culmination of cues provided additional context for the transcribed interviews. After interviews were transcribed, each interview transcript was printed with sizeable margins to make room for my notes, initial impressions, and coding activities. I used different colored pens for each round. I noticed ways in which I began to “hear” or frame the responses, often beginning the initial process of connecting ideas and themes between interviews. Quite the opposite, it also gave me pause when reading inconsistent or incongruent responses, especially among participants within the same institution. While the purpose of these interviews was not to “fact-check” one participant from another, the inconsistencies found led to analysis of why and how these inconsistencies might develop and foster within an institution or across community colleges. I also bracketed my feelings and reactions leading to some reflective memos and exploration of my own reactions, values, and biases related to my research topic. Due to the highly politicized and polarizing nature of immigration-related topics and policy, I found this extremely valuable in wading through the emotional complexities of qualitative work.

**Triangulation of data**

Document analysis is a means of triangulation of the data which could indicate convergence, corroboration, or lack thereof, with data collected through interviews (Bowen, 2009). Documents serve multiple functions. Documents can inform what interview questions as well as provide context, background information, and historical insight about the context in which research participants work and “indicate the conditions that impinge upon
the phenomena currently under investigation” (Bowen, 2009, p. 30). Supplementary research data from documents can be analyzed to verify findings or review evidence from other sources. Documents also assist with monitoring changes and developments over time.

Validity

Trustworthiness is a term used to describe a qualitative study maintains high quality (Jones, et al., 2014). In this study, processes to uphold trustworthiness began as research questions were formulated and continued through the end of the project. The term inquiry competence is useful in considering the multiple efforts necessary to realize validity. Inquiry competence includes thick descriptions, illuminating the multiple perspectives of participants, and efforts to identify my own reactions and biases related to the research.

Role of the researcher

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is an instrument in the study (Jones, et al., 2014). Therefore, my personal and professional values influenced this study. First, harm and risk to participants must be minimized (Miles, et al., 2015). I asked participants about sensitive and controversial topics. Confidentiality was discussed verbally and in writing to affirm informed consent with each participant before giving consent to participate. Consent to participate was freely given (Miles, et al., 2015) and participants had the right to end participation or not answer any interview questions. Participants’ identifying information is stored in CyBox; only pseudonyms are used outside of CyBox.

Social justice is another ethical principle that informs this work. Critical race theory challenges the assumptions of equality in policy discourse (Iverson, 2007). Therefore, I
questioned what or who are the drivers of policy; who wins and who loses as a result of policy; and what are the effects of the policy? Policies in higher education are dependent on many factors including the institution’s location, history, mission, constituents, and funding source (Gildersleeve, 2017). However, a critique of social justice was also utilized in analysis process which led to my examination of critical constructivism and racial fortuity.

Respecting the dignity and worth of the person is another ethical value relevant to this research (National Association of Social Workers, 2017). Upholding this value influenced the manner in which I spoke to and about the people affected by and implementing policies and practices related to undocumented students. When discussing “the other,” it is possible for discussants to speak in ways that could be further marginalizing. Researcher integrity requires both dignity and respect to participants and a critical lens, which may challenge the assumptions of access and equality of opportunity.

My values and experiences are inherently brought into the research process. The empathic bridge built between me as the interviewer and participants must be acknowledged and reflected upon. Interviews are conducted to gain understanding, facilitated by empathy. My analysis of the interviews was conducted from the position of “other.” Reflective memos throughout the data collection and analysis were used so that my experiences were recognized and, to the best of my ability, controlled in a manner that is respectful of participants’ unique experiences, but also with a critical theoretical lens.
Limitations

The endeavor of qualitative inquiry is fraught with complexity and potential pitfalls. “Qualitative inquiry has everything wrong with it that its detractors claim” (Stake, 1995, p. 45). Despite the complexities of this research, I made each methodological decision carefully, considering my own subjectivity, qualitative methodology, and ethical values. I found myself having much in common with my participants and needed to remind myself to maintain adherence to the research process, my methods, and utilization of a critical lens. As a white scholar in a predominantly white higher education system in a predominantly white state, my reflective work throughout this study is required, which includes using a critical lens to analyze my own discourse, beliefs, and attitudes. This quote from Pasque, et al., 2012 was also valuable:

A common thread connecting methodological reflections on the professional consequences of engaging in critical qualitative scholarship is an awareness that the critical scholar’s work (including research, teaching, and community engagement efforts) is subject to evaluation processes and standards governed by a dominant ideology that does not value, or in extreme cases does not recognize, the norms and commitments of critical inquiry. (p. 66)

There are limitations to my methods. Legislative and institutional documents provided information regarding policies and practices related to undocumented community college students. These documents are publicly available through state and institutional websites. However, I selected which documents to review and, therefore, my analysis is limited by my access to documents and vulnerable to researcher bias. Documents may be limited in detail, as they were not created with my research questions in mind. As stated by Bowen (2009), documents should not be over-relied upon, especially as it relates to informal practices related to a vulnerable population. I analyzed any document provided directly to
me by participants to attempt to mitigate my own bias and influence on the document review process.

The interviews I conducted with community college agents were voluntary and it can be hypothesized that only those people comfortable discussing my topic volunteered. One participant said she volunteered to participate because she did not think anyone else would talk to me. When I asked why, she explained the controversies about immigration would be a barrier. Because there are so few public policies specifically regarding undocumented students, I relied on participants to explain the informal policies and practices of their institution from their perspective. Therefore, the temptation toward reductionistic conclusions must be rejected and, instead, we entertain the findings of the study for what they are, in this historical time and space and through my lens as a researcher.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

All researchers have great privilege and obligation: the privilege to pay attention to what they consider worthy of attention and the obligation to make conclusions drawn from those choices meaningful to colleagues and clients.....this expertise comes largely through reflective practice (Stake, 1995, p. 49-50).

Chapter Four presents the findings of this study. To gather information pertinent to the research questions and methodology, I conducted face-to-face interviews and analyzed documents, including web pages, related to the state and colleges represented in the study. In addition to IRB approval at Iowa State University (see Appendix C), IRB approval was sought and received from three community colleges in Iowa: Van Buren Community College, Sunrise Valley Community College, and Mission Valley Community College. Institutional Review Board approval was not sought from Newbold Community College due to only interviewing a high-level administrator. I was able to recruit the participant, Jonathan, due to a mutual contact who facilitated my request.

Interviews

Similar to Rudestam and Newton (2015), my first step in data analysis was the listening, transcribing, reading, and rereading interview transcripts and my notes during the interviews. Reflective memos supplied an opportunity to digest and ponder ideas and related events and experiences, allowing my focus on the transcripts to be on the participant’s voice and less on my reactions to and thoughts about what was said.

I created a table listing 11 preliminary patterns. Interview name and page number were listed for relevant content and specific quotes. This process provided visual organization to the connection between evidence to patterns. After I reviewed the table, I
listed each pattern on a separate note card. Then I spatially arranged the note cards on a table, moving them to consider categories, subcategories, and relationships. I utilized Saldana’s (2016) description of networks, in which categories interact in complex pathways which suggest relationships. Photos of the arrangement were taken to record the process. During this spatial arranging process, the constructs of macro, mezzo, and micro levels came to my awareness. I have considered the dynamic interrelationship of multiple contexts throughout data collection and analysis. Reflection questions I asked included, “What does this policy mean for this college? This community? What is risky about this practice that may or may not be risky for other agents or institutions? Who are the people ‘in the know?’ How does one get ‘in the know?’ Would some people prefer not to be ‘in the know?’”

After careful review of documents, transcripts, and the above-described coding practices, three themes emerged:

1) The interrelationship of community colleges, workforce development, and shifting demographics;

2) Inconsistent community college practices are carefully communicated, not captured or rewarded; and

3) Risks taken by undocumented students and their families.

Each theme and its patterns are described in detail and Figure 2 presents a summary of the themes and patterns.
Theme One: The interrelationship of community colleges, workforce development, and shifting demographics

This relationship between community colleges and workforce development is not new or novel; similarly, colleges can only serve the population of individuals seeking higher education. As the potential student population shifts, so too may the demographic make-up of college students in Iowa, especially students who seek to access low-cost post-secondary training near their homes. Three patterns were merged to form this theme. Pattern One: Education and training in demographically-shifting communities to meet workforce demands in the region; Pattern Two: A similar articulation and interpretation of the mission, vision, and values of Iowa’s community colleges in educating and training students; and Pattern Three: The role and function of community college leaders in the state of Iowa regarding local, state, and federal law and policy.

Pattern One: Workforce demands and changing communities

The relationship between community colleges, workforce development, and the state’s shifting demographics requires institutional attention. However, this theme presents dilemmas for agents of community college. The interpretation of who is the “community” appears to be a fundamental and critical philosophical question. The notion of community is also tied to the awareness of demographic shifts through the state and community college area. Jonathan, a high-level administrator, described awareness as the first step in providing open access to higher education, “What I have found in my thirty-plus years in education in Iowa, especially early on, there was in many cases a complete lack of awareness of demographic shifting going on,” specific to the growing population of minorities in the state.
He described the next step as “acknowledgement,” which leads to conversations about how to help growing populations be successful in educational settings. Through his involvement in local and national organizations, Jonathan built relationships and was accepted as an ally. Under his leadership, he described the organization as going through a “significant paradigm shift…the new paradigm has a lot more color. Early on, our focus was on our Latino/Hispanic populations, but that’s also shifted to Burmese, Sudanese, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Bosnian, the list large.” Similarly, Alicia, a mid-level administrator, stated that “every institution at any level should be very willing to help students because they have the same right as any other person in this country to obtain an education and move into a professional world or whatever their dreams are.” Implied is that a person, whether a documented citizen or not, has a right to higher education. It is critical to emphasize the humanity of immigrants instead of viewing them as a nuisance or social problem.

For example, Jonathan spoke about considering “underrepresented stakeholders” as community colleges develop policies related to students. His philosophy includes all community members, regardless of citizenship status, as stakeholders. Jonathan further described the opportunity that new residents offer to local communities and compared the notion of opportunity to that of “problem.” He stated, “This is not a problem, it is an opportunity; it’s not the future, it’s the present. It’s here and we owe it to any person who comes into this country to help provide an education for them.”

However, efforts toward access and inclusion of undocumented individuals and recent immigrants are met with varying modes and degrees of resistance. Two participants from the same institution told a similar story: some community members suggested immigrants should be kept “down there,” as in a specific town within the region. The
descriptive term of “keeping it down there” indicates the tensions that can exist as a community college serves a wide geographical area with varying demographics. The notion of “keeping it down there” suggests that immigrants are acceptable as long as within a space, place, or a contained area. While the implications of the “down there” opinion are not fully known, it is notable that the bilingual, Latino community-connected staff person provides services for the college, but at a location away from the main college campus. On the one hand, this can be viewed as a strategic placement of college staff to provide access to a community. On the other hand, keeping services separated, perhaps isolated, could have implications for greater institutional and region awareness and acceptance. The interests of the Latino community and the community college converge in a particular community within a larger community college service area.

The notion of “keeping it down there” also indicates awareness of demographic differences between Iowa’s communities and resistance to change. Diane, a mid-level administrator, stated, “We always joke around here that the only diversity we ever had here was what church people went to.” The region which she is referencing has experienced demographic changes, largely related to Latino immigration and most closely associated with the meat packing industry. It appears that institutions are willing to serve the residents of each community as long as those efforts do not complicate the other functions and identity of the college. This finding that indicates interest convergence between institutions and students – community members are served when and how it works within the system of the college.

Rebecca described the Latino community traditions of “staying close to home,” putting greater onus on the local community college and other nearby higher education institutions to reach out to Latino communities, especially with the need for “an educated
The positive economic impact of immigrants in the workforce was noted by several participants. Elaine, a mid-level administrator, described the positive economic impact immigrants have on the state and the even more significant, positive impact possible if more immigrant workers paid federal and state taxes. However, she cautioned that access to post-secondary training and education is only one step in this process. Many professions require state licensure, including the much-needed healthcare professions. The economic impact of providing education, licensure, and employment is described:

If you have an individual that all they want to do is be a nurse, and they’re in the United States and they can’t get their nursing degree, but they can take all the classes that they want, but they can’t sit for the boards and even if they sit for the boards and pass, they cannot get their license because they cannot provide proof of citizenship. And I said, wouldn’t it be great if that individual could become a nurse and in Iowa, starting salary might be around fifty to fifty-five thousand dollars a year, and that individual would be paying income tax and probably buy a house…and not only that but this individual will be serving a need that the community has. We need people in nursing and health services.

The potential for positive economic impact related to immigrants is often cited as a justification for expanding legal immigration and for immigration reform, another example of converging interests. Community colleges in Iowa provide a variety of training, much of which is specific to state and local workforce demands. This service relates to the mission of Iowa’s community colleges and the state regulations that govern community colleges.

Pattern Two: Mission, vision, and values of the community college

Community colleges are compelled to respond to Iowa’s workforce needs and shifting demographics of Iowa communities. Many participants described their awareness
and understanding of the workforce shortages and impetus for community colleges to respond to the workforce demands of their communities.

“We hear a lot about workforce, not having the skilled workforce we need, we need to educate the people who are here. Well, I hate to tell you this but some of the people who are here are undocumented.” - Diane

“If you want to talk about Future Ready Iowa and driving production and driving the economic engine, community colleges sit right in the middle of that Venn Diagram. And it shouldn’t matter what their documentation status is.” - Jack

Many administrators described a sense of obligation expectation of community colleges to respond to the workforce needs of the state, region, and local communities. The stated goal of Iowa’s Future Ready Iowa initiative is for 70% of Iowa’s working population to have a post-secondary credential by 2025 (State of Iowa, 2018). While Future Ready Iowa has received only partial funding from the state legislature, community colleges are already coordinating programming and access related to the initiative, especially in counties in which the unemployment rate is very low (Future Ready Iowa Alliance, 2017). Shawn, a mid-level administrator, described the challenge for the state’s workforce:

“So, there’s some real difficult things for this community in this state that’s graying and dying without immigration, right, and whether that’s documented or undocumented, we’re getting old and gray and we don’t have people coming in here. In that context, we really can’t figure out that our potential, our future actually lies in these people we’re trying so hard to get rid of?”

This awareness and acknowledgment of workforce needs and the local, state, and national level anti-immigrant rhetoric appears to be another dilemma. Community colleges are expected to respond to and meet the workforce needs of the local communities and state, yet the growing populations in many regions are immigrants, some who are not citizens, do not speak English, and do not easily assimilate into the traditional notion of “Iowan.” For
example, Simon described the difference in his personal and professional social systems regarding DACA and immigration-related issues:

“I would say that my personal experience has been different than what I see in higher education. I see the higher education environment has been very open and receptive and inviting and want individuals to present themselves as DACA so we can support them effectively.” This sentiment is reflected by Deena’s comment, “So if you’re here for an education, we will educate you,” and Diane’s comment, “If they graduate from high school, we’re gonna educate them.” As stated above, this is a philosophical declaration related to the agents’ understanding of the mission of Iowa community colleges. This delineation between philosophy and practice becomes increasingly salient when considering the polarizing views regarding immigration within the state and nation.

In one Iowa city, home to one of the community colleges in this study, a company proposed building a hog confinement and meat packing plant which had broad, visible support from the Iowa governor. The governor even came to the community to highlight the economic development in the rural area. According to Diane, Kathy, and Rebecca, community protests ensued. When asked what was being protested, there were different explanations. Diane perceived the protest as being related to immigration: “They couldn’t handle the type of people it would bring and our school system would be drained of resources to help them speak English.” Diane recalled that after the building of the site was stopped, the CEO publicly described the community members. She said, “I can’t remember what he called us. It wasn’t rednecks but it was pretty mean.” Kathy’s perception of the protests was different. Instead of the protests being explicitly anti-immigrant, she attributed the protests to poor communication by city leadership and a lack of transparency about the agreement made
with the company. She also described some community members being concerned about new immigrants “taking jobs away” from native Iowans. Either explanation begs questions about the response of native Iowans – a largely white populace – to potential workforce opportunities perceived to bring newcomers and “blue collar” jobs to a community. One might see this as an opportunity for interest convergence, somehow not beneficial enough for those in power.

Citizenship status does not appear to be the only salient factor in reactions to immigration. Diane, a mid-level administrator, described the college’s efforts to provide English language courses to a recently growing Puerto Rican community, primarily drawn to the area by a factory. When some of the nearly-immigrated Puerto Rican individuals applied for the college’s welding program, the employer contacted the college’s admissions department and said, “If they come to take that test, I’m firing them.” Diane’s interpretation of this threat was that the employer viewed his employees as there to work, not to get an education, which contrasts to her description of the community college, “That’s why community colleges were set up, to meet the needs of the areas in which they serve.” This anecdote also connects race, English-language acquisition, and citizenship. In this case, Puerto Ricans were viewed as “other,” not as citizens. This resonates with the notion of racialized foreignness. The newcomers to the community did not look like others in the historically white community.

Pattern Three: Community college leaders' role and function

Related to the role and function of the community college is the role and function of community college leadership. A theme that emerged was leaders’ concern about local, state,
and federal policies related to student access to higher education, extending to DACA and the related provisions comprehensive immigration reform. Jack, a mid-level administrator, described “a really delicate balance” between assisting undocumented or DACA students without having to unnecessarily draw negative attention from policymakers.

In the meantime, community college leaders must navigate complex laws and public opinions to do the work of the college. Jonathan, a high-level administrator, voiced specific concern for DACA students:

We’ve got over 700,000 DACA students in our schools that are wondering what’s gonna happen to them. So it’s hard for me to listen to them [state elected officials] talk about a workforce shortage and yet make excuses as to why we’re not breaking down barriers to educate people to help fill the workforce shortage.

Simon, a mid-level administrator in financial aid, described his concern about financial aid eligibility and the impact of piece-meal budget resolutions on financial aid rules in contrast to reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. He stated, “If [DACA enrolled] individuals are protected, if they’re a protected class, they were brought here as a young person with no fault of their own, no desire of their own, they graduated from our high schools, they’re a part of our communities, they’re planning to work and live in our community, they haven’t broken the law.” Simon also emphasized the need for the state of Iowa to address DACA if DACA is continued at the federal level so that students can be eligible for state aid as well as federal financial aid.

Several participants alluded to the shift in political rhetoric related to immigrants since the 2016 presidential race and subsequent election of Donald Trump as well as how the shift has affected higher education contexts. Despite community colleges promoting the open access nature of their institutions, Veronica reported that she experienced backlash
toward her advocacy for “new Iowans.” She described a conflict with another administrator about the display of a poster regarding Islamophobia she had posted near her office with other posters supporting students who were also new to the country. Veronica reported that she heard by word of mouth that this other administrator did not approve of her opinions. Soon after, the poster went missing. She replaced the poster, to have it taken down two more times. Concurrently, the high-level administrator to whom Veronica reports informed her that she had been “reported to the president and cabinet” for being too political on campus. It was evident that Veronica was careful in how she described these events, pausing occasionally, seeming to collect her thoughts and carefully select her words, including the term “new Iowans” instead of immigrants, refugees, or other labels.

**Theme Two: Inconsistent community college practices are carefully communicated, not captured or rewarded**

Community college practices related to undocumented students are inconsistent, neither captured nor rewarded and carefully communicated. The inconsistent practices within institutions appear to be influenced by leadership, the location of various campuses and centers, informal practices, and differing opinions on immigration-related issues. Interviewing a range of administrators and staff across different institutions brought out the intra- and inter-institutional differences. Descriptors such as “torn,” “insidiously quiet,” and “uncomfortable” were used to describe the conversations related to undocumented students. “I don’t know how to put this,” said Simon, “almost like I’m trying to avoid that conversation and avoid that pitfall,” when describing a DACA-specific resource created by the college. He added, “All it would take to make a human services and social issue to turn into a political issue is a few very opinionated individuals. And they’re absolutely entitled to
their opinion, but I’m afraid how that might be viewed at the Board of Directors’ level,” which would then affect the availability and publication of the DACA-specific resource. Upon review of the resource, this DACA webpage specifically quoted the Pomona Letter, indicating some alignment with the Pomona message in which higher education leaders proclaimed the continuation of DACA as a “moral imperative” and “national necessity” (“College and university presidents,” 2017). Simon went on, “Now, this has been shared with our administrator, you know this is something we asked permission to do. And so I just want the resources that I have available, I want to be able to maintain.” His comments indicate that while the immediate supervising administrator approved the resource, a wider audience may have brought about dissent and differing opinions. Jack, a mid-level administrator, described agreement among his colleagues and immediate supervising administrator, yet voiced concern that too much public positioning could be problematic for the president as he appeals for public and private support of the community college.

Pattern One: Processes of data collection, retention, and use

Data collection, storage, utilization, and distribution are essential to community college accreditation, funding, as well as public image. Community colleges commonly have an institutional research department, division, or employees designated as responsible for such. While personnel and structure may vary across the community colleges in this study, similarities in the processes and implications for undocumented students were found. The broadest information about data was provided by Arthur, a high-level administrator with responsibilities directly related to institutional research. He described the common indicators of student success such as retention, persistence, and completion as “lagging,” “I mean they give you a picture but they don’t tell you enough of the immediate story...we’ve got all kinds
of ways to collect data to understand the whole student experience here,” which would reflect a “more holistic view of learners.” He further described the possibilities of collecting and utilizing data about student subgroups, whether DACA students or other groups, as ways to focus more on students rather than the institutional.

When exploring the options for collecting data about undocumented or DACA students, participants described concerns about how to ask for, store, and use such information, noting risks to both students and the institution. More about risk is discussed later. Concerning process, the methods and justification varied among participants.

Rebecca, who serves as the main outreach to the Latino community, described the way information is shared and stored regarding students:

So, in our application, we have changed it so it does say undocumented, DACA, and the reason we have done that is to make sure they get in-state tuition because they were either being tagged for out of state tuition or international. So, we made that change but all the information that comes in then from that comes directly to me, it doesn't go anywhere else. So, I get the email that someone has applied that is undocumented or DACAmented so I can immediately email them the welcome email and give them information about the [specific DACA Scholarship] if they’re DACA and I can keep a file and make sure to continue to make those connections and to follow up with.

Rebecca further explained that she uses the college’s software system to log that the student has DACA status. She acknowledged, “I guess I don’t know the back side of that from the application where it sits other than it sends an email to me…nobody else uses it at this point.” She also collects the documentation which proves DACA status, “the only person who ever sees it is me. So, I don’t share it and then once we’re done with the process I shred it so that it’s not shared with anybody else.” When asked about how this process was established, she explained that she created the process, shared it with her supervisor, and, to her knowledge, hasn’t been reviewed or discussed by others at the college.
At this college, applications for the DACA-specific scholarship are reviewed and applicants interviewed by a three-person team, just as with other institutional scholarships. Kathy, another participant from the same college, explained that the goal of the interviews was “to get the answers that we needed and not to make it overwhelming or too imposing, but to get the information that we wanted to collect so we could make an informed decision.” However, both Rebecca and Kathy reported that applications for the scholarship dramatically dropped in the past year. Kathy stated, “We have some things going on at the national level [and] we ended up without applicants because of fear so it’s [the scholarship] laying low right now and I don’t know honestly where it’s at right now in regard to the coming year. Not that the commitment is not there to do it from our end just there’s so much uncertainty for the population of people that need it. They’re afraid, yeah.”

Other concerns about documentation related to the identity of DACA college students were reported. Elaine voiced caution about DACA-specific scholarships and services due to the identification that is required to deliver such services. At the time DACA was established, she and another administrator disagreed about how to promote the college to DACA students.

“We had this one provost that wanted to make a big splash in the Latino community and said, we’re gonna recruit you for DACA, we’re gonna do this and this and this, we’re gonna maintain a list, you need to get on the list, and I said time out. Look who you’ve got in Congress who is sitting on the west side of Iowa. If this Executive Order ever goes south, he has got or will get his hands on the list of all these people who have signed up. I do not want to jeopardize them. Therefore, I am not willing to promote DACA.”

Elaine further described conversations with an immigration lawyer who speculated that such a “list” would lead to eventual deportation. Elaine compared the identification and then possible maltreatment as akin to the Nazi regime, “You’re not the same color, you’re not the same religion, you don’t speak the same language, you’re not us, so you need to
These concerns informed her leadership and the practices at her institution related to undocumented students. Jack offered a similar perspective, explaining that his institution does not maintain a list of DACA students “because we intentionally don’t want to flag them.”

Pattern Two: How undocumented students pay for college

Many participants voiced concern about how undocumented students pay for college. Undocumented and DACA students qualify neither for federal financial aid nor from state aid in Iowa. Students without a Social Security number, whether undocumented or DACAmented, do not qualify for federal financial aid. Therefore, students do not have resources such as Pell Grants and federal student loans available to finance higher education. In some states, state financial aid is available, but not in Iowa (Nguyen & Serna, 2014; Education Trust, 2017). Access to state aid is linked through the Social Security number not through graduation from an Iowa high school. Therefore, Iowa’s undocumented and DACA students attend their college or university without many of the customary supports for higher education available to other students. Simon stated, “Millions of dollars of financial aid and not one went to a DACA student. Millions upon millions of dollars, like 180 million dollars since I’ve been here.”

Scholarships play a critical role in helping finance education and seem to be of particular importance to undocumented and DACA students. Some institutions provide scholarships specific to DACA students and partner with other organizations to help students access funding. In this study, these efforts varied not only by the institution but by divisions, campuses, and staff within the institution.
There appear to be two pathways for undocumented or DACA students to access institutional scholarships. First, students may have access to all available institutional scholarships if the student has enrolled, has other qualifying characteristics, and if a Social Security number is not required for consideration. Participants acknowledged that undocumented or DACA students might receive scholarships and, while the institution knows who is receiving the scholarships, the institution may not have tracked the receipt of the scholarship with the student’s identifying information, such as the presence of or absence of a Social Security number. Some administrators discussed the discretion they hold in scholarships awarding, thus potentially being able to grant scholarships to students based on the administrator’s knowledge of the student’s unique situation. There is value in knowing the “right” person at the institution.

The second way in which DACA students appear to receive institutional scholarships is through a designated DACA scholarship program. In these examples, the college and its foundation provide the criteria and structures for the awards. Some of these examples included failed or blocked efforts at scholarships as well. Jack voiced concern about a specific institutional DACA scholarship,

Acknowledging and recognizing politically, we have to realize if we came out and said we as a community college are gonna offer a scholarship to DACA students, there may be some vitriol and then next time funding cuts come down there may be some, I don’t know, but there may be some that would just say, well if you’re funding, if you're just using this money to help DACA students or undocumented students than why should, we’ll just cut the funding from you. I don’t know if anybody would be that petty but it’s possible and I don’t want to ever, I don’t want us to develop any policies that our president has to essentially explain to social conservatives who have been great allies to the community college.
In response to this concern, Jack described practices of direct communication between the agents of the college and community leaders who may collaborate on funding opportunities for students, whether institutional or community-based scholarships, but not an explicit DACA-related funding effort. Simon described a dilemma in offering an institutional scholarship for DACA students, “If you’re gonna specifically identify that you have a DACA scholarship, will the student feel comfortable raising their hand and saying, ‘I am a DACA student and, therefore, I’m applying for a specific scholarship.”

Elaine described a process that “never got traction” at her institution which she learned about from another college, that estimated family contribution (EFC) could be hand-calculated instead of using the electronic FAFSA, thereby making undocumented or DACA students eligible for need-based institutional scholarships. In this case, the foundation balked at using a hand-calculated EFC. Jonathan described a conversation he had with his institution’s foundation in which he asked the foundation to consider removing citizenship as a requirement on all scholarships. This request was also denied.

Elaine described several workaround methods to help undocumented and DACA students be eligible for more scholarships. One strategy was to identify scholarships with the criteria of “Iowa high school graduate” but did not ask for a Social Security number or citizenship status. This strategy utilized a lack of information instead of the provision of information to assist undocumented students enroll and pay for college. Influential community college agents did not overtly change or defy policy, an example of the convergence of interests between students and institutions.

The complexity of paying for college does not end there. Simon described the dilemmas for families in which parents are undocumented and/or do not speak English,
“Imagine an 18-year-old with parents who don’t speak English being able to go online and research [private] lenders. It’s just a failing process.” Even if colleges sponsor FAFSA completion nights, a common practice of community colleges with local high schools, the college often has very limited resources to offer undocumented and DACA students. Furthermore, students who are citizens but have parents who are not may be uncomfortable with the questions requested on the FAFSA including parental income. Simon described a FAFSA completion night sponsored by the college at a local high school at which a recent high school graduate learned for the first time that she was not a U.S. citizen. He described the experience as “impactful” and went on to discuss the “frustrating” lack of resources for undocumented students.

However, the barriers do not seem to block the will of community colleges agents to help however they can. Overwhelmingly, the participants in the study described efforts to assist and support undocumented students. However, the energies toward undocumented and DACA students are not consistently captured or rewarded due to the individualized and somewhat veiled nature of the efforts. Without data to track the number of students served, in what manner they are served, how often, and by whom, there is no data to support ongoing or expanded efforts. Administrators are left with anecdotal reports which may provide a partial picture of actual efforts and services by institutional agents. Simon described the challenge of tracking efforts to support DACA students financially, “We’re not able to track effectiveness so, for example, are the students graduating?” On the one hand, the lack of documented data protects students; on the other hand, students may be missing out on the available or potentially accessible resources by not identifying themselves to institutional agents. Several participants described the complexity of data collection and utilization within a college.
Arthur, a high-level administrator, described inconsistent philosophies and practices regarding what student information is collected by whom, for what purposes, how it is stored and then utilized. Jack described the dilemma of deciding how much student information is necessary versus that it is unnecessary to collect and document as well. The participants with the most student contact - Shelley, Deena, and Rebecca - all described having access to and documenting some information when working with undocumented or DACA students. These inconsistent and even contradictory approaches to data collection and retention exemplify the complexity in practice by staff and practice expectations cast by leaders.

Jack, another mid-level administrator, described efforts as “truly word of mouth” both within the college and within students’ communities. The knowledge of people and college resources appears to be vital to the ongoing access of undocumented or DACA students to college. Jack described a situation in which an undocumented student was referred to his college, but the student did not encounter the expected staff member and received an unexpected, less than welcoming response. When word of this encounter was communicated from the student to members of the Latino community, a Latino community leader contacted Jack with grave concern over how the student was treated. Jack explained how due to a staffing change, the expected front-line person was not available to the student, which then affected the student’s ability to enroll. These word-of-mouth communications fostered through trusting relationships appear to exemplify the nature of undocumented or DACA students navigating college: the interests of the college and students converge enough for community college agents to assist undocumented students.

The implications of inconsistent practices extend beyond the micro- or individual student level. Shawn, mid-level student services administrator, described how the safety of a
campus can be impacted, “In some ways I feel that having so few resources and having so few options for people that we think are undocumented actually makes us a less safe institution and a less safe community than we could be if we were handing folks into resources in the community intended for their particular purpose.” Not only does the secrecy around citizenship status impair access to higher education, but it may also impair a student’s access to other community resources, employment, housing, and supportive services. However, a network of support appears to exist if one can follow the connections. Roman stated, “The underground railroad of support is alive. You can feel it. It’s there, I just can’t put my finger on who those people are. And maybe that’s a good thing. Because at the end of the day, if I’m subpoenaed down at the government oversight, I can honestly answer I don’t know.”

Because the American system of higher education requires students to pay tuition, enrollment is inextricably linked to a means of payment. Financing higher education is a well-documented barrier to higher education already; it appears that community colleges extend resources to undocumented students as long as it is quiet enough or safe enough for students, personnel, and the institution.

Risk to the institution

Along with the risk students and their families’ experience, participants indicated that institutions and their agents also take risks as it relates to outreach and services to undocumented students. It is difficult to calculate or estimate what risks are real or imagined. However, many participants described concerns that the institution takes risks in providing support to undocumented or DACA students. Arthur, a high-level administrator, described his institution as being reactive instead of proactive, focused on the institution.
rather than the student, as an impediment to serving undocumented students. Another high-
level administrator, Roman, explained his concern about the state of Iowa, “And now I feel
like the state has entered a different place in terms of its governance of us [the community
college] and so now my fear is to really become intentional about [serving undocumented
students] means a certain amount of risk for us and the individuals we’re talking about for
lots of really good reasons.” Veronica, a mid-level administrator, identified the similarities
of this dilemma between community, state, and national levels: “I would say our institution,
much like the country right now, our institution probably needs to decide where its heart is
and how much we’re going to do for this population and we’re in a tough position right now.
The rest I don’t want to say.” Even her reluctance to say more in that moment could indicate
the perceived risk of the conversation and the perceived jeopardy in taking a public stand.
Other participants discussed the image of the community college as a factor in such
decisions, including Roman’s reference to his college’s “good citizen” role in the region,
later explaining that the institution prides itself on being non-controversial, apolitical, and
neutral.

At the state level, Senate File 481, Immigration Law Enforcement, cleared both
legislative houses and was signed by the governor on April 10, 2018 (Legislative Services
Agency, 2018). ….. According to Elaine, community college leaders were concerned about
raising concerns about the bill, “We all have DACA students, we all have undocumented
students here, we’ve welcomed them, they are citizens of Iowa, but we need to remain silent
on [the legislation] because we don’t want to lose our funds because if we lose our funds, we
can’t help them.” Jack also described his concern about how the college president may have
to explain or defend services specific to undocumented or DACA students to socially
conservative legislators. He went on to say that he felt an obligation to “protect the president” regarding the state political climate, the reliance of the community college on state funding, and the anti-immigrant stances taken by some conservative legislators. Again, this is an example of the higher education system’s reliance – and complicity – with laws and policies. Community college agents will extend assistance to undocumented students as long it does not hurt the institution and the state’s support of higher education. In other words, the interests of undocumented students converge with community colleges.

Theme 3: Risks taken by undocumented students and their families

Perhaps the most obvious yet elusive theme is that participants perceive that undocumented students and their families are afraid of being exposed, which relates to the themes described previously. Participants acknowledged that undocumented students and their families appear to be increasingly concerned with being identified since the 2016 presidential race. Undocumented college students faced challenges before 2016, but increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric and shifts in federal and state policy exacerbate realistic fears for detection and deportation. This theme includes two patterns: how undocumented students signal institutional agents and fear exposure of self and their families.

Pattern One: Signaling for assistance

Participants described students signaling administration or staff about their undocumented status. The signaling ranges from requesting to speak with a particular institutional agent and mentioning a referral source, to students dropping clues about their situation, to students overtly describing their lack of citizenship or documentation. Deena stated, “So they [undocumented students] are coming here and gonna specifically ask for
me.” Rebecca also described being the person of contact for undocumented students, being bilingual and well-connected in the local Latino community. Not only do students regularly identify to Rebecca as undocumented or DACA, but she also facilitates their consideration for an institutional scholarship designated for DACA students. She described this process of working with local high schools on enrollment and FAFSA completion events, at which students and families come for assistance. Because the high school does not need or ask for Social Security numbers, high school guidance counselors may not know a student’s citizenship status. She elaborated, “We [the student and I] have that knowing look and then I just say, ‘Oh, I’ll message you later and let you know,’ and then we have a conversation privately.” However, Rebecca described more reluctance in students to self-identify since the 2016 presidential campaign, despite a large scholarship being available to identified DACA students. At one institution, no student applied for a $3500 scholarship available only to DACA students in 2017, compared to multiple applicants in the two years prior and since the scholarship was established. Kathy described the careful balance between knowledge of DACA status and not making the scholarship application process “too overwhelming or too imposing” for students.

At another college, Jonathan described a DACA scholarship at his institution that is not awarded through the college foundation, as are most scholarships. Review of the foundation’s website revealed no mention of a DACA student-specific scholarship. Jonathan explained that applicants are identified by making “some assumptions” regarding students’ responses on the general scholarship application. Jonathan explained, “It’s a convoluted complex issue and until it’s truly addressed at the federal level we’re gonna continue to have problems.”
Another example of signaling is the clue-dropping that students may intentionally or unintentionally share to college agents. Shawn, a mid-level administrator, described an interaction with a student perceived to be undocumented:

Sometimes people come through [the office] and it’s like, ‘I work on a construction site from 8:00 pm to 5:00 am and then I come, I sleep for a couple hours and then I come to class. So that person isn’t saying, ‘I’m undocumented,’ but like actually, there are rules about working construction sites in the middle of the night.

Instead of explicitly probing about immigration status, Shawn described exploring options with the student such as working fewer hours or different employment options. However, as the conversation ensued, Shawn considered the student’s answers in the probable context of being undocumented.

The acts of signaling are in contrast to the “ignorance” described by several participants, suggesting that they are not the primary contact for undocumented students at their campus, whether by choice or chance. Roman succinctly described this as a “don’t ask, don’t tell” exchange between institutional agents and undocumented students. He further speculated:

The underground railroad of support is alive. You can feel it. It’s there, I just can’t put my finger on who those people are. And maybe that’s a good thing. Because at the end of the day if I’m subpoenaed down at the government oversight I can answer honestly, ‘I don’t know.’

Shelley apologized for her lack of information, adding that she was embarrassed she did not know more about policies and practices related to undocumented students at the college. The lack of knowledge by some community college agents is also a compelling finding. It is difficult to assess whether the lack of knowledge is deliberate ignorance or carefully calculated limited knowledge. Either way, the pathways created for undocumented students are often covert and not well-known across institutions.
Pattern Two: Students and their families afraid of being exposed

Participants described their perceptions of the risks that undocumented students and their families face when navigating higher education. Several participants noted the changes in attendance at FAFSA completion or Latino-specific recruitment events since the 2016 election. When this shift was explored through follow-up questions, participants directly linked the shift in national rhetoric about immigration to these changes.

When asked about clubs or organizations for undocumented or DACA students, Shelley stated, “There certainly isn’t a club because they’re not gonna identify themselves as a group, which would be the perfect thing for them to do to say, ‘Hey, we’ve got support here,’ but I don’t see that happening.” Recognizing the value of campus support yet need for privacy is another dilemma. The real impact on students was vividly described by Rebecca, who has a great deal of direct contact with undocumented and DACA students:

“They’re slapped in the face on a daily basis, minority students and students of color, and they hear derogatory terms said to them on a daily basis even if it’s unintentional and so that stress that they go through on a daily basis just compounds itself over and over. That’s a barrier in itself for that student moving forward.”

So how do students find support at the college? As Shelley described, “There certainly isn’t a club, because they’re not gonna identify themselves as a group, which would be the perfect thing for them to do, to say hey, we’ve got support here but I don’t see that that will happen.” The perceived risk may have impacted the applications for DACA-specific scholarships as described above - no applicants for a $3500 scholarship. Locating the safest
college agents through networking and signaling appears to be students’ method of mitigating risk. Otherwise, the relationship may be the “don’t ask, don’t tell” as described by Roman. Communication occurs where it can, or where it is permitted, when the interests of those in power converge with undocumented students.

Figure 2. Summary of Themes and Patterns
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

And so, the future feels tenuous around this and that makes me really sad because there’s so much potential, all this potential right in your hands and yet all you want to do is talk about how we’re not achieving instead of spending time cultivating the potential that’s here because it doesn’t look like we want it to, it doesn’t come with the piece of paper we desire. So, there’s some really difficult things for this community in this state that’s graying and dying without immigration, and whether it’s documented or undocumented, we’re getting old and gray and dying off if we don’t have people coming in here. In that context, we really can’t figure out that our potential, our future, actually lies in these people we are trying so hard to get rid of.

~ Shawn

This study examines the policies and practices related to undocumented students at community colleges in Iowa. The first chapter introduced the research topic. Chapter Two presented a review of the literature and the study’s theoretical framework, the interest convergence tenet of Critical Race Theory. Research methodology was outlined in Chapter 3 followed by findings in Chapter Four. Chapter 5 includes discussion of key findings using the interest convergence tenet of Critical Race Theory. Findings are compared to other literature regarding undocumented community college students. This chapter offers implications and recommendations for future research, policy, and practice. The findings of this study will be examined in the context of literature and the study’s theoretical framework with specific development related to this study’s research questions:

1. What is the legislative and political policy discourse about undocumented students in Iowa?

2. What are the institutional policies and practices regarding undocumented community college students in Iowa?

3. How do institutional policies and practices differ among community colleges in Iowa?
Theme 1: Community Colleges, Workforce Development, and Shifting Demographics

The system of higher education does not exist in a vacuum. Colleges and universities have a dynamic relationship with other social structures. Power and influence are reciprocal, yet higher education often relies on state and federal government funding with amounts varying across states and institution types. State and federal regulations also inform the policies and practices of higher education institutions. Therefore, adherence to state and federal regulations is inextricably linked to funding, even in the age of decreased public funding for higher education (Iowa Association of Community College Trustees, 2018; National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, 2012.

Education is not a neutral structure (Freire, year; Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2012). “CRT, like critical theory, emphasizes the importance of perspective and historical context in analyzing phenomenon, while claiming race is actual (not marginal) in understanding social structures and individual experience” (Castro-Salazar, 2012, p. 27). Similarly, “whiteness” is not a fact or objective state, but an interpreted identity. CRT scholars in the Obama presidential era critiqued the faith put in a post-racial society, where equality and opportunity allow anyone and everyone access to the mythical “American Dream.” Considering racial adversities in the Obama- and post-Obama era in higher education structures, while also considering the sociopolitical context, is consistent with CRT scholarship.

The workforce demands and a shrinking populace create a structural and systemic dilemma, as well as mezzo- and micro-level problems. At a state level, Iowa recognizes its need for a more skilled workforce despite a shrinking working-age population (Future Ready Iowa Alliance, 2017). To meet the needs of industry, Iowa needs more working-aged
individuals with the appropriate skills and credentials to fill the workforce needs. To the chagrin of some, the Representative Steve King to be one, Iowa’s growing population is not white, but instead, persons of color and new immigrants, documented and not documented (State Data Center of Iowa, 2017). When considering this situation with an interest convergence lens, one can identify the convergence of dominant structures goals and the goals of new Iowans. Community colleges, as described by Jack, a mid-level administrator, sit at the “center of the Venn Diagram” of this interest convergence. To fill the workforce demands, Iowa needs more skilled workers. The growing population of college-going students in Iowa are from a minority background; for Iowans to gain skills and credentials as identified by Future Ready Iowa, colleges and universities must be able to serve students (Iowa Student Aid, 2018).

Pattern One: Workforce demands and changing communities

Workforce development appears to be one intersection of legislative and political discourse related to undocumented students in Iowa. Several participants specifically linked the barriers undocumented students face to the workforce shortages in the state, an example of a systemic dilemma that inhibits access and completion of a post-secondary credential as well as the workforce development declared critical for the state. While colloquial, the notion of, “You can’t have it both ways,” seems to apply here. The state of Iowa’s workforce needs is well-documented and widely accepted by the range of political and social perspectives. Findings indicate that the proclamations of workforce development by political leaders could be short-sighted in their consideration of who might be the Iowans filling the workforce gaps. However, this is less obvious when there is a higher priority placed on what
is often called “the rule of law,” or prioritizing immigration enforcement above other social or political concerns.

An interest convergence conceptual framework provides a lens through which to make sense of this seemingly contradictory policies. The interests of legislators and, perhaps, their constituents, do not converge enough with the interests of undocumented students to emphasize the social values in Núñez and Holthaus (2017), specifically, economic development. Furthermore, Castro-Salazar & Bagley (2012) describe this dilemma, “Undocumented immigrants’ main obstacle is not their attachment to divergent cultural values, but structural, legal, and institutional constraints combined with racial prejudice” (p. 103).

Iowa’s shifting demographics converge with workforce needs and the role of the community college in responding to those needs. If there is agreement that the Iowa workforce needs to be developed, if community colleges are one of the primary systems involved in workforce training, and if the only growing population in the state are immigrants, it might seem obvious that immigrants, whether documented or not, will help fill the state’s workforce gaps. However, the perceptions of immigrants as “foreign” or “other,” such as the Puerto Rican workers described by – complicate perceived foreignness appears to be a factor in Iowa. If a person is perceived as foreign, even if from Puerto Rico, what does that mean for other immigrants of color who do not speak English as their first language? In this case, the social identity of whiteness appears to impact both workplace and educational structures (Solórzano, et al., 2005). A related concept is racialized foreignness, particularly relevant in the context of a historically white community (Burdsey, 2013; Dhamoon & Abu-Laban, 2009; Kramer, 2018). Beyond the community-level reaction, national level rhetoric
also racializes foreignness. President Trump’s racialization of immigrants is a continuation of earlier U.S. immigration policies and resonates with the view of Puerto Ricans as “other” instead of citizens of the United States (Kramer, 2018). This also relates to the question of who is a stakeholder or a community member and how community colleges respond to the community norms and values.

Pattern Two: Mission, vision, and values of the community college

Understanding why Iowa’s community colleges are affected by workforce demands and demographic shifts is critical in the analysis of this study’s findings. Iowa’s community colleges system was established by the 1965 Merged Area Schools Act, evolving from vocational schools and junior colleges originally operated by K-12 school districts (Varner, 2014). The mission of the community college broadened from vocational training to include transfer programs and continuing/community education, leading to the designation as “comprehensive community colleges” (p. 108). Iowa’s community colleges offer this range of educational opportunities as well as high school equivalency programs, developmental education, distance education, and continuing education as required by state licensing boards. In 1983, legislation linked Iowa community colleges to state efforts at economic development. Increasing numbers of partnerships between community colleges and local industry ensued, leading to a current-day strong connection between state economic development, business and industry, and the local community college. Iowa Code Section 260C.1 currently regulates community college functions.

It can be easy to generalize the work of community colleges across the state, but it is evident that each institution’s mission, vision, values, as well as policies and practices, are
inextricably linked to the community served by the college. While an outside surveyor might assume Iowa is a monolithic state, the state’s cities, counties, and communities present a range of historical experiences and cultural norms. Adjacent communities can differ sharply from one another necessitating an institution like a community college to have multiple centers or campuses, offering different programs, serving different student subpopulations, and employing a range of practices in so doing.

Findings indicate that community colleges and, specifically, agents of the community college, have found ways to work around some of the barriers facing undocumented students. Whether or not this is because of workforce development needs, an interpretation of the mission of the community college, and personal value system is unknown. For example, Alicia described her understanding of the community college as “here to support any student.” She went on to explain that such support is “different than saying if the institution is willing to bend backwards to help them.” What constitutes support versus “bending backwards” can be widely interpreted, but suggests that institutions and their agents attempt to align actions with the mission, vision, and values of the community college while also navigating local, state, and national forces.

An example of institutional flexibility is the finding that some community colleges in Iowa already offer in-state tuition to undocumented or DACA students if the student is an Iowa high school graduate, even though state law does not explicitly offer in-state tuition to undocumented or DACA students. Using high school graduation or HiSET completion as the criteria, while not stated explicitly in college policy, provides an opportunity for Iowa’s community colleges to be more accessible to undocumented and DACA students and, thereby, potentially increases the skilled workforce in the state. These findings are consistent
with the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good’s conclusion, “educators try to act responsibly within a treacherous set of pressures” including state and local attitudes and complex federal and state laws (2012, p. 4).

Pattern Three: Community college leaders’ role and function

This study’s participants included community college leaders as well as several non-administrative staff. Findings indicated that some leaders assume a role or function specific to serving undocumented or DACA students. Higher education leaders must navigate the political realms in order to advocate for policies supportive of post-secondary education and their college, programs, or students. Whether through formal or informal means, Iowa’s community colleges actively lobby the state government for support (IACCT, 2018). The Iowa Association of Community College Trustees (IACCT) listed three 2019 priorities: increasing the state general aid to community colleges, allowing community colleges to ask for more local community support, and workforce training. At a national level, two advocacy bodies, American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) speak to issues related to DACA students. For example, the AACU’s website states, “Access and diversity remain cornerstones of our collective mission” (American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2018, para 4). Two of the three legislative priorities, Access, Affordability, and Value and Campus Climate: Supportive Learning Environments refer to increasing access and providing supportive learning environments for a diverse student body. Similarly, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) offers policy statements and advocacy for the continuation of DACA, the passing of a DREAM Act to comprehensively reform the immigration process,
and reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (AACC, 2018). These initiatives include simplified FAFSA process and eligibility for DREAM Act students.

In the meantime, community college leaders must navigate complex laws and public opinions to continue the work of the college. Jonathan, a high-level administrator, voiced specific concern for DACA students:

We’ve got over 700,000 DACA students in our schools that are wondering what’s gonna happen to them. So it’s hard for me to listen to them [state elected officials] talk about a workforce shortage and yet make excuses as to why we’re not breaking down barriers to educate people to help fill the workforce shortage.

Jack, a mid-level administrator, described “a really delicate balance” between assisting undocumented or DACA students without having to draw negative attention from policymakers unnecessarily. Leaders must calculate their role in advocacy toward access to higher education and workforce training in the midst of this jungle of contrarian policies and opinions. Jonathan described a focus on “making a difference at the grassroots level” instead of “fighting battles at the federal and state level.” An interest convergence framework points out that leaders’ calculation of risk and benefit may be tied to their perceived vulnerability and experience as a part of dominant, oppressive structural systems.

Perhaps no story so aptly sums up these confounding dilemmas as Shawn’s description of a visit to a rural Iowa county jail for a leadership class. The county jail primarily housed federal prisoners and the federal payment for housing federal prisoners is what made the jail financially possible for the county and provided much-needed jobs. When asked what sorts of serious crimes the federal prisons were held on, the correction officer replied that most are detained for immigration violations. The officer described the jail as a calm place, with the most coveted privilege in the jail being the library. Shawn reflected:
I mean it’s just so awful and you know in that context I just think of our potential as a community and a state is sitting in jail fighting for a library. And I’m an educator and my enrollment’s down. It doesn’t add up.

Community college leaders concerned about declining enrollment may seek students from previously “undesirable” groups. Elaine suggested that Iowa will need to engage populations who, in the past, were excluded from those most recruited into the workforce and college, in order to meet the state’s workforce needs. Similar to Jones’s 2018 article on efforts colleges are making toward incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, the interests of institutions to survive may converge with previously disregarded groups of potential students.

Concern about how to make higher education more accessible to new Iowans has been debated in the Iowa legislature. Some state legislators demonstrated support for offering in-state tuition to undocumented or DACA students, Representative Ako Abdul-Samad (D-Des Moines) introduced HF 2192, The IOWA ACT, (Iowa Workforce Opportunities Act) in the 2011-12 legislative session. Described as a state DREAM Act, the bill proposed that undocumented students in Iowa be eligible for in-state tuition if they graduated from high school or obtained the HiSET, attended an Iowa public high school for five years, and commit to becoming a citizen as soon as possible. The bill stalled in subcommittee. HF 27, a similar bill introduced in January 2017 by three Democrats in the Iowa House, also stalled in committee (State of Iowa, 2017). The participants in this study indicated that community colleges already do this, begging the question of what difference such legislation would practically make. However, access to in-state tuition is available due to the individual agents of the community college who interpret criteria favorably for undocumented students. Once again, interests converge: if in-state tuition entices potential students, institutions benefit
from the state support and tuition dollars the student brings. In-state tuition, while cheaper than out-of-state rates, is better than no tuition dollars at all.

**Theme Two: Inconsistent community college practices are carefully communicated, not captured or rewarded**

Literature established the confounding local, state, and federal policies that impact how colleges serve undocumented students. Likewise, findings from this study indicate that community college practices related to undocumented students are inconsistent, not captured or rewarded, and carefully communicated. This theme is consistent with previous research which explains and analyzes the confusing context in which colleges attempt to serve undocumented students (National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, 2012; Valenzuela, et al., 2015; uLEAD Network, n.d.).

Most of the participants in this study described a pro-undocumented student position, some more overtly than others. Alicia, a mid-level administrator, stated, “Every institution at any level should be very willing to help students because they have the same right as any other person in this country to obtain an education and move into a professional world or whatever their dreams are.” Implied in this statement is that a human being, whether a documented citizen or not, has a right to higher education. Considering who possesses rights is not an uncontentious notion, especially when considering the 13th and 14th Amendments and immigration policies throughout U.S. history. The nation’s bestowed rights to its citizens are not identical to human rights.

The broad interpretation of who is a student or an Iowan, or who can be a student or an Iowan, is used by some community college agents to extend access to Iowa’s undocumented students. However, a limited interpretation, whether due to the “rule of law”
rhetoric or another reason, could withdraw opportunity currently existing for undocumented college students. While no participant in this study indicated such a perspective, it is entirely plausible that more anti-immigrant or xenophobic views are held by people connected to community colleges, whether staff, faculty, administrators, board members, or community stakeholders. However, this study leaves those voices unrepresented. These unheard voices beg questions about the veiled nature of racism and xenophobia that exists in social structures. Individuals holding views that may be contrary to traditional values of higher education may be less likely to voice such opinions. Similarly, the coded term of “new Iowan” arose during the research process, perhaps indicative of intentional phrasing conveying inclusion by community college agents. For example, does “new Iowan” include only documented immigrants, refugees, or immigrants of color? I did not explore the term during the interviews, but the coded language of “new Iowans” is notable in the context of racist and xenophobic rhetoric.

Pattern One: Processes of data collection, storage, and usage

Colleges collect, store, and utilize data about students to conduct the business of education and to meet state, federal, and accrediting body requirements. Arthur described how community college leaders, even those within the same institution, may hold discordant views about how, why, and for what purpose colleges use data. Andrade (2017) recommended higher education institutions seek to understand undocumented students’ experiences, modify classroom practices, and provide campus protections. However, anti-immigrant legislation may prevent such supports. Iowa Senate File 481, signed into law in April 2018 and effective July 1, 2018, mandated city and county officials comply with
federal officials in immigration enforcement (Pfannenstiel, 2018; State of Iowa, 2018a). While the law stops short of compelling campus authorities to do so, enforcement may further complicate relations between the immigrant community and law enforcement, whether on or near a college campus. Several participants voiced concern that legislators may become savvier about how to affect college policies and practice including Roman and Elaine, whom both noted how state governance of community colleges could prevent colleges from intentionally serving undocumented students, placing additional regulations on citizenship questions, or restricting scholarship awards to U.S. citizens only. Jack and Roman both voiced concern that data about undocumented students could be acquired for “sinister” purposes.

Pattern Two: How students pay for college

Access to federal financial aid is a critical barrier for undocumented and DACA college students. As Simon stated, “Millions of dollars of financial aid and not one went to a DACA student. Millions upon millions of dollars, like 180 million dollars since I’ve been here.” In FY 2017, Iowa funded 25,311 scholarships and grants to college students totaling $66,596,710 (Iowa College Aid, 2018). An increasing number of Iowa high school seniors completed the FAFSA by June 2017 (Iowa College Aid, 2017). Due to state law, undocumented and DACA students were excluded from this state aid. On a national scale, 2016-2017 estimated financial aid estimated $250.7 billion, over half in the form of student loans for undergraduate students (College Board, 2017). As of 2014-15, a first-time full-time student received an average of $3,470 at public two-year institutions; average institutional grants averaged $260 per student. Federal aid increased while state aid decreased for students
between 2004-05 and 2014-15. Therefore, even financing community college is a disproportionate and inequitable experience for undocumented and DACA students, reinforcing the value of citizenship to receive benefits from the federal and state government.

Community college agents are able to offer scholarships to DACA students either formally or informally. The lack of FAFSA completion complicates scholarship eligibility, so community college agents must be resourceful in other means of calculating need. Without scholarships, DACA students would be even less likely to afford college. Elaine described a proposed bill that was discussed in the Iowa legislature that would restrict the distribution of institutional scholarships to U.S. citizens only, which would command exclusion of DACA and undocumented students.

Pattern Three: Risk to the institution

Higher education institutions are structures influenced by unique historical, social, and political factors. The system of higher education in the United States is connected to federal, state, and local policies, as well as demographic shifts. Many participants indicated concern – or fear – related to their institution’s public positions and practices related to undocumented or DACA students. Institutions and their agents face dilemmas regarding undocumented and DACA students. Elaine described a conversation with another community college administrator in Iowa about Senate File 481, the law that requires Iowa law enforcement agencies to comply with federal immigration law and prohibiting local governments from discouraging the enforcement of federal immigration law:

He said, I understand, we all have DACA students, we all have undocumented students here, we’ve welcomed them, they are citizens of Iowa, but we need to remain silent on [Senate File 481] because we don’t want to lose our funds because if we lose our funds, then we can’t help them.
Elaine did not agree with being silent on Senate File 481, describing the state government apparent philosophical disconnect between needing to fill state workforce shortages yet being unwelcoming toward immigrant communities, the only growing population in the state.

Differing positions among college leaders and stakeholders influence institutional policy and practice. With the diversity in opinion about immigration throughout the state, institutional policies are affected by the local communities in which colleges reside. Not only do institutional policies and practices differ among community colleges in Iowa, but within colleges. There appear to be many factors in these inconsistencies. First, the nature of the community college service area, multiple campuses, and centers within the service area, and the uniqueness of the towns, cities, and counties in which those centers or campuses are located. The notion of “keeping it down there” also indicates awareness of demographic differences between Iowa’s communities and resistance among some communities to welcome new Iowans. On the other hand, it appears that institutions are willing to serve the residents of each community as long as those efforts do not complicate the other functions and identity of the college. This reminds me of Shawn’s description of the institution’s “insidiously quiet” disposition related to undocumented and DACA students, a finding that indicates interest convergence between institutions and students – students are served when and how it works within the system of the college. Beyond just interest convergence, the theoretical frame of racial fortuity is also useful: efforts to advance the interests of people of color are advanced when the interests of White individuals are also served and, if the latter stops, so will the former (Bell, 2004).

According to the literature, post-secondary institutions should have clear, visible policies related to undocumented students to prevent isolation and stigmatization
(Valenzuela, et al., 2015). Findings of this study identify many barriers to clear and visible policies; the barriers are complex and multi-systemic. This lack of clarity appears to be related to fear – either the risk to the institution, to students, or both. If the perceived risk to the institution supersedes the will to serve undocumented and DACA students, would Iowa’s community college stake a pro-student stance? Intra-institutional tensions were also described by participants, including a recognition that personal values and beliefs regarding immigration may affect professional choices and practices. When practice is not policy, and when there is inconsistency throughout an organization, community college agents less inclined to assist undocumented/DACA students can do just that – minimal, nothing, or even subversive efforts.

Furthermore, community college administrators take professional risks as they take potentially controversial stances related to students. High-level leaders in this study recognized that their professional identities affect the institution, including relationships with the community, legislators, business and industry, and private donors. When community members with power, influence, and resources might disapprove of a college practice related to a group like undocumented/DACA students, institutions may experience a two-sided coin akin to racial fortuity – does the institution sacrifice core values in order to access much-needed resources controlled by those in power?

**Theme 3: Risks taken by undocumented students and their families**

The pursuit of higher education leads undocumented and DACA students, as well as their families, to take carefully navigated risks, especially in the increased open hostility of the Trump era. The experiences of undocumented and DACA students described in the
literature resonate with the perceptions of community college agents in this study.

Community colleges strategically place resources, including staff persons, bridging the students and institution despite the institutional and systemic barriers as well as local, state, and national anti-immigrant rhetoric, akin to the social navigation within a potentially hostile climate described by Muñoz and Maldonado (2012).

Pattern One: Signaling for assistance

Literature indicates that navigating higher education is fraught with challenges for many subpopulations, including historically underserved groups, minorities, immigrants, and first-generation students (Quaye, Griffin & Museus, 2015; Renn & Reason, 2013). Undocumented students face barriers due to political and social environments yet demonstrate resistance and resilience (Jimenez-Arista & Korg-Ljungberg, 2017). Students signal their citizenship status to carefully selected community college agents who are accessible to students, whether placed there intentionally by the college or not. Furthermore, findings from this study indicate that members of Latino and immigrant communities appear to know safe people and pathways in colleges and share this information within their community to support one another. When this system breaks down, as described by Jack, these failings are communicated back through the community and to the college, similar to the confusion-provoking administrative inconsistencies described by Neinhusser (2014). This finding supports the influence of institutional agents’ validation of undocumented and DACA students (Andrade, 2017; Linares & Muñoz, 2011; Valenzuela, et al., 2015). This, too, appears to be an example of convergence, when the interests of new Iowan communities and the community college converge to provide a pathway for college access, leading to student enrollment, completion, and another credential-earner in the state.
The other side of signaling is the decision not to signal, akin to Roman’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” description of interactions with undocumented students. Community college agents may be allowed or encouraged by the institution to “be in the know” while other agents maintain relative ignorance, whether by intention or by circumstance. Undocumented students are presented with a dilemma: to access assistance and support available to them, they may have to reveal a part of their identity which jeopardizes their individual and familial safety. If the student is undocumented and does not signal, the student may miss out on available support and assistance by community college agents and institutional resources, such as scholarships. Hernandez, et al. (2010) stated, “Enrolling in college as an undocumented immigrant often means living a life with two identities. On campus the students have no obvious insignia conspicuously declaring their citizenship status, and most often they do not disclose this information with higher educators” (p. 67).

Pattern Two: Students and their families afraid of being exposed

Signaling is necessary because of the risk faced by undocumented students and families. The increased fear among immigrants, especially immigrants who are not white, has only increased since the 2016 presidential race. The delusion of a post-racial society no longer veils the vitriolic rhetoric sweepingly directed toward immigrants. The presidency of Barack Obama did not assuage the CRT and other critical scholars, as Ladson-Billings (1999) suggested. Between federal policies such as the separation of children from parents at the southern border and seemingly casually pitched xenophobic statements by presidential and congressional leaders, being an immigrant, let alone an undocumented immigrant of color, is precarious on a daily basis. In a state like Iowa, where jobs for immigrants and new Iowans have been available, families making Iowa their new home experience the dangers of
identification, separation, detainment, and deportation. For immigrants and their families to access the opportunities available in the state, post-secondary training and education provide more employment and economic benefit. However, with every step toward achievement and attainment, the risks of such must be carefully weighed. Institutions cannot resolve the genuine risks inherent in being an undocumented student, yet the findings of this study indicate that some community college agents possess the influence and will to assist students, as long as such assistance is worth the risk. The dynamic relationship between the risk when signaling and the risks institutions and their agents take in outreach and responsiveness resonates with Bell’s concept of racial fortuity (Bell, 2004). Henderson (2012) explained:

Bell’s concept of racial fortuity presumes that every remedy that ostensibly addresses or removes barriers to racial equality is the fortuitous result of a concomitant majority interest in the same remedy. The fortuity principle, however, goes further: It posits that wherever interest convergence results in an effective racial remedy, that remedy will be abrogated at exactly the point where it is seen to threaten white hegemony (p. 15).

If I were to edit this quote by inserting the findings of this study, it might read:

Bell’s concept of racial fortuity presumes that every remedy that ostensibly addresses and removes barriers to undocumented students accessing higher education is the fortuitous result of the concomitant interest in the institution and its agents in the same remedy. The fortuity principle, however, goes further: It posits that wherever the interests of undocumented students and colleges converge in an effective remedy, that remedy will be abrogated at exactly the point where it is seen to threaten the institution, in which white hegemony persists.

Implications for Future Research

Future research opportunities abound. As Iowa’s working-age population shrinks and the immigrant population grows, higher education’s response should be examined. The impact of the state’s Future Ready Iowa initiative on post-secondary completion can also be
investigated. The role of the community college in Iowa is unique from private and public four-year universities and therefore, research specific to these institutions and comparative case studies would lend insight into how the systems of higher education differ in this era of declining enrollment and state funding. Dual enrollment – the concurrent enrollment of high school students in college – could be also be researched regarding to undocumented students.

Policies and practices within Iowa high schools as it relates to the dual enrollment of undocumented high school students in college-credit classes could shed insight into the ways educational structures limit or extend access to post-secondary education.

Case study or ethnographic work would also provide a deeper dive into a particular college in which more in-depth interviewing, observations and document review leads to a richer understanding of the experience of undocumented/DACA students. For example, Chen & Rhoads (2016) utilized an ethnographic case study to understand staff and faculty allies to undocumented students at a large public university in California. Lopez (2007) examined the experiences of college-ready undocumented high school students using critical race theory and Latino critical theory ethnography. Ethnographic methods were also used to examine the experiences of undocumented immigrants in Vetter (2007). Institutions with more overt efforts at serving undocumented students, such as specific DACA or Dreamer scholarships, could be compared to those who do not.

Other research could also focus on the experience of leadership in decision-making and legislative advocacy. Upper-level administrators appear to carefully calculate their professional risk related to advocacy for undocumented students; a more in-depth examination of the “why” and “how” of high-level administrators could provide a richer understanding of the dilemmas faced by administrators. Further examination could identify
similarities and differences between administrators who differ by gender, race, ethnicity, or other social identities.

As it relates specifically to Iowa, a more intensive analysis of community colleges and other higher education institutions located within the district of U.S. Congressman Steve King could accentuate the dilemma of anti-immigrant rhetoric with the immigrant presence. As previously noted, Iowa’s electoral votes went for Obama in 2008 and 2012, but Trump in 2016 (Murphy, 2016). The political shifts and divides of the state could be examined with implications for institutional, local and state policy.

Qualitative inquiry requires researchers to listen to the voices of participants, and no voice deserves greater attention than undocumented students’ and their families. Ethical research must consider the risk to participants and the process of IRB may be difficult to acquire at present. However, research that examines the experience of undocumented/DACA students in Iowa will inform higher education leaders about policies and practices that benefit students, instead of resting on the perception of benefit. Listening to and learning from the counterstories of marginalized persons provide alternatives to the dominant narrative associated with policy (Metcalf, 2015).

Research from sociological, economic, historical, and political science perspectives could examine the broader phenomenon of 21st-century immigration into the state of and develops the narrative of Dreamers. As time goes on, examining the sociocultural experiences of undocumented/DACAmented individuals in Iowa during the Trump era is also a rich opportunity.

Researcher positionality informs a study’s conceptual framework and I acknowledge taking the ambitious challenge of being a white scholar utilizing CRT and interest
convergence. Critical race scholarship does not just critique the status quo but also utilizes the critique to mobilize awareness and change. However, telling the stories of the oppressed does not necessarily activate empathy and change. Empathy is aspirational, and it is easy for a white scholar to fall into the empathic fallacy, seeking out a narrative that resonates with one’s own cultural norms (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). The lens of interest convergence provided opportunity to critically analyze the policies and practices of institutions in hopes that the findings bring awareness and lead to change in higher education policy and practice.

The lens of racial fortuity also provides an opportunity to utilize interest convergence and expand to consider what involuntary sacrifices students make for access into higher education. Bell (2004) described the two sides of silent covenants: one side, interest convergence; and the second side, involuntary racial sacrifice. This two-sided coin is racial fortuity. As applied to undocumented or DACA students, racial fortuity would provide a lens through which not only interest convergence is examined, but also the sacrifices that undocumented and DACA students make when attempting to access higher education. Bell (2004) wrote, “Racial policy actions may be influenced, but are seldom determined, by the seriousness of the harm blacks are suffering” (p. 71). Sometimes, people of color are the fortuitous beneficiaries, or incidentally positive affected, by policy. Furthermore, white individuals can also be fortuitous beneficiaries. This study’s findings indicate a parallel to how undocumented students encounter the community college in Iowa and the benefits incidentally received by students and by community college agents who serve them.

Further exploration should also consider the voices of undocumented and DACA students to more thoroughly understand their counterstories and experiences. Salisbury’s (2018) qualitative case study could serve as a model to replicate a critical race methodology
using racial fortuity to examine educational opportunities for undocumented students. In this study, high school students of color were found to sacrifice culturally relevant educational experiences due to the school’s improvement efforts. As Iowa’s community colleges continue to focus on success, workforce development, and meeting enrollment goals, further study could highlight how students of color may be third-party beneficiaries in processes intended to advance opportunity and access.

Examining the experiences of undocumented/DACA students in Iowa using an ecological perspective is also valuable. For example, Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco (2005) investigated how motivation, parental support, and peer support influenced the success of first-generation minority students. Many undocumented students are also first-generation students and institutions. The experience of being a first-generation, undocumented, community college student in Iowa is unexamined in scholarly research. Utilization of the diverse learning environments model, as in Shim & Perez (2018), would further examine the dynamic between individual, institutional, policy, and sociohistorical contexts.

The socioemotional and academic experiences of undocumented students in Iowa could be further explored as in Hernandez, et al. (2010) and Pérez, et al., (2010). Validation theory, as used by Andrade (2017), could also provide a framework for research that broadens understanding of the role of higher education faculty, staff, and administrators. A specific replication of Andrade’s (2017) study would shed significant light on the Trump-era experiences of undocumented students in Iowa. A multicultural development lens could be applied to explore faculty engagement and curriculum, as in Doran & Singh (2018). Such a study would be especially compelling at the larger Hispanic-serving institutions in Iowa.
Implications for Institutional Policy and Practice

A study about policies and policies inevitably offers implications for their future iterations. It is essential to include the critical lens not just when analyzing current policies and practices, but when envisioning what’s next. “Repositioning the role of policy studies to that of interpretation and interrogation instead of consultation provides researchers with a new voice with which to talk to policymakers” (Metcalfe, 2015, p. 221). A critical lens coupled with data about the experiences and outcomes of undocumented students can inform critical policy shifts for Iowa’s post-secondary institutions and workforce development efforts. For example, the socioemotional and academic experiences of undocumented students in Iowa could be explored with implications for student services policy and practice as in Hernandez, et al. (2010) and Pérez, et al., (2010). A deeper understanding of undocumented students’ social and cultural wealth and how higher education systems can assist students in maximizing those resources could inform the policies and practices throughout Iowa and beyond.

Iowa does not have an in-state tuition policy (ISRT) for undocumented students. ISRT influences odds of enrollment by 3.069 for Hispanic students and 2.025 for Asian students (Education Trust, 2017). Furthermore, Dream U.S., a non-profit organization which provides scholarships and support for DACA students, reported 100 percent of all scholarship awardees persisted through the first year with an average grade point average of 3.57 (Education Trust, 2017). The majority of undocumented community college students studied were on track to graduate within three years, and 46% of the 2014-15 community college graduates completed a bachelor’s degree (Education Trust, 2017). These findings indicate the value of ISRT as well as comprehensive federal policy for undocumented
students to access higher education. This presents Iowa and its higher education institutions with a data-driven policy shift to provide in-state tuition and access to scholarships to the state’s undocumented students.

The findings of this study include the risk to individuals and institutions. Institutions are comprised of people, converging the risk to the college with the risk to community college agents. It is likely that institutions will continue to provide levels of support to DACA students (specifically DACA and not undocumented, as DACA conveys some sort of “legal” status) in accordance with degrees of acceptance or ambivalence by stakeholders and state policymakers. However, should federal, state, or local policies further restrict college access to DACA and undocumented students, institutions and their agents will be forced to choose a course of action, dependent on the will of those in power: 1) overtly comply with restrictive policies while providing covert access points to undocumented students, 2) comply with restrictive policies and also restrict the informal practices which currently provide supports to undocumented students; 3) openly resist more restrictive policies and attempt to increase access – or provide sanctuary – to undocumented students; or 4) openly adopt the restrictive policies and then investigate and squelch any institutional practices providing access and support to undocumented students. Institutions and their leaders must consider what is worth the risk – formally or symbolically – to uphold the mission and values of the community college. I wonder if the already racialized structures of higher education will modify their espoused values if the federal law becomes increasingly racist and xenophobic.

The findings of this study also indicate that despite institutional policies, community college agents may help undocumented students according to their values or their perceptions of the values of higher education. It is difficult to assess the degree of risk assumed by the
participants, but those who volunteered for this study were interested enough to speak to the topic. An anonymous survey of policy-influencing community college agents may have yielded different results. At this point, practices appear to be informal and person-dependent, vulnerable to the positioning and employment of certain people. If those individuals were to no longer work at the institution, undocumented students and their advocates would need to seek out new allies for support.

This study found Iowa’s community college agents to be, at the least, sympathetic to the needs and experiences of DACA students and other new Iowans. Muñoz and Maldonado (2012) recommended that post-secondary educators and administrators pay attention to the needs and experiences of their diverse student population that “both shape and are shaped by contemporary configurations of inequality in the USA” (p. 311). With demographic shifts in motion and statewide recognition of workforce needs, perhaps the fog of anti-immigrant and racist ideologies will fade, making the opportunity sweepingly apparent to even those who might prefer the notion of a “Whiter” Iowa. This is an opportunity for leaders to not only advocate for the needs of students within the institution but also for local communities. This leadership may be expensive in the face of anti-immigrant and xenophobic ideologies, yet this study compels educational leaders to know who they are and what they want to stand for, mindful of their legacy and institution’s footprint on Iowa’s history.
CHAPTER SIX: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

How can scholars reduce the risk of becoming estranged from themselves and the world they seek to document, explain, and advance? As my own study suggests, adopting a critical approach may enable a better balance of sense and sensibility, allowing for mediation of the dynamic tension between scholarship and self (Chang, 2015, p.55).

This study examined policies and practices related to undocumented students at community colleges in Iowa. Chapter One introduced the research topic; Chapter Two presented a review of the literature and the study’s theoretical framework, the interest convergence tenet of Critical Race Theory. Chapter 3 outlined the research methodology of the study followed by findings in Chapter Four. Chapter 5 included a discussion of key findings using the interest convergence tenet of Critical Race Theory and relevant literature regarding undocumented students as well as implications and recommendations for future research, policy, and practice. This final chapter is an autoethnographic exploration of my experience as a white female scholar utilizing Critical Race Theory to study policies and practices related to undocumented students.

This chapter is a synthesis of analytic memos, reflective journal entries, and conversations during my research. This chapter’s headings are quotes intended to capture the broad themes.

“Why Undocumented Students?”

When asked why I decided to study policies and practice related to undocumented students in Iowa, I often paused and stammered out an awkwardly-worded explanation. I am personally quite distant to the immigrant experience; I do not have close friends or family who are directly impacted by U.S. immigration policy and processes. However, my
professional experiences in social work practice and higher education exposed me to a range of children, individuals, and families affected by immigration, including separation, deportation, language acquisition, and the social stigma associated with being perceived as “other” in a mostly white state. It is this “knowledge with distance” that I found compelling - bringing into the research my basic understanding of the debates related to immigration, particularly unauthorized immigration, and the experiences of new Iowans. When I was in the deciding stage of the dissertation process, I felt confident that I wanted to focus on the experiences of subgroups historically underserved by higher education or for whom structural barriers limit access and opportunity. Part of this interest stemmed from my concern for social justice, rooted in my personal values, professional social work background, and work in the community college. It was also important to me to incorporate a systems perspective in any research, which also resonates with my social work background, to more fully understand the complex dynamics of human experience. I not only wanted to investigate and understand the experiences of students, but also analyze the systemic and structural influences on the experience of these students in higher education, specifically in Iowa.

Early in my research, I read Castro-Salazar and Bagley’s *Navigating Borders: Critical Race Theory Research and Counter History of Undocumented Americans* (2012) and began to consider how this could be applied to educational contexts. Castro-Salazar and Bagley wrote, “Undocumented immigrants’ main obstacle is not their attachment to divergent cultural values, but structural, legal, and institutional constraints imbued with racial prejudice” (p. 103). This quote led me to the question, “What does this look like in higher education in Iowa?” even though Iowa is not known to be a state with a large immigrant
population. Even if the population of undocumented or DACA students is not large enough to be compelling to other researchers, I wanted to know more about their experiences. As a community college faculty member, I have interacted with many students and am confident that some were not documented or were DACAmented. While I’ve had only one student specifically reveal this to me, I wanted to honor my students’ experiences in the community college and, moreover, their experience as human beings in the world.

If I could have previewed the future with a crystal ball in the spring of 2017, I would have reconsidered my selection of undocumented students as the subject of my study. The historical and socio-cultural knowledge I acquired writing my dissertation proposal did not prepare me for the coming tidal wave of negative public rhetoric, federal policy, and practice shifts, as well as state and local positions (or lack thereof) related to immigrant communities in the last 18 months. I can attribute some of my naiveté to a lack of thorough knowledge of (or belief in) xenophobia and racism in the United States, from which I have been largely shielded due to being white and living in predominantly white places. However, the more I learned about immigrant families and students, the harder it was to hear or read the discourse about them.

“If You’re Going to Use Critical Race Theory, You Have to Do It Well.”

I felt both fear and excitement at the guarded permission given by my Major Professor to explore using Critical Race Theory and its tenet of Interest Convergence. It almost felt too easy to choose a theoretical framework with which I was already comfortable and familiar. I felt more challenged and inspired by using a social justice framework that required stretching on my part. My doctoral studies exposed me to a range of commonly-
used theoretical or conceptual frameworks for the study of higher education. Several frameworks commonly used in social science research, including social capital theory (Ortega, 2011) and ecological theories (Garibay, Herrera, Johnston-Guerrero, & Garcia, 2016), were not only familiar but suggested by committee members.

The thoughts and feelings I had about exploring CRT as a white woman reminded me of how I felt when I decided to run a marathon. On the one hand, my ambition compelled me to countless hours of training and preparation, even in the early morning hours and at the expense of other interests. On the other hand, I knew that I might decide it was too hard or find myself unable to meet the challenge. These feelings of uncertainty and doubt contributed to my motivation and courage. For example, I acquired every relevant book or article to immerse myself in CRT. My husband joked that I carried a book about Critical Race Theory everywhere I went. It was this daily devotion I employed to meet the “do it well” challenge. I knew there would be academic challenges, a vocabulary to learn, scholars’ names to recognize, seminal works to read and reread. However, I did not fully anticipate the affective dimension of exploring CRT as a white female and how lonely and isolated I felt as a result.

Because I am white and most of my spaces and places are predominantly white, I’m not forced to think about racism or xenophobia very often. My daily dose of CRT in addition to the constant news cycle felt like a needle’s pinprick. And the more the needle pricked, the deeper or more inflamed the wound. I felt enraged by children and parents being separated at the border in June 2018, hopeless and cynical as the remedies were short-sided and inhumane. I felt angry at the public reaction to the death of college student Mollie Tibbetts when the accused was determined to be an undocumented individual in rural Iowa. I felt
uncomfortable with the subtle xenophobic, racist, and misogynistic comments tweeted nearly daily by President Trump. This reminded me of the literature on microaggressions (Neinhusser, et al., 2016; Yosso, et al., 2009) as well as CRT scholars who reflected on their own use of the framework (Delgado, 2001, Delgado, 2006; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Taylor, et.al, 2009), so I took time to pay attention to my feelings, noting what might be related to my reactions. Between the rigor of the dissertation process and current events, these opportunities came about frequently. Sometimes I would write memos, other times voice-recorded my thoughts and conversed with trusted people including professors, fellow students, family, and friends. While extremely valuable, the conversations proved to be the most onerous and awkward, as I often weighed my words carefully depending on the person, my cognitive processing thus far, and my degree of emotion. At many times I wished I had chosen a more comfortable path, but the degree of satisfaction and ongoing curiosity is far more inspiring and rewarding at this stage of the process.

Critical theories appealed to me and resonated with my experiences as a social worker and faculty member in higher education. Critical theory is “a means to solve social problems and facilitate public good,” (Martínez-Alemán, Pusser, & Bensimon, 2015, p. 8). Bell (1980) stated, “Those critical race theorists who are white are usually cognizant of and committed to the overthrow of their own racial privilege” (p. 40). Furthermore, “Marxists, feminists, gender and queer theorists, structuralists, and poststructuralists all utilize critical theory to identify and locate the ways in which societies produce and preserve specific inequalities through social, cultural, and economic systems” (Martínez-Alemán, Pusser, & Bensimon, 2015, p. 8). I could tell countless stories of inequalities and privilege observed in over 20 years of social work and ten years in higher education, but most of those stories are not my
own. Instead, I was an observer, perhaps complicit participant, because I had the luxury of whiteness and the professional position of power.

Qualitative inquiry resonated with my natural curiosities and desire to understand, make meaning, and consider a variety of perspectives and experiences outside of my own. Quantitative methodology became more appealing during a project for a statistics course regarding the completion rates of African American males at Iowa community colleges, but I was committed to qualitative inquiry regarding undocumented students. As I recruited participants, arranged for interviews, and transcribed each interview, I second-guessed my decision. The process of data collection was fairly smooth, but when challenges arose, I found myself questioning my methodological decisions. One challenge was the rejection of my IRB proposal to collect data at Turkey River Community College. While I have no clear answers for the decision of the Turkey River Community College IRB, I noted the state law which was approved by the Iowa legislature on April 5, 2018, Senate File 481, compelling local law enforcement to comply with USCIS and orders that state funding be cut off from any sanctuary city or county in Iowa (Pfannenstiel, 2018). As previously described, regular anti-immigration rhetoric by state and national leaders was typical at this time. I am curious about how this experience mirrors the experiences of people of color: subjection to subtle and covert actions that can’t be unequivocally deemed as unfair and discriminatory, yet leaves me feeling unsettled and powerless.

To align myself with a critical theoretical framework and qualitative methodology, I used reflection throughout the research process. In the beginning of my research proposal process, I explored values and beliefs related to social justice and, specifically undocumented and DACA students. The exploration of the experiences of subpopulations of college
students led me to consider critical theories and, eventually, the decision to employ Critical Race Theory and the Interest Convergence tenet. As a White person utilizing CRT, I had to be willing to explore my own experiences and identify ways in which I participate in oppression. There were painful moments in this process which I often framed using a lyric from a song, “The wider the eyes, the bigger the lies, yes, it’s true” (Supergrass, 1999, track 9). I bracketed my feelings and reactions leading to some reflective memos and exploration of my own reactions, values, and biases related to my research topic. Due to the highly politicized and polarizing nature of immigration-related topics and policy, I found this extremely valuable in wading through the emotional complexities of qualitative work.

“Iowa nice”

“I’m uncomfortable with the cognitive dissonance which leads to increased anxiety in my largely white social circles.” – February 5, 2018

The “Iowa nice” phenomenon - how Iowans are considered outwardly friendly, tolerant, and willing to help others while veiling one’s authentic thoughts and feelings - emerged as a theme in my reflective memos. There are varying definitions and interpretations of “Iowa nice”; similarly, there are varying opinions about the consequences of “Iowa nice” on relationships, social systems, institutions, and policy. Several participants referenced the notion of “Iowa nice” including the evidence and consequences of the phenomenon. Shawn described an “insidiously quiet” culture related to the needs of undocumented students; Roman described his institution as “being unwilling” to address the issue of undocumented students with a formal policy; three participants from one institution described community tensions about immigration and the desire to keep an immigrant community “down there,” relatively contained in a small town. One participant said that she volunteered because didn’t
think anyone else at her institution would talk to me. When I asked why she explained that the highly politicized and polarized views about immigration probably kept people quiet.

Coded language is another example of “Iowa nice.” Several participants used the term “new Iowans” to describe immigrants. Upon reflection, the term “new Iowan” could imply a variety of meanings depending on one’s understanding of immigration. For example, does “new Iowan” include only those with legal documentation? Are refugees or non-English speaking immigrants “new Iowans?” This also resonates with Critical Race Theory’s critique of liberalism. Liberals and social justice warriors are skilled at crafting terminology that is often viewed as “politically correct” but vague. It is easier to maintain an “Iowa nice” state of being when the more controversial terms of immigration, citizenship, illegal, undocumented, and refugee are veiled.

I wrote reflective memos at a variety of times and places; perhaps most notable were those written during show choir contests and basketball tournaments, both events where parents spend a great deal of time and money to support their children’s extracurricular interests (or to attempt to fulfill their unfilled childhood dreams). While at a show choir contest in a rural Iowa community, I journaled about having books authored by Derrick Bell and Ta-Nehisi Coates in my bag, with the awareness that I was probably the only person there, in the sea of white students and parents, to be carrying along those books to read during the breaks of the day. This experience and those similar led me to feel like an “other,” an outsider in my normal places. Instead of gossiping or making small talk with other parents, I was reading about silent covenants and the societal echoes of the Obama era.
This situation reminded me of when I was a child and public television (PBS) was one of the few television channels available to me, let alone being one of the few offering children’s programming. Sesame Street is still in circulation, but only those of my generation could speak to the influence of its programming when our families, if they had color televisions, had about four channels from which to select our entertainment. One of Sesame Street’s segments was a scene of children set to music, the lyrics of which went, “Which of these kids is doing their own thing?” The narrator gives clues as to which of the four kids is unique. Well, of all those parents, I was doing my own thing. Similarly, when friends and acquaintances inquired about what I was reading or, if I had shared that I was in the midst of doctoral studies, I was often acknowledged by awkward silence, a nod of the head, and a change of subject, even among those who were college-educated, evidence of “Iowa nice.”

Ignorance is bliss – and privilege. I had a basic understanding of how higher education institutions perpetuate oppression before my doctoral research. I preferred being “nice” above being honest or critical, or willing to engage in the difficult conversations that led to mutual understanding. Perhaps other critical theorists shared this experience, an internal argument to accompany the constant critique-mode bubbling over from scholarship to personal life. When describing the disconnect between “Iowa nice” and policy, Scott (2017) wrote, “If ‘Iowa nice’ is a characteristic of our communities, why doesn’t ‘Iowa nice’ translate into municipal or state policy?” (para 2). This study has left me with a similar question – if community college agents offer support to undocumented and DACA students beyond what the institution requires or expects, why can’t those efforts be channeled into policy change at an institutional, local, state or federal level? Community college leaders carefully calculate how to work within the culture, even subversively if necessary, yet this
lacks authenticity and integrity, and arguably, is evidence of Bell’s interest convergence and even racial fortuity.

“Now that the Recording is Over”

I want to protect the privacy of participants and respect what they were not willing to share while being recorded. That being said, I believe it is important to the research process to offer a reflection on the conversations after the recording stopped.

A consistent theme of the post-recording conversations related to the intra-institutional tensions around serving students who are not White, immigrants, refugees, non-English-speaking, and Islamic. While this theme and the supporting patterns emerged in the official findings, additional details and nuances were shared after the recording was over. One participant described how he/she used to see things more “black and white,” but that personal experiences with students and their families changed his/her perceptions of undocumented and DACA students. However, he/she noted that without these experiences, his/her views may not have changed and would not be forced to change by institutional policy and practice. Another participant described changes within the institution over time. “Back in the day, leadership said if the student applicant is an Iowa high school graduate, they can come here,” yet alluded that that was never formal policy and only communicated to specific staff. Furthermore, this solution did not respond to the needs of an undocumented student currently living in Iowa but who graduated from a high school in another state, leaving individual community college agents unsure of how to proceed with such students.

Another participant shared additional details about a story shared during the recording, specifically the intra-institutional tensions around advocating for minority
students. This participant described a disagreement with another leader which was eventually reported by the other leader to the highest levels of administration at the college. When the participant advocated his/her position to the upper-level leaders, he/she was asked to be less overt about his/her visible efforts to support minority students. In addition to the leadership’s direction, posters and flyers the participants posted by his/her office were taken down several times, an act that he/she believed was directly related to the upper-level administrative response. An action as impotent as replacing a poster was not only problematic, but led to long-term professional consequences for this administrator.

The most chilling conversation after the recording stopped was about an administrator’s concern that if state and federal legislators better understand the higher education system, the data collected about students, and how data could be combined and connected, undocumented students could face much higher risk and severe consequences for college enrollment. The administrator expressed relief, yet concern that policymakers had not yet figured out how to track undocumented individuals and voiced concern that current trends in policy and rhetoric indicate that this could occur. I asked this participant if he/she thought research like mine could be used to identify and attempt to restrict pro-undocumented student practices, and the answer was a firm, “yes.”

These off-the-record conversations led me to question the wisdom of researching a topic for which so much risk is involved for students, their families, professionals, colleges, and even the researcher. If anti-immigrant policymakers were to learn of the pro-undocumented student practices at Iowa community colleges, would policymakers act to restrict the informal practices with legislation or threats to public funding? Even with pro-immigrant voices, would the policymakers in power still be able to tighten the restrictions on
and barriers to undocumented and DACA students accessing higher education? The concurrent sociopolitical events during this study indicate that yes, indeed, those in power would be willing. My reflective memos were full of reflections on the local, state, and national events and movements of the past year – from ICE raids in Iowa, the #metoo movement, the separation of children from parents at the southern border, the death of college student Mollie Tibbets and the accused undocumented individual, the Kavanaugh confirmation, and U.S. troops deployed to the U.S. – Mexico border to stop “the caravan” of migrants. The rhetoric around these events often left me feeling hopeless and cynical, much like CRT scholars when describing racism as normal. Xenophobia and misogyny was everywhere. Liberalism could not fix it – or cover it up. It was clear to me how interests must converge for rights and privileges to be granted to those without power.

Conclusion

Critical race scholars who are white are usually cognizant of and committed to the overthrow of their own racial privilege (Bell, 1980). Am I cognizant of and committed to the overthrow of my own racial privilege? My most honest answer is, “I don’t know.” Qualitative and critical inquiry is as much knowing as not knowing, a recognition that the more I know, the more I realize what I don’t know. It would be easy for me to proclaim high cognizance and commitment, to be a White social justice warrior who puts aside “Iowa nice” cultural conventions. But I am afraid; specifically, I fear my study will be used to harm students and their community college allies. So instead of bowing to the fear, I need to be a change agent in the community college. The real measure is in the doing of life which, in this study, is the practice of community college agents related to undocumented students.
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APPENDIX A

IOWA COUNTY POPULATION AND PERCENT CHANGE

Iowa County Population and Percent Change
(from April 1, 2010 population estimates base to July 1, 2017)

Note: Graphic from State of Data Center of Iowa (2017).
APPENDIX B

LATINO POPULATION IN SELECT IOWA COUNTIES, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Latino Population (Percentage of total)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crawford</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>County with largest percentage of Latino population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>County with second-largest percentage of Latino population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>County with third-largest percentage of Latino population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscatine</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>County with fourth-largest percentage of Latino population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodbury</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>County with fifth-largest percentage of Latino population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Largest population of Latinos in any county, 21.3% of the state’s Latino population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Latino population increased by 638.1% between 2000 and 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringgold</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Latino population increased by 892.3% between 2000 and 2015.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Information from State Data Center of Iowa (2017).*
APPENDIX C
IRB APPROVAL MEMO

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
1130 Pearson Hall
Ames, Iowa 50011-2807
515 294-4856

DATE: 03/19/2018
TO: Emily S Logan
FROM: Office for Responsible Research
TITLE: Community College Policies Affecting Undocumented Students
IRB ID: 18-091

Submission Type: initial Submission
Review Type: Full Committee
Approval Date: 03/19/2018
Date for Continuing Review: 03/05/2020

The project referenced above has received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Iowa State University according to the dates shown above. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- Use only the approved study materials in your research, including the recruitment materials and informed consent documents that have the IRB approval stamp.

- Retain signed informed consent documents for 3 years after the close of the study, when documented consent is required.

- Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes to the study.

- Inform the IRB if the Principal Investigator and/or Supervising Investigator end their role or involvement with the project with sufficient time to allow an alternate PI/Supervising Investigator to assume oversight responsibility. Projects must have an eligible PI to remain open.

- Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

- Stop all human subjects research activity if IRB approval lapses, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Human subjects research activity can resume once IRB approval is re-established.

- Submit an application for Continuing Review at least three to four weeks prior to the date for continuing review as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

- Please be aware that IRB approval means that you have met the requirements of federal regulations and ISU policies governing human subjects research. Approval from other entities may also be needed. For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment data) may require additional approvals.
records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. IRB approval in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.

- Please be advised that your research study may be subject to post-approval monitoring by Iowa State University’s Office for Responsible Research. In some cases, it may also be subject to formal audit or inspection by federal agencies and study sponsors.

- Upon completion of the project, transfer of IRB oversight to another IRB, or departure of the PI and/or Supervising Investigator, please initiate a Project Closure to officially close the project. For information on instances when a study may be closed, please refer to the IRB Study Closure Policy.

Please don’t hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.