BORDERED LIVES: ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND ACCULTURATION
PATTERNS AMONG UNDOCUMENTED ADOLESCENTS

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**Bordered Lives: Ethnic Identity Development and Acculturation Patterns Among Undocumented Adolescents, 2018**

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Abstract

**Objective.** Undocumented migration, the phenomenon of living somewhere without legal documents, has replaced traditional immigration to become the fastest growing form of global migration (International Organization for Migration, 2014). Despite burgeoning numbers, this population is often overlooked within psychology (Ellis & Chen, 2013). Building on limited literature, this dissertation addresses two primary aspects related to the experiences of undocumented adolescents – ethnic identity development and the acculturation process – from a developmental lens. **Paper 1.** Although Ellis and Chen (2013) and Maduena (2015) have developed models for ethnic identity amongst undocumented university students, no existing model focuses specifically on the developmental periods of adolescence and emerging adulthood. This qualitative study addresses gaps in the literature by developing an ethnic identity model for undocumented youth. A sample of 23 undocumented youth, between the ages of 16-22, completed a demographic questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Employing a grounded theory approach, four major themes or stages related to ethnic identity development emerged: Revelation, (Dis)Engagement, Developing Undocumented Consciousness, and Negotiating Undocumented Consciousness. **Paper 2.** The second paper extends the
Tridimensional Model of Acculturation (Ferguson et al., 2013) – whereby individuals acculturate to host, home, and other subcultures within host country – to explore how undocumented adolescents understand and negotiate processes related to acculturation. Using qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews with 23 undocumented adolescents, the second paper identified various cultural influences, specific stressors that amplify acculturative stress, and the most critical sites where acculturation occurs. Youth identified attachment to native, host, and subcultures and described school, work, service provision institutions and national borders as the most influential sites of acculturation. **Conclusions:** This dissertation deepens our understanding of the impacts of undocumented status upon adolescents via an analysis of developmental stages of identity development and an empirical investigation of the process of acculturation. The first paper contributed a new model on undocumented adolescent development and the second paper offered evidence supportive of the Tridimensional Model of Acculturation whereby individuals endorsed acculturating to multiple cultures. Findings provide important insights for service provision, including addressing specific developmental needs of undocumented adolescents by facilitating information sharing to counteract confusion and fear of the unknown. Continued research into processes of identity and acculturation during adolescence may establish best practices for undocumented youth.
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Lastly, to the immigrant kids, with and without papers, the in between-ers, the dreamers, here’s to us. To creating space where one did not exist.

“They don’t tell you about this part of migrating. The part where you go back and feel like a stranger. Where kids stare at you in awe and adults break themselves in half to cater to you. They don’t tell you how your voice doesn’t sound like yours because English has made itself permanent on your tongue. How you’ll always live in the diaspora now, forced to make the middle ground your home. They don’t tell you that about borders, how they break you in half until you’re never enough for either side.”

- Afrodominicanxthings
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Introduction

Immigration status, or lack thereof, is an important determinant of mental health and social well-being (Gonzales et al., 2013; Khanlou, 2005; Magelhaes et al., 2009; Martinez et al., 2015; Simich, 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015; Zimmerman, 2003). Undocumented or non-status immigrants\(^1\) – persons living in a host country without any legal immigration status – confront a wide range of mental health issues, including difficulties with the acculturative process and identity development (Costa, 2008; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Khanlou, 2005; Simich et al., 2006). In the past decade, undocumented, irregular, or ‘illegal’ migration – terms used to describe the phenomenon of moving or living somewhere without legal documents – has replaced traditional forms of movement to become the fastest growing form of global migration, currently accounting for 30-40 million people worldwide (European Union Migration and Home Affairs, 2016; Papademetriou, 2008). Although irregular migration is an internationally relevant phenomenon, undocumented populations in Canada are remarkably understudied and have received scant attention in academic literature.

Currently, conservative estimates of the number of undocumented immigrants in Canada exceed 500,000, over 80,000 of whom reside within the Greater Toronto Area (Magalhaes et al., 2010; Nyers, 2006). These numbers are expected to balloon, as statistics show a significant decrease in the number of accepted refugees – some of the lowest acceptance rates in 30 years – and an increase in issuance of only temporary forms of immigration status, with no means of accessing permanent avenues of immigration status (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2016; Vosko et al., 2014).

\(^1\) The terms non-status and undocumented are used interchangeably, as they both reference the population of individuals without legal immigration status.
For the purposes of this dissertation, undocumented or non-status refers to individuals currently residing in Canada without legal immigration status, including those who have overstayed their visitor’s visa, worker’s permit and/or student visa; failed refugee claimants remaining in the country without authorization; individuals remaining in the country following the issuance of a deportation order; and those pursuing alternate procedures such as Humanitarian & Compassionate applications when judicial appeal has been exhausted. Due to the considerable size of this population and the paucity of research within this area, it is important to explore the impacts of living without legal immigration status in an attempt to better formulate policies that adequately address the needs of undocumented residents. Although a small number of studies have explored general psychological impacts of being undocumented, studies focusing specifically on undocumented adolescents have rarely been conducted in Canada. Consequently, this study aims to help bridge the gaps in the existing literature and knowledge and explore the impacts of living without status on adolescents by focusing on identity development and the acculturation process. In particular, this study seeks to investigate how the acculturation process itself shapes undocumented youths’ sense of ethnic identity, understandings of social integration and inclusion/exclusion, familial and peer relationships, and well-being.

Adolescence is typically characterized as a period of time where youth begin to explore and examine psychological characteristics of the self in an attempt to discover who they are with regard to their personal identity and how they position themselves or fit in the social world they inhabit (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). It is widely recognized that the development of immigrant

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2 Filing a Humanitarian & Compassionate application does not provide any legal status to an applicant while in process. As such, it is common for many nonstatus immigrants to be in formal correspondence with the Canadian government without having legal status.
children and youth is heavily informed by not only their proximal context (e.g., peer, family, extended family), but also their distal context, which includes legislation, policies, and social institutions and structures (Brabeck, 2016; Brabeck et al., 2015; Sibley, 2016; Salehi, 2010; Suarez-Orezco et al., 2011). An array of researchers in various disciplines have documented that this distal context contributes directly to a myriad of specific developmental challenges for children from immigrant families and that nonstatus families, in particular, face even greater challenges (Brabeck, 2016; Brabeck et al., 2015; Brabeck & Sibley, 2016; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, 2014). Specifically, discriminatory or exclusionary laws and racism have been shown to negatively and profoundly impact the psychosocial growth of immigrant and non-status children and adolescents (Brabeck et al., 2015; Brabeck & Sibley, 2016; Fry & Passel, 2009; Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000; Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998).

It is particularly important to note that the immigration status of the parent(s) is an important factor within the distal environment and has significant impacts on adolescent development, given that laws that delineate who may access the associated benefits of citizenship while effectively excluding others have significant impacts on the individual in multiple domains. For example, having an undocumented parent is linked to higher rates of psychological distress and financial stress, and poorer cognitive performance on standardized tests (Brabeck et al., 2015; Brabeck & Sibley, 2016; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Fuligni & Yoshikawa, 2003; Yoshikawa et al, 2008). Furthermore, non-status children and adolescents are less likely to take part in public programs (e.g., immunization drives, anti-poverty initiatives, recreational programs, etc.) or have health coverage/insurance if their parents lack status (Brabeck, 2016; Caulford & D’Andrade, 2012; Lykes et al., 2013; Magalhaes et. al., 2009). This is particularly concerning given that the average income of undocumented families in the United States is 40%
lower than that of both immigrant families with status and also native-born families (Brabeck, 2016; Passel, 2006). Although official figures for Canada are unavailable, various scholars contend that similar trends would be observed in Canada (Magelhaes et al., 2010; Meloni, 2013). Given that public services are typically accessed to structurally ameliorate some of the negative impacts of poverty on development and the fact that most nonstatus families fall below the poverty line, nonstatus adolescents are disproportionately and negatively impacted by poverty and various laws and policies that prevent them from accessing services – an important component of the distal context that impacts development (Brabeck et al., 2015; Brabeck & Sibley, 2016; Magalhaes et. al., 2009, Simich et. al., 2006; Salehi, 2010).

In addition, due to immigration restrictions that prevent families and individuals from exercising the ability to move and (re)unite, undocumented children and adolescents often face protracted separation from primary caregivers, many spending up to half or more of their childhoods without their biological parents (Abrego, 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2014). Consequently, the distal context surrounding immigration laws directly impedes physical contact in families and contributes to generalized fears and anxiety of being separated from parents at critical developmental stages (Maduena, 2015; Suarez-Orozco, 2011). This sense of precarity and worry is further heightened amongst undocumented children and adolescents, as they are encouraged to actively understand and develop contingency plans should one of their caregivers or parents face detention or deportation. In one study in the United States, 40% of undocumented Latino parents reported having an existing plan in place and discussing the plan openly with their children in the event of forced separation, and 58% reported having a general plan (Brabeck & Xu, 2010). This unique socialization experience is endemic to undocumented populations and provides insight into how distal contexts, such as immigration
systems and national laws, directly impact development by placing greater stressors on these children and adolescents.

Immigration System Overview

Cognizant of the realities of being undocumented and the direct impacts of distal contexts on development for this population, it is critical to examine the Canadian immigration system, particularly in the past decade since increasing numbers of families and individuals have been denied status (CIC Report, 2009; Goldring & Landolt, 2013; Landolt & Goldring, 2016; Magalhaes et. al., 2009; Sharma, 2006; UNHCR Report, 2010). Canada’s immigration and refugee system has been critiqued from all political persuasions in recent years, as immigration law dramatically shifted under the Conservative government with many such laws remaining intact under the current Liberal government (Freckelton, 2013; Lowry, 2002; Walia, 2013). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s 2012 report, the number of refugees who had their asylum claims approved dropped significantly to the second lowest number since 1979 (CIC Report, 2012; Walia, 2013). Since 2012, numbers have remained at historic lows until 2016, when asylum claim approvals reached their highest peak in four years (Atak et al., 2017; Keung, 2017). Similarly, the number of claims even referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) in the past decade dropped to some of the lowest numbers since 1989 when the IRB was formed, leading many researchers to conclude that the refugee system is becoming increasingly restrictive – systematically denying legal status to large numbers of individuals and families by casting nets so small that fewer and fewer meet eligibility criterion (Goldring & Landolt, 2013; Landolt & Goldring, 2016; Lowry, 2002; Magalhaes et. al., 2009; Sharma, 2006; Walia, 2013). Many have argued that in the past two years, under the federal Liberal government, immigration acceptance rates have soared (Tyyska et al., 2017). However, the
numbers tell a more nuanced story: though some acceptance rates in areas such as refugees have increased (e.g., acceptance rate for refugees is between 49-56% in past three years), these numbers do not represent a net increase in acceptances and still bring current rates to lower than 2006 levels prior to the instatement of a Conservative federal government (Government of Canada, 2016). To provide some historical context, Canada currently accepts approximately half the number of refugees it did in 1989 (Government of Canada, 2016; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2015; Schwartz, 2015). Given this background, it is unsurprising that more individuals are falling out of status and unable to garner legal documentation (Goldring & Landolt, 2013; Landolt & Goldring, 2016; Walia, 2013).

Contrary to popular discourse that often paints undocumented families and individuals as entering Canada through clandestine or illegal means, only 1200-1300 each year attempt to enter Canada illicitly (Atak et al., 2017; Auditor General of Canada, 2013). The majority of undocumented people enter Canada with some form of legal status, including work permits and visas (Goldring & Landolt, 2013; Nyers, 2006). This can primarily be attributed to Canada’s geography, whereby borders are not shared with countries producing high levels of migrants (Atak et al., 2017). However, despite entering Canada with legal documentation, many individuals are unable to secure permanent status after their temporary permits and visas expire, as Canada’s immigration system systematically privileges specific types of immigrants over others, with a strong preference for well-educated, upper-middle class individuals (Goldring & Landolt, 2013; Landolt & Goldring, 2016; Sharma, 2006; Walia, 2013). As a result, individuals entering Canada through temporary work programs in service-related industries, such as construction, agriculture, or domestic work (e.g. as a nanny) or through travel visas are typically unable to garner enough points to qualify under Canada’s Immigration Point System (Goldring...
The only options available for such individuals are to either apply for refugee status or file a Humanitarian & Compassionate (H&C) application, and when both these avenues have been exhausted, some individuals may qualify to file a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment. It is important to assess how accessible these options are. The Humanitarian & Compassionate route has an approximate acceptance rate of 10-30% (depending on the year) and individuals who are even eligible to file a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment has dropped by a staggering 600% since 2007 with an acceptance rate of 1-3% over the last decade (Government of Canada, 2016). Given these rates and few legal pathways to status, it is unsurprising that individuals living with temporary status for years are in increasingly precarious positions.

Particularly worrisome given the low rates of acceptance for permanent paths to status is the emerging trend of people coming into Canada through precarious, temporary means. The number of temporary foreign workers has increased 30% over the past four years and, starting in 2008, for the first time in Canadian history, more people entered Canada on temporary work permits than as permanent residents – a trend that continues unabated today (Government of Canada, 2016; Clark, 2009; Goldring & Landolt, 2013; Landolt & Goldring, 2016; Montreal Gazette, 2011). Noting the ballooning numbers of temporary workers alongside plummeting numbers of permanent pathways to status have led researchers in economics and political science to note the above trends as ‘the permanence of the temporary’, whereby increasing numbers of people on temporary permits will fall out of status, thus increasing the undocumented population overall (Landolt & Goldring, 2016; Vosko et al., 2014).

After being denied legal status, many individuals make the difficult decision to stay in Canada as undocumented migrants, without papers and rights. Given that the focus of this
dissertation is on adolescents, it is necessary to highlight the fact that although adult immigrants relocate to Canada for a myriad of economic, social, and political reasons, children and adolescents do not exercise the same level of agency, typically immigrating because their parents or caregivers have made the decision on their behalf (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2014). As such, adolescents must contend with the realities and repercussions of migration and being undocumented but are unable to exercise the same level of autonomy and decision-making as their adult counterparts.

In this dissertation, I aim to understand how the acculturation process impacts undocumented youths’ sense of ethnic identity development by exploring the personal, cultural, and contextual factors that comprise acculturation to better understand the implications for undocumented youth. The dissertation is comprised of two papers, each examining how features of the adolescent and emerging adulthood period may relate to individuals’ understandings of their identity, culture and social world. In the first paper, I seek to identify and understand themes associated with undocumented ethnic identity development. Given that no existing model has been developed that focuses exclusively on adolescence and emerging adulthood – perhaps one of the most critical developmental periods for identity creation and consolidation – this paper specifically addresses how undocumented adolescents negotiate various aspects of identity, including perceptions of self, characterizations of their social world, differentiation amongst documented peers, and personal understandings of inclusion/exclusion and culture. Using qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews, this paper proposes a new model of understanding the process of ethnic identity development that provides insight into how contextual and personal variables influence the developmental process. The second paper also uses qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews to explore the role of culture and
how culture(s) shapes and informs undocumented adolescents. In this paper, I explore and identify specific cultures that influence undocumented adolescents using the Tridimensional Model of Acculturation framework (Ferguson et al., 2012), which asserts that individuals who immigrate to a host country acculturate to multiple cultures. By examining the unique and combined contribution of home, host and subcultures – the three components of the Tridimensional Model of Acculturation – a more nuanced understanding of the acculturation process and lived experiences of undocumented adolescents may be established. To this end, I investigate the acculturation process closely by examining specific stressors (acculturative stress) and critical sites where acculturation occurs. By gaining a deeper understanding of these issues and processes, I hope to provide psychologists and other mental health professionals with critical information that will allow them to effectively respond to the needs of undocumented youth and support this population during critical developmental periods. The dissertation concludes with an integrated discussion that highlights the importance of examining acculturation and ethnic identity from a developmental perspective in order to inform policies and practices.
Paper 1 - Ethnic Identity Development Amongst Undocumented Youth

Abstract

This qualitative study explored the ethnic identity development process of 23 undocumented adolescents living in Toronto, Canada, focusing on how these individuals negotiate aspects of identity, including perceptions of self, characterizations of their social experience, understandings of inclusion/exclusion, and culture. Semistructured interviews were conducted and data analysis was consistent with grounded theory methodology. From the data, four major themes/stages emerged: (a) ‘revelation’ of undocumented status; (b) level of ‘(dis)engagement’ with understanding implications of status; (c) ‘developing undocumented consciousness’ by establishing a nuanced understanding of identity vis-a-vis immigration status; and (d) iterative, continuous process of ‘negotiating undocumented consciousness’ and extent to which immigration struggles define personal identity. Findings highlight the importance of understanding ethnic identity from a developmental perspective and can inform the efforts of mental health professionals to effectively respond to the needs of undocumented youth during critical developmental periods.

Introduction

‘Illegal’ or irregular migration – the phenomenon of moving or living in a country without legal documentation – has replaced traditional forms of movement to become the fastest growing form of immigration, accounting for over 50 million people worldwide or approximately one-fifth of all migrants (International Organization for Migration, 2014). Despite burgeoning numbers globally, undocumented populations are notably understudied and often
overlooked within mental health literature (American Psychological Association, 2016). This is largely attributed to the fact that undocumented migrants – persons living in a host country without legal immigration status – actively and quite consciously remain hidden from public view so as to avoid detection and deportation (Brabeck, 2014; Cornelius, 1982; Lykes et al., 2013). Although the inability of most researchers to access such populations remains a primary reason why there is only the most exiguous research data, concerns around funding of research on ‘illegal’ or invisible populations and the political controversy surrounding irregular migration have also contributed to the dearth of available research (American Psychological Association, 2016; Brabeck et al., 2015; Cornelius, 1982; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2014). Furthermore, due to the heterogeneity of undocumented populations, particularly with regard to country of origin, educational background, social support networks, and socioeconomic status, a comprehensive understanding of the undocumented experience remains a challenge (Ellis & Chen, 2013).

Immigration status, or lack thereof, has been consistently found to be an important and critical determinant of mental health (Brabeck & Sibley, 2016; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Kene et al., 2016; Lyon, 2015; Munoz, 2014; Suarez-Orozco, 2011). Undocumented immigrants confront a wide range of mental health issues, and undocumented youth, in particular, struggle with identity development and forming a coherent sense of self (Costa, 2008; Ellis, 2010; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Lyon, 2015; Munoz, 2014; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2005). Given the complex and unique set of challenges that emerge as a result of not having legal status and protections, undocumented youths’ developmental trajectories are distinguishable from other immigrant populations with similar characteristics (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2013). The development of immigrant children and youth is heavily informed by the policies, laws, and social institutions of their host country, otherwise referred to as the distal context (Brabeck, 2016; Brabeck et al., 2015; Brabeck &
Sibley, 2016; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Salehi, 2010; Suarez-Orezco et al., 2011). Various researchers have documented how the distal context contributes directly to a myriad of developmental challenges for children from immigrant backgrounds, and that undocumented adolescents and families, in particular, face more pronounced challenges (Brabeck, 2016; Brabeck et al., 2015; Brabeck & Sibley, 2016; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, 2014). Specifically, exclusionary laws and discrimination negatively impact the emotional and psychosocial growth of immigrant and undocumented children and adolescents (Brabeck et al., 2015; Brabeck & Sibley, 2016; Fry & Passel, 2009; Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000; Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998).

Parental immigration status is a critical component of the distal context impacting child and adolescent development, as exclusion from the benefits of legal status are associated with greater rates of psychological distress and lower levels of cognitive ability in children on standardized assessments (Brabeck et al., 2015; Brabeck & Sibley, 2016; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Fuligni & Yoshikawa, 2003; Yoshikawa et al., 2008; Yoshikawa et al., 2011). These difficulties are further compounded when taking into account that the average income of an undocumented household is 40% lower than native-born and immigrant families, effectively relegating this population to poverty status (Brabeck, 2016; Passel, 2006). Given the established literature on the pernicious developmental impacts of poverty (American Psychological Association Office on Socioeconomic Status, 2014; Machell et al, 2015; Steele et al., 2016) coupled with low rates of medical coverage and access to public services within this population (Brabeck, 2016; Campbell et al., 2012; Caulford & D’Andrade, 2012; Lykes et al., 2013; Magalhaes et. al., 2009), undocumented adolescents’ distal context includes multiple risk factors associated with poorer developmental outcomes (Brabeck, 2016; Suarez-Orzceo et al., 2015). Other risk factors include
protracted separation from primary caregivers whereby adolescents may spend upwards of half their childhood without biological parents due to immigration difficulties (Abrego, 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2014) and planning for future scenarios of forced separation (Brabeck & Xu, 2010), both of which have been shown to be positively correlated to anxiety stress, and fear (Brabeck, 2016; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, 2015). Consequently, the unique distal context endemic to undocumented populations has significant development impacts at the individual level.

1.1 Mental Health of Undocumented Adolescents

Despite burgeoning numbers of undocumented adolescents, relatively few studies have explored the psychological impacts of growing up without status. Some studies have focused on how acculturation – the process whereby individuals and groups engage in a variety of intercultural contact and negotiate various cultures (Kunst et al., 2015; Berry, 2005) – impacts mental health, along with the ways in which undocumented populations experience and manage the inherent stress within this process, oftentimes referred to as acculturative stress.

Undocumented adolescents, by virtue of not being born in their host country (and therefore not being entitled to rights and protections of citizenship), are first generation immigrants and experience more acculturative stress than second- and third-generation immigrants (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015; Yeh et al., 2003). This is further compounded by the unique psychosocial challenges undocumented adolescents face, primarily the risk and fear of detention or deportation, which leads to higher levels of acculturative stress (Kamal, 2015). Acculturative stress is associated with poorer mental health and developmental outcomes, including anxiety and depression (Cobb et al., 2016; Crockett et al., 2007; Stacciariini et al., 2015; Wei et al., 2010), feelings of isolation and rejection (Coll & Marks, 2012; Gonzales et al., 2013), increased
psychosomatic symptoms (Berry, 1997; Ellis & Chen, 2013) and difficulties with identity
development and consolidation (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Lyon, 2015; Munoz, 2014). Furthermore, it
is important to note that individuals who immigrate during adolescence or emerging adulthood
experience greater adjustment difficulties than children who migrate at a younger age (Suarez-
Orozco et al., 2011). Importantly, while adult immigrants choose to relocate to Canada for a
myriad of economic and political reasons, children and youth often do not exercise the same
choice, as they typically immigrate because their parents have made the decision on their behalf.
As such, adolescents do not maintain the same level of autonomy and agency as their adult
counterparts in decisions regarding migration, which often leads to feelings of helplessness
(Kamal & Killian, 2015).

1.2 Undocumented Adolescent Development: Ethnic Identity

In the general literature, one of the major areas impacting mental health of marginalized
or racialized adolescents is successful development of ethnic identity (Jung, 2013). Given that
one of the critical developmental tasks of adolescence is to construct a coherent self-identity
(Schwartz et al., 2012; Steinberg & Morris, 2001), it is important to examine ethnic identity in
this context. It is during this period of adolescence that individuals start to form increasingly
abstract characterizations of themselves and self-concepts of self and other/world become more
differentiated and better organized (Schwartz et al., 2012; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Typically,
adolescents begin to perceive themselves in terms of personal values and beliefs while also being
undocumented adolescents, research demonstrates that they classify themselves largely based on
social comparisons as the designated ‘other’ or ‘illegal’ – someone who is qualitatively distinct
from a typical adolescent (Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Ellis & Chen, 2013). This perceived difference
is based upon social comparisons with peers, but the extent to which this impacts development remains unclear in the available literature. This gap in the literature is important to note as research in the field has consistently demonstrated that healthy adolescent identity development for minority, immigrant, and nonstatus youth necessitates the development and maintenance of a coherent *ethnic* identity, which is informed by personal understandings of inclusion and exclusion (Steinberg & Morris, 2001; Salehi, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, 2015). Generally, a strong sense of ethnic identity is associated with higher self-esteem and greater self-efficacy amongst immigrant youth (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Phinney et al, 1997). As such, scholars understand ethnic identity as one of the defining factors impacting general identity in immigrant and undocumented populations with some asserting that ethnic identity supercedes and subsumes general identity related concerns (Knauss et al., 2014; Reese, 2010; Trimble & Dickson, 2005).

Despite ethnic identity being viewed as a critical component of identity in acculturation research, more than two thirds of studies to date fail to explicitly define what ethnic identity as a construct is, despite the fact that these studies focus exclusively on the topic (Phinney et al., 1997; Ellis, 2010). Scholars in the field focus on various aspects of ethnic identity with some viewing self-identification and commitment to a culture as critical aspects of ethnic identity, whereas others assert that it is a sense of belonging, shared values, and attitudes towards one’s group that is most crucial. In contrast to those who focus on attitudes and feelings, other scholars underscore the importance of cultural aspects of ethnic identity such as language, knowledge of ethnic group history, food, and behaviour. Despite variations in definition, most scholars agree that discrimination is a central theme within ethnic identity development (Ellis, 2010; Ellis & Chen, 2013). Discrimination is defined as a negative judgment, attitude, or unfair treatment of a particular individual or group (Brown et al., 2012; Williams et al., 1999). Such discrimination is
experienced both on an individual as well as systemic level, and it is the very perception that one is being discriminated against that results in feelings of invisibility and helplessness, which ultimately leads to decreased self-esteem and a sense of ethnic identity loss or confusion (Brown et al., 2012; Farver et al., 2002; Yeh et al., 2008). Although there are only a handful of studies examining the impacts of discrimination on undocumented youth, preliminary findings support previous research with other marginalized populations and demonstrate that discrimination leads to significant acculturative stress and difficulties with ethnic identity development within this population (Ellis, 2010; Gonzalez, 2011; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Researchers have also stated that such difficulties may be more pronounced with undocumented populations than other immigrant groups, as these populations experience higher rates of marginalization, discrimination, and acculturative stress (Ellis, 2010; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). For the purposes of this study, ethnic identity is examined by understanding the evolution of values and beliefs when multiple cultures interact; how self-identification and sense of belonging emerges and develops over time; and how personal experiences of discrimination and oppression impact and influence understandings of self.

In recent years, a handful of researchers have developed models in the United States for understanding ethnic identity amongst undocumented university and college students. Ellis and Chen (2013) proposed a thematic, descriptive model specifically addressing the intersection between ethnic and career identity amongst both university and college students. Within it, four primary categories emerged: (i) ‘sewn with two threads’ asserted that identity is comprised of the dual confluence of home and host cultures; (ii) ‘enhancement of positive attributes through addressing documentation struggles’ consisted of personal traits being enhanced in the process of struggling with immigration status difficulties and the process of building resiliency; (iii)
‘challenging reflections’ addressed how discriminatory experiences were associated with negative self-perceptions; and (iv) ‘identity formation as an ongoing negotiation’ discussed how identity development is a fluid, ongoing process.

Based on a review of some of the available literature and synthesized findings from other studies and immigrant populations, Lyon (2014) proposed a conceptual, unified model of development specifically addressing the intersection of moral and ethnic identity amongst undocumented college students. Lyon (2014) describes three phases of development: (1) ‘awakening and self-sacrifice’, which references a phase of uncertainty, fear, and confusion whereby individuals often feel pressured to identify more with host country culture and have not explored the meaning of difference; (2) ‘exploration and ethnocentrism’, which involves active discovery of new culture(s) and working through dissonance between cultures; and (3) ‘fulfillment and balance’, the final phase whereby individuals develop bicultural acceptance and a strong sense of ethnic identity. Given the study reviewed others work and did not collect original data nor had access to datasets of the reviewed literature, phases should be interpreted with caution, as none of the original authors reviewed proposed a model of development based on their data nor presented data indicating evidence of a developmental model. Most recently, Maduena (2015) proposed a ‘three position general identity development framework’, which consists of three primary themes: (a) ‘discovering difference’ highlights understanding the politics of difference in relation to immigration status; (b) ‘making meaning of difference’ focuses on extracting meaning from immigration challenges; and (c) ‘coming to terms with being undocumented’ outlines the process of becoming self-advocates and asserting immigration-related needs.
These models of identity development provide important insight into the development of ethnic identity amongst undocumented college students and highlight common themes of discovering, understanding, and making meaning of undocumented status. However, the studies to date investigated ethnic identity development generally without specific identification of factors particularly critical to this population. This study explicitly examined five primary factors related to identity development and acculturation: Social understandings and cognitions of host country and education system, cultural understanding and competency, social identity and sense of self, social stigma and challenges, and resiliency (Padilla & Perez, 2003). By developing interview questions measuring constructs identified as critical to acculturation and identity, this study hoped to identify themes that may not have been accounted for in general models and develop a model of ethnic identity development that addressed a host of underlying factors.

Undocumented youths’ identity development is a complex, variegated process influenced by not only typical acculturation struggles, but also a palpable, pervasive fear of immigration status revelation that could result in detention, deportation, or other serious consequences (Suarez-Orozco, 2013). Consequently, their development is intricately tied to their immigration status, or lack thereof (Ellis & Chen, 2013). Developmental processes, particularly during adolescence, underlie individuals’ cognitive understandings of personal identity and how they experience the world. As such, in this study I aimed to provide a model of ethnic identity development amongst non-status youth based on their self-reported perceptions and experiences, and describe various stages that are characterized by qualitative differences in behaviours and cognitive perceptions.

1.3 The Present Study
The present study addresses the question of how undocumented adolescents negotiate aspects of identity, in particular, social understandings and cognitions of host country and education system, cultural understanding and competency, social identity and sense of self, social stigma and challenges, and resiliency. Although Ellis and Chen (2013) and Maduena (2015) have developed models for ethnic identity amongst undocumented university and college students, no existing model focuses on both adolescence and emerging adulthood – perhaps two of the most critical developmental periods for identity creation and consolidation. This study is the first in Canada to explore ethnic identity development in this population, and drawing on the literature from Ellis and Chen (2010) and Maduena (2015), I anticipated that there might be similar themes related to identity. Building on the limited existing literature, I attempted to develop an ethnic identity model for undocumented youth that sheds light on how contextual and personal variables influence the process of development by focusing on specific domains related to ethnic identity development (Padilla & Perez, 2003): Social understandings and cognitions of host country and education system, cultural understanding and competency, social identity and sense of self, social stigma and challenges, and resiliency. By investigating the factors that influence ethnic identity, the goal is to begin to construct a developmentally appropriate model that can inform clinical practice and research with undocumented adolescents.

METHOD

Qualitative designs are appropriate to research exploring the realities of populations from their own distinct perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 2014) and particularly useful for research pursuits involving topics in exploratory phases of academic research (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). As little research has been conducted in the area of undocumented identity development, this study functions as a preliminary exploration of how
living without legal immigration status informs non-status youths’ sense of ethnic identity. A grounded theory analysis, an inductive methodology that allows for systematic generation of theory (Glaser, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 2015), was adopted to develop a broader base of knowledge and facilitate nuanced understandings of complex subjective experiences. This kind of analysis involves immersion in the dataset through initial and focused coding, categorizing, iterative comparative analysis, and memo writing to generate from the ‘ground’ a substantive theory (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). The study received university Research Ethics Board approval as well as ethics approval at each of the social service organizations where recruitment occurred (See Appendix C for ethics approval documentation).

Qualitative methods of inquiry often necessitate researchers to explicitly identify their social locations and paradigmatic perspectives while conducting research, as the researcher herself is viewed as a critical component impacting the project and the lens from which phenomena is understood (Charmaz, 2006). A constructivist approach to grounded theory was adopted, one in which meaning making was understood to be co-created between participants and the researcher (Charmaz, 2003). This approach was particularly helpful because it allowed for the direct exploration of subjective realities and multiple perspectives. Cognizant of the realities of undocumented peoples, one in which an inherent system of power already exists in society between those with or without papers, the researcher identified her social location in relation to a historically marginalized and disenfranchised group as an immigrant woman with legal status who had close ties to undocumented communities through professional networks and prior social justice involvement. In explicitly identifying the researcher’s location with respect to participants, power dynamics were delineated in the hopes of creating spaces that recognize the inherent differences and work to meaningfully create more equitable relations.
2.1 Participants

As discussed earlier and expressed by one of the first researchers in the area, Cornelius (1982), “most field researchers have found that the most difficult part of fieldwork among [the undocumented] population is locating and gaining access to the interviewees on terms that will permit valid and reliable information to be gathered” (p. 385). To gain access to this population, community partnerships were forged between the researcher and two organizations that provide recreational, educational, and/or health services to undocumented youth. Although both organizations service undocumented youth, neither maintain formal statistics on services provided to this population due to program funding restrictions. A purposeful sample was obtained through two organizations in Toronto. A sample of 23 undocumented youth, between the ages of 16-22, was selected. This sample size was ultimately selected because sample sizes of 20-30 are recommended for qualitative designs that seek to draw more robust conclusions and lay the starting foundation for future research in a particular subject or area (Mason, 2010). Youth participating in the study varied in the length of time they were undocumented in Canada from 1 to 13 years. It should be noted that several youth in the study lived for years without immigration status in the United States and European Union prior to relocating to Canada. Taking into account total years spent undocumented in all countries, youth in the study ranged between 3-18 years in nonstatus. In an attempt to establish gender parity and explore whether there were any differences based on sex, 13 females and 10 males were recruited (see Table 1 for a summary of the sample’s demographic characteristics).
Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Distribution</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Origin</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
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<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Number of Years Undocumented in Canada, United States, and European Union</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-8 years</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12 years</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-16 years</td>
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<td>17+ years</td>
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<td>Education Completed</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Middle School</td>
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<td>High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary Enrolment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Income</td>
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<td>&lt;10k</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19k</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29k</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29k+</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Data Sources

Data sources include a demographic form, interview and post-interview debrief, transcription and field notes.

2.21 Demographic Form

In an attempt to ensure all participants met inclusion criteria and to reduce length of overall interview time, all participants filled out a brief demographic questionnaire prior to the interview. Participants submitted these forms to their respective social service organization, and the form was subsequently released with consent to the researcher to ensure that each participant fit study parameters. The form requested information regarding the participant’s age, sex, country of origin, education status, personal income, parental income, age of arrival in Canada, means of entry into Canada (e.g., tourist visa, student visa, etc.), number of years living without status, and prior immigration history.

2.22 Interview

A comprehensive review of acculturation and ethnic identity development literature was conducted regarding undocumented adolescents’ experiences in the United States, Canada, European Union and Australia. Based on the literature reviewed above and gaps in knowledge, five sets of questions were developed to focus on specific domains related to ethnic identity development: Social understandings and cognitions of host country and education system, cultural understanding and competency, social identity and sense of self, social stigma and challenges, and resiliency. Once a comprehensive initial list was developed, “lead” questions were identified and “follow-up” questions were categorized accordingly. For example, questions related to identity development in light of immigration status began with the lead question, “How would you describe yourself?” which was followed with the question, “How, if at all, has your
immigration status affected your view of yourself?” Ultimately, the final set of 14 questions was developed to understand participants' current reflections on how their immigration status impacted their identity development (see Appendix B for interview questions). All questions were developed temporally and according to topic (e.g., social identity, cultural competency, social stigma, etc.). Subsequently, final questions were distributed to three academic researchers in the field to ensure interview questions addressed relevant constructs of identity development for this population. Feedback from all researchers confirmed that domain questions addressed relevant constructs and provided recommendations about any protocol changes with detailed rationale. Several changes to protocol questions were made following feedback, including language and wording of questions, order of questions, and follow-up questions for each domain.

Due to the nature of working with clandestine populations, special measures were taken to ensure comfort and feelings of safety. Given that all participants were recruited from organizations they were acquainted with, individuals were given the option to choose setting, time, and date, with everyone opting to conduct interviews at organizational headquarters or their homes after school or on the weekend. Prior to the start of the interview, the researcher explicitly discussed the confidential nature of the study and emphasized the importance of not disclosing names or personal identifiers during the course of the interview, as anonymity was paramount to protecting safety. Following the interview, there was a 10-30 minute debrief session that consisted of participants providing general feedback about the interview. This time was allotted to discuss feelings, thoughts and comments and to provide an opportunity for participants to provide any additional information about their experience and revise or further elucidate on specific topics or questions, which provided richer data of participants’ experiences and understandings. Directly following each interview, the researcher engaged in reflection and
notetaking about ideas, thoughts, and themes from the interaction. This process was formally conducted to increase the rigour of future data analysis, which necessitates multiple data sources and active reflection by the researcher at various points in time (Charmaz, 2014; Morrow, 2005).

2.23 Transcription and Field Notes

Given the security issues inherent in collecting any identifiable personal data, participants were assigned a letter pseudonym and no names were collected at any point in the study. Interviews ranged from 90-120 minutes in length and were digitally recorded with consent and subsequently transcribed. Upon transcription, all digital files were deleted. Extensive field notes about individual participants during interviews as well as debrief session, and reflections after interviews were also transcribed, as the rigor of qualitative research necessitates the analysis of a variety of data points when developing themes in results (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Morrow, 2005; Elliott et al., 1999).

2.3 Procedure

2.31 Recruitment

Recruitment for the project was conducted by both organizations internally, as they were privy to immigration information about their respective clients and had provided ethical clearance for the study. Based on the participant requirements set by the researcher whereby all individuals had to be 16-22 years of age and living without immigration status, each organization designated one staff member to select participants that matched inclusion criteria. Each organization selected 11-15 individuals and provided the researcher with their respective demographic questionnaire and contact information upon agreement that the researcher could contact them. Afterwards, the researcher contacted the individual participant and established a time and location to conduct the interview. All participants were encouraged to choose the
setting for the interview and most elected to conduct interviews in their homes. Participants were informed verbally and through the consent form of their right to end their participation in the study at any time for any reason without penalty, and participants were assured of their anonymity and that no identifying information would appear in any report or publication of the research. In accordance with Research and Ethics Board protocol, digital files of interviews were permanently deleted following transcription.

2.3.2 Data Analysis

Responses to the interview questions were analyzed using Strauss and Corbin’s (2015) and Charmaz’s (2014) grounded theory methodology and consistent with this approach, formal data analysis began following the collection and transcription of all interviews, debrief notes, field notes, and demographic materials. Initial data analysis involved immersion within this entire data corpus and line-by-line reviewing and coding of each interview, which allows for detailed, systematic analysis of initial data and better facilitates subsequent generation of theory (Charmaz, 2014). Following line-by-line reviewing, raw data were converted into phrases or words that conceptually captured the data described – often described as ‘open coding’ – with specific attention directed towards psychological phenomena of ethnic identity (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Initial coding resulted in 28 open codes. The second stage of ‘focused coding’ (Charmaz, 2014) involved separation and synthesis of established open codes through a method of constant comparison, recurring topics, key words, and phrases in order to identify relationships within the interview – often referred to as ‘axial coding’ (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). At this stage, formal review of field and debrief notes as a means of comparing multiple data points for identified participant/interview was conducted in order to explore established codes and identify new ones (Charmaz, 2014). This process allowed for methodical differentiation between codes while
identified similarities were collapsed into a singular code, resulting in 10 ‘axial’ or ‘key codes’ (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). The third stage of ‘selective coding’ consisted of repeated sifting of data and codes to identify relationships between interviews and demographic questionnaires, resulting in four ‘selective codes’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 2015).

Subsequent stages of coding were iterative and involved the renaming and condensing of codes and the use of “family” or umbrella categories that brought together the underlying codes they represent. Data saturation occurred following the analysis of 19 participant interviews, with no emergent themes or relationships originating in subsequent data analysis for the remainder of the interviews (i.e. the other four interviews consisted of previously identified categories and themes). Upon data saturation, the last and final stage of analysis involved examining the relationship between all codes and themes to generate theory – often referred to as ‘theoretical coding’ (Charmaz, 2014). As outlined by Charmaz, theoretical coding is a:

“…form of coding to integrate and solidify the analysis in a theoretical structure (Charmaz, 2014, p. 19). It [is] during this final coding cycle that the researcher utilize[s] the established codes to depict the participant’s experiences and to ultimately generate a theory. Theorizing mean[s] stopping and thinking, looking at the data from varying points, making comparisons, and building on ideas (Charmaz, 2014, p. 244).”

The codes and themes that emerged from the participants' narratives were analyzed by examining the participants' social locations on the contextual variables of immigration status and age and how these locations informed their experiences.

2.33 Data Coding Checks
Consistent with principles of qualitative research, several strategies were implemented within the study to ensure rigor of scientific findings. Triangulation, the use of multiple data sources to comprehensively understand a particular phenomenon, is often employed in qualitative research to increase reliability and validity (Carter et al., 2014). Method triangulation, which involves multiple methods of data collection, was adopted to increase validity through the use of interviews, debrief and field notes, demographic questionnaire, and reflections (Carter et al., 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). In addition, investigator triangulation, which addresses issues of reliability and validity, involved the participation of multiple researchers to provide observations and feedback at various points in the study (Charmaz, 2014). As outlined in previous section, interview questions were developed and edited with the support of three other research academics in the area to ensure they measured relevant constructs of ethnic identity prior to interviewing. Furthermore, in an attempt to limit biases of data analysis by a single researcher and ensure reliability of findings, the primary supervisor reviewed several transcripts and concomitant coding and analysis. Subsequently, for the duration of the project, the supervisor provided ongoing feedback regarding data analysis, as well as development of categories, codes, and theory.

RESULTS

Based on participant interviews and data analysis, a developmental model with four stages emerged from the coded themes. Each of the ‘stages’ represent the selective codes and the ‘themes’ represent the axial codes, which were renamed and organized during subsequent stages of theoretical coding after taking into account age and demographic variables. Open codes were collapsed into the summary and description during the development of the model. The emergent stages and thematic clusters that encapsulate participants’ experiences are outlined below (Table...
2). Although various themes emerged from the data, this section focuses on themes that were mentioned by all or almost all participants and is divided based on four developmental stages: Revelation, (Dis)Engagement, Developing Undocumented Consciousness, and Negotiating Undocumented Consciousness. Each stage delineates particular themes that emerged within areas and outlines their impacts on undocumented adolescents. It is important to note that not all participants reported undergoing every stage with younger individuals not having sufficient experience to be at later stages of development. Within this sample, 12 out of 13 older (19+ years) participants’ reported having experienced all four stages, with insufficient data for the remaining participant to confirm he had in fact undergone the last developmental stage. Amongst 16-18 year old participants (younger cohort), all reported experiencing first two stages with 8 out of 10 providing narratives indicative of beginning the third stage of development.
Table 2. Undocumented Ethnic Identity Developmental Stages Based on Interview Codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>Unfolding reality: From unaware to awakening</td>
<td>Learning about status; confusion regarding status; feelings of anger, frustration and resentment emerge; anticipatory anxiety about future begins. More aware regarding status challenges although confusion remains; increased hopefulness; transition from news of being undocumented to learning what being undocumented means in life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased awareness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Dis)Engagement</td>
<td>Familial Challenges</td>
<td>Parental anxiety and stress regarding status associated with higher stress levels in adolescents. Level of engagement with status contingent on experiences where status is necessary (e.g. field trips, doctor visits, community programs, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“World out there”: School and Social Experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing undocumented</td>
<td>Developmental Milestones</td>
<td>When normative rites of passage unmet, adolescents report feelings of anxiety, depression and hopelessness. Risk taking associated with higher levels of connectedness, happiness, and self-efficacy. Higher social support associated with positive future orientation, fewer mental health concerns, and internal locus of control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consciousness</td>
<td>Willingness to take risks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buffer up: Social support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of identity: Negotiating undocumented consciousness</td>
<td>Selective acculturation</td>
<td>Varying degrees of acculturation in domains of language, food, values and fashion. Ability to create and reconstruct dreams while ascribing meaning to ‘shattered’ dreams associated with positive mental health outcomes. Belief of temporality and fluctuation of emotional experience; reality acceptance; commitment to reconstructing and renegotiating status challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Re)Constructing dreams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accepting fluctuations and ongoing identity negotiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1 Stage One: Revelation

Many parents make the difficult choice to not share with their children potentially disconcerting news that they lack legal immigration status for a panoply of reasons, including fears that children will accidentally and unknowingly reveal sensitive information, feel increasingly afraid, and experience heightened stress and uncertainty. Consequently, for parts of their childhood and adolescence, many undocumented individuals are unaware of their immigration realities and upon information being shared, face the task of understanding how their lack of immigration status impacts them personally.

3.11 Unfolding Reality: From Unaware to Awakening

All participants in the study recalled a time in their life where they were completely unaware of their lack of immigration status, which one participant referenced as “a blissful innocence…or ignorance.” During this time, participants discussed having little to no information about immigration status or what that might imply. Nine out of 23 participants (39%) described having some understanding that their families were engaged with the immigration system, including memories of parents accessing immigration lawyers, parents or relatives examining documents related to immigration, watching parents or relatives research immigration-related matters online, and general discussion within the family about immigration difficulties, although none were aware of being undocumented and therefore, inured from the harsh reality of navigating the world without legal status, rights and protections. One participant relayed “not giving much thought” to these situations or moments because she assumed “[that] our family had status or was in the process of getting more [permanent] status.” Due to undocumented youths’ initial obliviousness regarding their immigration status, this stage
punctuates an important marker: Learning that they are, in fact, undocumented and beginning to make sense of what that means.

Participants reported discovering their lack of status in various ways from either parents, caretakers, siblings, or relatives, at different ages, with most participants (69.5%) learning of their lack of immigration status between the ages of 12-15. Participants recalled responding with confusion as to why information had not been previously shared (65.2%), anger and frustration towards family for withholding information (34.7%), resentment towards family for their immigration predicament (43.4%), vexed with the immigration system (47.8%), and perplexed or puzzled by how their lack of immigration status would impact their future (82.6%). Some participants (43.4%) also described not grasping the gravity of the situation and thinking that lack of immigration status would not impact or impede their lives in meaningful ways. One participant stated:

“I didn’t know what to think and honestly, it wasn’t really, it didn’t seem like that big of a deal. Like, I didn’t think it was gonna really be much of an issue for me. Not much changed right then…I still went to school, and dance practice and all that so I was still living fine and that [immigration] stuff didn’t really get to me. It was kinda ‘whatever’ then.”

During this stage, adolescents are processing the news of their immigration status, experiencing confusion regarding impacts of their status, and are generally hopeful that their lack of status will not negatively impact them. Another participant encapsulated this sentiment well:

“I was straight up like ‘WTF’ when my mom told me, just because I don’t know what I’m supposed to think and it was definitely WTF…so I was just trying to think through what she was even saying. I wasn’t super upset, just surprised and wondering how [all of] it is gonna work out. I was kinda irritated after[wards] that no one told me, but I wasn’t bugging out…because I was pretty confident that everything would work [it]self out and [didn’t] sweat it because I was still gonna live my life to the fullest.”
The lack of awareness of impacts to not having legal immigration status facilitates more hopefulness at this stage.

3.12 Increased Awareness

After the initial surprise and lack of preparedness for learning that they are undocumented, adolescents move towards understanding what being undocumented constitutes. Although still suffused with confusion over what the impacts of undocumentedness are, adolescents process their status by accepting that they are undocumented and gaining more familiarity with being undocumented by gathering information and aggregating knowledge. Participants described developing awareness primarily by asking questions and discussing immigration matters with family members, although several also engaged in online research in the hopes of becoming better versed in immigration matters and what the experiences of other undocumented people have been. During this time, adolescents begin to experience anxiety about their lack of status. Their anxiety, at this stage, surfaces due to lack of understanding and knowledge and fears that they are not fully prepared and informed about what lacking immigration status entails, both in the present and future. As one participant aptly stated:

“It was a weird time, hard to get a picture, or even, like, a good sense of what [not having] papers (immigration status) would mean. I mean, I remember asking my parents questions about us getting [status], what the family was planning, how possible it would be, like our chances, you know, and stuff like that. I even looked up a few things online…but it was strange, trying to understand [things]. I remember feeling a little nervous because I didn’t even know, like, I didn’t know what I didn’t know…I didn’t know if I was supposed to know more so I was just trying to get [information] and put it all together.”

This first stage of revelation involves an awakening to information regarding being undocumented and starting the process of trying to understand what exactly undocumented is and how their lack of immigration status will impact their lives.

3.2 Stage Two: (Dis)Engagement
After processing and accepting news regarding their lack of immigration status, participants begin to punctiliously engage with a new reality of living “in the shadows,” as one participant referenced. This emergent reality is one where individuals make increasingly conscious “choices” to engage with the fact that they do not have the same rights, privileges, freedoms and power as citizens and residents with legal status. In this stage, individuals begin to navigate their journey towards undocumented consciousness – a state of understanding how their personal identity is impacted by their lack of immigration status. Individuals’ level of engagement with understanding the implications of status on their identity at this stage is contingent upon their familial, school and social experiences. These experiences profoundly influence and shape the degree to which individuals engage with and understand what being undocumented constitutes.

3.21 Familial Challenges

The extent to which adolescents, at this stage, are able to develop healthy understandings of being undocumented and strategies to deal with their lack of status is associated with the familial unit and how they cope with and manage immigration stressors. Adolescents with parents who are better able to manage their anxiety and stress while maintaining hope instill a sense of security in their children, even under precarious conditions. As one participant recalled:

“I did ask my parents a lot of questions after I found out [about being undocumented] and they tried their best to answer, they did, so that was good that they knew some things…I figured they could help me out. I don’t know, but thinking back on that, it was, like, they’d been [undocumented] for a while so it was normal for them, I guess, or something, so they weren’t really freaked out [laughs]. That was good for me and my little bro[ther], I think, because I thought that [my parents are] getting through it and managing alright so we’ll be alright [as well]…it’s good that they’ve been calm and pretty leveled throughout everything, it’s why I don’t get as worked up or worried or sad or whatever as much.”
When discussing ability to cope with immigration stressors and gaining deeper understanding of how immigration impacted their identity, most participants (91%) outlined the integral role family played in that process. At this particular juncture, participants with more anxious parents or caretakers reported higher levels of anxiety and stress. One participant described this phenomenon quite well:

“I had a hard time and kinda didn’t wanna think or really deal with it after I found out [I was undocumented]. My dad was all types of crazy about it…he was really stressed out, just nervous a lot, I mean, a lot a lot, like, all the time a lot. He was, like, always afraid of everything. He was really scared of security people in the subway and stuff when he’d go with us on the subway to school, like, sorta paranoid about it. I think he was just trying to protect us but sometimes it would just make me more nervous, you know, like, I’d start feeling [fans face], I don’t know, like, more heated and scared. My mom was nervous sometimes too but not as much as [my] dad…I just feel really nervous too sometimes, like I need to watch out for myself just like [my parents] do.”

From such narratives, it is salient that parent-child dyads with regard to anxiety and stress are quite impactful at this stage. Adolescents with parents who are able to more effectively manage uncertainty and stress related to their immigration issues develop better coping strategies, confidence about managing obstacles, and positive beliefs about their social world.

3.22 “World Out There”: School and Social Experiences

Given the fact that children under 18, irrespective of immigration status, are required to access public education in Ontario, undocumented students’ level of engagement and understanding of what being undocumented constitutes is inextricably linked to their social and school experiences, where they spend the majority of their day. All participants in the study delineated how they emphatically learned what being undocumented meant within school and educational settings. Almost all participants outlined learning in school that, to be undocumented, “means [being] pushed to [the] sidelines, learn[ing] to sit out opportunities…that you’re alive and around, but excluded…or best case, sort [of] ignored,” as one participant shared.
Undocumented adolescents learned important consequences of not having status within educational settings. All study participants recalled one or more events at school where they felt marginalized and excluded – these events were their first encounters with feeling ‘othered’ as a function of living without status and not preferred the same privileges as their legal student counterparts. Participants described various scenarios, including needing official provincial health insurance numbers to be eligible for field trips overnight, doctors’ notes to verify readiness to play sports following an injury, immigration documents to be eligible for registration at new schools, and identification documents to be eligible to access services and programs. Depending on how many of these scenarios undocumented adolescents encountered and how difficult they were to navigate often determined how intimately they engaged with and understood the implications of being undocumented at this stage. For example, individuals who described multiple such scenarios described at length their understanding of the consequences of undocumented status at this stage, while those with fewer or no such experience(s) described not clearly understanding the implications of status at this point.

3.3 Stage Three: Developing Undocumented Consciousness

In this stage, adolescents develop a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their identity in relation to their immigration status. They grapple more directly with the institutional, social, and personal challenges and limitations that come with not having immigration status. Undocumented youths’ ethnic identity and development at this stage is influenced by whether they are able to successfully meet traditional developmental milestones of adolescence and emerging adulthood, willingness to take risks, and social support.

3.3.1 Developmental Milestones
Developmental milestones refer to a set of functional skills and age-specific tasks individuals are expected to meet in order to facilitate cognitive, social and personal growth. For undocumented youth, normative rites of passage that inform developmental trajectories – such as procuring a driver’s license, pursuing post secondary education, attaining a job or volunteer work, traveling during gap years or for personal and educational pursuits, and forming more intense and closer attachment with peers and romantic partners – are often stunted due to their lack of immigration status. All participants mentioned difficulties in each of these five areas and described how not being able to meet these milestones impacted their personal identity and well-being. As one participant described:

“Man, at a point, it just gets too lit...too crazy...you start to really think on things and you take a step back and it’s like ‘holy shit, is this for real?!’ [silence] You can’t seem to catch a break [on] any end. Like, it was ridiculous...I got into Queens, McMaster, U[iversity] of T[oronto], Ryerson, York, Western, and McGill and I can’t go unless I leave the country and re-enter as a foreign student, but like, I’ve gone to school here my whole life so I’m not exactly a foreign student. My parents can’t afford that kind of paper [money] anyway, and I can’t leave the country because I’m not here with [immigration] papers so [the Canadian government] wouldn’t even let me back in [for re-entry] so it’s this total loser [scenario]. I felt like total shit about myself, my confidence was just [signals slitting throat motion] whack...I knew in my head that it’s not my fault, but it doesn’t stop you from feeling like you failed...that you’re kinda worthless, you know, because no one really believes in your future and potential, like you’re just something to be forgotten...[or] trashed. It was real[ly] depressing, just got me in a funk, felt all kinds of stupid, naive too...feeling like [there is] no way out of this hellhole. You can’t even work a regular job or do normal things anymore...it sucks, all [of it] blows.”

The lack of opportunities accorded to undocumented youth, particularly with regard to educational and employment options, negatively impacts their identity and sense of self. All participants described feelings of shame, worthlessness, and low self-confidence and self-efficacy as a function of not having immigration status and meeting developmental milestones. This is further compounded when undocumented adolescents feel they cannot share intimate details of their lives that are deeply impacting their well-being, such as not having immigration
status, with peers and romantic partners. More than half (56.5%) the participants mentioned that they did not feel safe discussing their issues with friends and partners due to fear of disclosure, as encapsulated by this participant:

“It doesn’t feel good…to have to hold in [this] secret, but I’m not stupid enough to put [my] family [at] risk. It’s not worth it – point, blank, period…I do feel alone with [my] pain, it’s not something I can just talk about casually…it’s why it’s easier to not have a boyfriend when you’re like me (undocumented)…you can’t exactly be up front about why you feel like shit so much…you just gotta go it alone.”

Fear of the consequences of status revelation prevent many undocumented youth from achieving normative rites of passage, such as developing closer romantic partnerships and friendships, which further fuels feelings of loneliness and hopelessness. This nexus of unachieved milestones appears to be most salient during the transitional period between high school and post secondary, where adolescents must structurally face the realities of no longer being buffered by the education system from immigration enforcement. As undocumented adolescents are unable to meet critical developmental milestones, their identities become increasingly tied to their immigration struggles and they experience shame, worthlessness, lowered self-efficacy and self-esteem while simultaneously feeling more anxious, depressed, and stressed.

### 3.32 Willingness to Take Risks

Undocumented adolescents’ developmental trajectory is also impacted by their personal willingness to take risks at this critical stage, as not taking risks may lead to fewer vocational and educational opportunities. Individuals willing to take risks, such as disclosing their status to potentially helpful authority figures (e.g. teachers, guidance counselors, youth workers, etc.) and using back channel personal and social connections to procure employment opportunities, may have increased chances of successfully meeting developmental milestones. A majority of
participants (78%) endorsed taking risks and, in doing so, experienced a sense of connectedness, competence, and boost in self-esteem and self-efficacy, as described by this participant:

“I talked to my [teacher] about my [immigration] stuff…and she got my principal and guidance counselor [involved] so we figured out a way I could go to [University Name]. My guidance counselor talked to some people [at the university] and me and my family were able to work out those things so I could go…I felt like I accomplished a lot, you know. Most kids my age couldn’t go through this and survive, but I did it. I got it…I was able to make it happen, line it all up…just have to continue my hustle and I can do this…I’m happy…well, okay, where I’ve landed.”

Individuals who discussed not having taken such risks (17%, not including one participant who did not discuss risks at all) may have lower chances of successfully overcoming certain immigration challenges that typically require disclosure (e.g. accessing post-secondary education without leaving Canada). It is interesting to note that these four participants reported less immediate anxiety with regard to threat of detention and deportation, and also reported more feelings of loneliness and isolation and less self-efficacy than participants who endorsed risk-taking behaviours. Individuals who did not take risks endorsed the feeling that they had little to no control over events affecting them:

“There’s nothing I can really do about [immigration] problems, it’s not up to me, so I can’t change a thing…it sucks, you just have to accept it is what it is…I feel sometimes like it’s me against the world, and nothing I do changes [things] for the better.”

The willingness to take risks despite palpable threats of detention or deportation may have positive impacts on individuals’ understanding of personal identity, particularly during two periods of time: 1) Transitional period between high school and post-secondary; and/or 2) Directly prior to this transitional period. Data from participants (78%) indicate that willingness to take risks could help facilitate higher success in meeting developmental milestones and instill a sense of self-efficacy and control, as well as connectedness to their social world. It is important to note that positive findings related to risk-taking need to be interpreted with caution, as this
sample may not be representative and does not include individuals whose risks may have led to negative outcomes, including detention or deportation.

3.33 Buffer Up: Social Support

All participants in the study outlined that their immigration status had impacted their familial, peer, and romantic relationships, along with their interaction with their community, both in positive and negative ways. Almost all participants (95.6%) reported receiving support at critical moments, which positively impacted their sense of well-being:

“I don’t think I could’ve gotten through this crap without [Teacher Name] and [Sister Name] and my mom. When the school wouldn’t let me go to Montreal for [our school] trip because of [provincial health insurance] card, my sister and mom talked to [Teacher Name] and she made sure I got to go, like, in a few days, she made that happen. It sounds mad corny, but I cried…from happiness because it was my last time with [my peers in Grade 12] and I got to experience that. It meant a lot. I felt so good that I could make it work and I went back to [Teacher Name] when I had trouble with getting into [College Program] and we dealt with it together and [Guidance Counselor] helped out too…I [learned] that I have to make things happen and people [will] help me along [my] path, really good pe[ople] that [have] your back.”

Support from school, community, peers, and family factor into how comfortable and safe individuals feel about seeking help. Although support is important at any stage, it is particularly crucial at this point given that this is a transitional period between adolescence and emerging adulthood where unachieved developmental milestones are most common and adolescents structurally encounter the difficult realities of no longer being buffered from immigration issues by the education system. All but two participants 17 years of age and older discussed how social support during this time was vital:

“I think, personally, nothin[g] felt more jibberish and shit inside my mind than [my] last semester in [name of high school]. I was, like, a ghost, you know, but, like, alive. I felt I didn’t know [any]thing anymore [be]cause everything was coming apart [gestures hands]…like, I was go[ing to] graduate and then what? I can’t work…I couldn’t go to uni[versity] like all the other normal kids. I just didn’t wan[t to] continue, like, what’s the point [laughs]…but honestly, thank God I had [teacher
name] and [family member names] because they pulled my ass out that place and [another teacher’s name] helped me figure out uni[versity] stuff. For reals though, I’m not even trippin[g] out when I tell you that was probably the worst time of my life, like, the lowest for sure, so yeah, I really gotta thank [th]em for getting me out of it.”

Participants who did not receive support during this period also underlined its importance:

“İ”m sure it’s tough on anyone to not know things and go from high school to whatever, but when you put [lack of status] on top of [everything else], it’s the worst comb[ination]. It just gets to you in a different way and there wasn’t anyone that could really help me through [that time] so it is what it is, I guess, but…looking at it from where I’m at now, it would’ve been nice, you know, to have had some love from anyone, like, anything – even just someone to chill and talk it out with, you know, because you start thinking you can’t really do anything and you just get really down and hopeless.”

Participants who received support from multiple units reported higher levels of connectedness, hopefulness, more positive appraisals of the future, and feelings of personal control (internal locus of control) than those who reported they did not receive support. Mired in a social reality in which feelings of helplessness was frequently reported by participants, social support may help bolster self-efficacy, which in the general literature has been associated with better long-term developmental outcomes (Williams & Rhodes, 2014).

3.4 Stage Four: Sense of Identity: Negotiating Undocumented Consciousness

In this stage, individuals have already aggregated experiences and understood some of the challenges that present as a function of not having immigration status, and are in the process of actively negotiating how much their immigration struggles define their personal identity. They selectively acculturate in different domains, learn to construct and reconstruct their dreams, understand and accept the volatility and fluctuations of their emotional experiences with immigration, and commit to the ongoing process (re)negotiating their identity fluidly vis-a-vis immigration matters.

3.41 Selective Acculturation
Acculturation, a multi-dimensional process in which individuals adjust to the dominant culture while simultaneously retaining components of their indigenous culture (Berry & Hou, 2016), is a constant negotiation between new and old cultural norms and values (Cobb et al., 2017). Because acculturation experiences are a direct result of this dyadic interaction, individual immigrant experiences of this process are affected and shaped by immigration status, or lack thereof. Similar to other groups of immigrant youth, undocumented adolescents acculturate to varying degrees (selective acculturation) in various domains (e.g. language, food, values, fashion, etc.) based on their personal interactions with the host culture (Portes et al., 2009; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). All participants in the study acculturated to English language norms and the vast majority (86.9%) described various aspects of Canadian (host) culture as being positively impactful on their identity development, as described by this participant:

“Being in Canada and growing up here, of course, [influenced] me. It’s [an] open and accepting…society and really multicultural. I feel I’m so different as a person because I’m here…like, how I think about other cultures and people, what I believe in, like, my thoughts on gay people and stuff…I think different [things] are cool and my taste in music and stuff has changed because of [exposure to Canadian culture] and the friends I have here.”

Participants described the process of negotiating and constructing personal values (value internalization) as a dynamic transaction that took into account individual life goals, social norms and values, and beliefs about the immigration system. The latter, beliefs about immigration system, is an atypical component of acculturation patterns in other immigrant groups. However, amongst undocumented adolescents, beliefs about immigration system factored heavily into their understandings of identity. One participant eloquently described this:

“I don’t want to say [that] not having [immigration status] defines me, it doesn’t, but it mos[t] def[initely] changed me, or, I don’t know the word to really describe how much [immigration status has] impact[ed] how I see m[yself] and the world. In the beginning, I didn’t think it was a big part of my identity but nowadays, when I really reflect…it kinda changed my perspective of myself. I thought I could do anything I
set my mind to, but not having papers, you realize really quick[ly that] you can’t. I started to think I wasn’t really successful…I blame the immigration system for being so fucked up, but I also started thinking I wasn’t good enough to excel and that I was kind of a loser. You feel loser-ish when you’re different from everyone or when you just [have] different struggles from everyone else.”

Almost all participants described negative self-evaluations due to their lack of status, primarily feelings of worthlessness and lack of personal agency. This is noteworthy given that all participants in the study identified that they viewed the immigration system as inherently unfair and/or problematic and described understanding that many of their setbacks could be attributed (externally) to their lack of status. However, even with such understandings, undocumented adolescents internalize their difficulties with the immigration system and view themselves negatively. Undocumented youth developed increasing consciousness of how their immigration status impacted their beliefs and identity, which is an integral component of undocumented consciousness.

3.42 (Re)Constructing Dreams

Often unable to meet critical developmental milestones (e.g., continuing education, getting a job, etc.), many face what one participant referenced as “the shattering of dreams.” They contend with challenging realities where they are unable to continue with normal developmental trajectories and must face the task of reconstructing their dreams and forging a different path than their counterparts. This was a particularly challenging time whereby participants reported higher rates of distress, anxiety, stress, and sadness. As one participant described:

“It’s like, you watch your friends and everybody else go on with their lives and you’re left thinking ‘oh shit, I [have] no way out, what am I going to do?’ It’s devastating…I thought I had things figured out, just like everybody else. But they’re headed to university, a few to college, and I got in but now [the university] need[s] actual proof [of residence] and I can’t give it…I feel so desperate, just for anything to work out like it does for everybody else…I’m not going to work out like it does for everybody else…my dreams went up in flames [laughs],
like, big, red, crazy flames and I’m tryin’ to scrape up the ashes like an idiot...It’s one of my lowest dips, to be up front, I can’t even deal on some days because I’m so worried about what’s gonna happen, what I should do, how to get out of this...I’m bummed out so much now...having some dark days. Like, what does someone do when all your hope crashes and burns.”

This ‘shattering’ of hope is intimately tied to not having immigration status and at this stage, participants described decreased social and community participation and increased feelings of hopelessness, sadness, and uncertainty. Based on results, the critical task at this stage would be to foster hope and reconstruct dreams. Many participants described doing this by ascribing meaning to ‘dying dreams’, as one participant stated, and adopting a ‘survivor mentality.’ Narratives from participants demonstrate that most (61%) were able, with time and support, to successfully understand their ‘shattered’ realities as situations that helped develop personal strength, character, and resilience. Many commented how “most people could not go through what [undocumented people] survive” and described adapting prior dreams, particularly educational and career related, to instill hope for the future.

3.43 ‘Up and down the emotional roller coaster’: Accepting Fluctuations and Ongoing Identity Negotiation

The inherent vicissitudes of growing up without immigration status was described by one participant as “a constant up and down emotional roller coaster that keeps you strapped in.” The emotional impact of this ongoing uncertainty and fear results in feelings of hopelessness, lowered self-efficacy and self-esteem, anxiety, and sadness. However, participants at this stage learn to radically accept their lack of immigration status as a life situation that cannot be immediately changed, and to dialectically balance and understand the situational and emotional fluctuations endemic to immigration difficulties. As one participant described it:
“It sounds simple but you just accept [that] these [are] the cards I was dealt...and once you [accept] it, you see that nothing’s forever and it’s more like a seesaw, you go up and down and things change so you just gotta hang in there.”

This theme of impermanence and understanding that neither immigration difficulties nor the emotional reactions that accompany them are permanent was mentioned by the majority (82.6%) of participants. Embracing or accepting impermanence facilitates the idea that change is inevitable and opens up opportunities for instilling hope, as change can also be for the better. Participants mentioned that understanding impermanence is critical during difficult transition periods, particularly at the end of high school.

It is important to note that undocumented adolescents at this stage learn to accept and manage the current and future volatility of their situations and understand that their immigration status will continue to impact and be linked to their identity. They persevere and remain committed to reimagining, reconstructing, and renegotiating their identities as the ‘other.’ Every participant discussed feeling distinct and different from peers, groups, and individuals in Canadian society and how being the ‘other’, someone excluded from the rights and freedoms that Canadians are guaranteed, relegated them to a marginalized position in society. Without a sense of permanent security, these individuals must continue to contend with the harsh realities and perils of detention and deportation while developing a strong sense of identity in a hostile environment.

**DISCUSSION**

The reality of being undocumented complicates and impacts the ethnic identity development of these individuals and places unique, challenging demands when trying to construct a coherent sense of self within an environment that both influences and rejects them. In this study, I used grounded theory to develop a stage-based model of undocumented ethnic
identity with the results of this study suggesting that there are important associations between lack of immigration status and identity development. The four-stage ethnic identity development model (Table 2) consists of: Revelation, (Dis)engagement, Developing undocumented consciousness, and Sense of identity: Negotiating undocumented consciousness. Undocumented adolescents develop increased awareness of the implications of not having status, learn to navigate these realities by taking risks and securing support, come to terms with not meeting some critical developmental milestones, reconstruct their dreams, intimately understand the temporality of their emotional and social experiences, and continue to engage in the process of renegotiating their personal identities vis-à-vis status difficulties. This stage-based model of ethnic identity development was based on the aggregate data set and experiences of adolescents and transitional aged (i.e. emerging adulthood) individuals. Consequently, not all individuals in the study underwent all four stages, as younger participants were not at the developmental age to have experienced later stages. The majority (12 out of 13) of older (19+ years) participants’ responses and experiences consistently underwent all four stages, while the remaining individual’s experience was consistent with the four-stage model but there was insufficient data to confirm that he underwent the last developmental stage. This may be due to lack of available data about these specific experiences, a reflection of his age and not having yet experienced the last stage, or indicative of the limitations of this model’s applicability to all undocumented adolescents. For younger participants (16-18 years), all underwent the first two stages and the majority (8 out of 10) were well into the third stage of development, based on interview data and responses. The remaining two participants were 16 years of age and did not endorse experiences consistent with the third and fourth stages of development.
Consistent with two prior models of identity development, Ellis ans Chen (2013) and Maduena (2015), findings from this study echoed themes such as discovering immigration status, difficulties during transitional period between high school and post-secondary/employment, perceptions and impacts of discrimination, experiences of being the ‘other’ or distinct from peers, resiliency, deriving meaning from challenges, importance of social support, acculturation impacts, and identity development as ongoing, iterative process. A majority of themes in both studies were reproduced, but due to wider age cohort and number of participants, this model builds on the prior models by organizing and collapsing themes into a stage-based developmental model, providing earlier stages within the developmental process, and outlining more detailed information regarding each stage and concomitant themes. Also, in contrast to both models whose primary focus was on undocumented students enrolled in post-secondary education, this study’s parameters included transitionally-aged individuals who were not attending school and, consequently, themes related to social justice activism in university were not as salient in our population. Furthermore, new themes not identified in previous studies emerged, specifically willingness to take risks and impacts of unmet educational milestones (i.e. not enrolling in university/college or securing employment).

Based on the findings in this study, identity development is a dynamic process that evolves over time and although ongoing negotiation of identity is witnessed in typically developing adolescents and nonstatus youth alike, the latter confront a myriad of challenges that are endemic to their immigration status, which functions as a unique, de-facto stressor during a period of already challenging rapid development and transition. Participants in this study, similar to other studies (Chen & Ellis, 2013; Ellis, 2010; Lyon, 2015; Maduena, 2015; Seif, 2011) examining this population, aggregate both positive and negative experiences throughout their
personal development and understand that being undocumented provides both opportunities for growth and significant constraints. The results of this study provide evidence that the identity of undocumented adolescents is defined by perpetual border crossings, where individuals must physically and metaphorically cross through daily borders erected to exclude and reject within schools, service sites, and communities. Their identities reflect a reality of marginalization and exclusion and a “constant [dancing] tango of accepting being [undocumented] and working like hell to reject [and] change [its] limitations,” as one participant communicated.

Results from this study suggest that being undocumented should be viewed as a psychosocial condition characterized by difficulties related to identity development and consolidation, as well as increased stress, anxiety, feelings of powerlessness, and lack of personal agency/control. Similar to research in public health and medicine that discuss social determinants of health – referencing various social conditions, such as income, education, housing, discrimination, and access to services as having pervasive and significant impacts on health outcomes and disease – there is an increasing shift in psychology to also understand, acknowledge and intervene based on social determinants of mental health (Allen et al., 2014). In the past decade, various researchers have avered that immigration itself be classified as a de-facto social determinant of both health and mental health given the significant outcomes associated with migration and/or being an immigrant (Castaneda et al., 2015; Caulford et al., 2012; Davies, 2009). Consistent with such developments and understanding immigration as a social determinant of mental health, it follows that lack of immigration status has pronounced impacts on health outcomes (Castaneda et al., 2015). With respect to mental health, countless studies have already documented the association between lack of status and worsening mental health outcomes (Arbona, 2010; Brabeck, 2016; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Fuligni & Yoshikawa,
This study provides further evidence of the difficulties in identity development associated with lack of immigration status and how such psychosocial conditions are associated with fear, anxiety, stress, feelings of helplessness and powerlessness, and understandings of lacking personal agency. These findings are consistent with prior studies of identity development within this population (Chen & Ellis, 2013; Ellis, 2010; Lyon, 2015; Maduena, 2015; Seif, 2011). Consequently, it is important to begin to understand and identify legal immigration status as a determinant of mental health so we may address relevant associated difficulties at the appropriate level (Castaneda et al., 2015).

4.1 Limitations

There were several limitations of the current study that must be considered when interpreting the findings. With respect to the demographic and personal characteristics of the current sample, there is a selection/sampling bias insofar as all participants were recruited from social service and/or advocacy organizations, and were therefore accessing various services. This is a particularly important sampling bias to note, as the vast majority of nonstatus youth do not have access to services (Nyers, 2006) and may consequently represent differences in help-seeking behaviours that are distinct from the larger group of undocumented youth. Furthermore, the experiences of undocumented youth may vary widely depending on ethnicity and pre-migration, migration, and post-migration factors related to socio-economic status, means of migration (e.g. smuggled into country, overstaying tourist visa, etc.), parental education, and familial resources, among others. To that end, this sample represented a small subset of the undocumented population with the majority of participants being of South Asian descent, and experiencing fewer pre-migration and migration stressors than other undocumented populations.
In Canada, Roma and other disenfranchised refugee populations who become undocumented often face significant pre-migration (e.g. trauma, war, racism, discrimination, precarious housing, etc.) and migration stressors (e.g. smuggled into country, arriving on overcrowded boats with little access to food/shelter), which impact identity development in profound ways (Pnevmatikos et al., 2010). In the United States, similar patterns are witnessed in undocumented Latin American populations (Suarez-Orozco, 2014). These experiences and stressors may combine to create a different and unique developmental process. Consequently, the individuals in this study likely differ in significant ways and findings may not be generalizable to other undocumented populations with greater pre-migration and migration stressors.

Additionally, due to ongoing difficulties associated with recruiting undocumented populations, a purposeful sample was utilized, which significantly limits the sample to individuals willing to disclose their legal status and discuss status-related concerns, which is an atypical feature in such populations (Lyon, 2015). Lastly, ethnic identity development represents a major part of an undocumented adolescent’s identity, but does not fully account for or encapsulate general identity development issues. As little is known or understood about other aspects of general identity development in this population, it is possible that factors unknown to researchers at this nascent stage impact general and ethnic identity but are unaccounted for within this model. Future studies are needed to corroborate findings and account for these limitations, particularly due to the fact that this is the first study in Canada to explore the developmental correlates of being undocumented.

4.2 Implications for Research, Practice and Policy

Results from this study provide data for an emerging theory on undocumented adolescent development and a new understanding of how the absence of immigration status informs an
individual’s ethnic identity. Research in this area is still in its infancy and much remains to be understood. This study and Maduena’s (2015) model are the only stage-based developmental models with this population to date. Neither model clearly articulates at what ages adolescents or transitional aged individuals would typically expect to experience and undergo each stage, what the implications of getting ‘stuck’ in one stage and not proceeding to the next implies with respect to developmental outcomes, whether all or the majority of undocumented adolescents in fact go through every stage or in the order outlined, and if there are other stages that this model fails to delineate. Another area of possible interest to researchers with this population is to better understand risk-taking behaviours, the construct of ‘calculated risk’, and its impacts (Mangual Fangueroa et al.; Negron-Gonzalez et al., 2014). These researchers discuss how calculated risk-taking behaviors such as disclosure of status to key figures is associated with positive outcomes such as increased sense of control (Mangual Fangueroa et al.; Negron-Gonzalez et al., 2014). Given that much of the extant literature in psychology often emphasizes the problematic aspects of risk-taking behaviors in this population (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2014), more focus on the potential benefits would provide a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon.

For clinical providers servicing this population, developmental considerations should be taken into account, as this population has different mental health needs than their adult counterparts. Specifically, during the initial stage when adolescents develop an increased awareness about their immigration situation, providing a safe space with resources that address what being undocumented involves may allow information processing to counteract and mitigate confusion and fear of the unknown. Similarly, providing psychoeducational information and sharing practical knowledge about educational opportunities, including the university application process and obtaining financial assistance to nonstatus students who may be unaware of their
rights and opportunities, unsure of how larger bureaucratic systems operate, or afraid to seek out such information themselves, may alleviate much of the distress experienced as a result of a lack of available information. Also, based on this study’s findings, there is evidence that similar to typical parent-child anxiety dyads, undocumented youth who exhibit more anxiety symptoms have more anxious parents. For this subset, it would be helpful to provide services to parents about managing their own anxiety so that youth are better adjusted. Furthermore, given reports of isolation and loneliness, possible peer support circles that facilitate undocumented youth meeting and supporting one another would be an important step in breaking cycles of isolation and fear.

Additionally, similar to other marginalized populations accessing mental health, stigma and discrimination are common narratives in this population. Mental health professionals need to be particularly attuned to such themes, validate the experiences of these adolescents along with the real and perceived difficulties associated with being undocumented, and provide space to reframe and counter stereotypical or negative perceptions of being undocumented. In doing so, an opportunity to identify and recognize personal resilience in the face of challenging obstacles may present itself, which in turn may bolster confidence and self-esteem. Lastly, given that the majority of participants discussed how understanding impermanence in life situations instilled hope, it is critical for providers to facilitate discussions about ‘temporality’, transience of situational factors, and that change is inevitable. In so doing, impermanence allows for hope that change can be for the better and no situation or stressor lasts forever. Fostering this is particularly important during transitional periods and in the last year of high school where stressors are particularly challenging and intensified.

On a policy level, inclusion and intentionality are key principles in developing systematic practices that ensure immigration status is not a barrier to receiving support and access to
essential services. In particular, education, which was most cited by participants as essential to their development and identity, is perhaps one of the most important institutional spaces to further policies in support of undocumented adolescents, as access has profound impacts on various developmental sequelae (Ellis & Chen, 2013). Given that Ontario and most provinces in Canada have robust policies guaranteeing access to education until high school matriculation, the next step is university and college access. Institutionally, universities in the United States have devised policies to promote access for this population. The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) was the first university in the world to launch a resource center devoted exclusively to serving the needs of undocumented students by providing information and resources for financial aid, recruiting and informing high school students that they are welcome to apply, and developing internship programs to train and employ undocumented students (Maduena, 2015). Implementing and staffing this center resulted in higher graduation rates and fostered a sense of safety on campus for undocumented students (Jacobo, 2014; Maduena, 2015). In the past decade, universities and colleges across the United States have followed in UCLA’s footsteps, with prominent universities such as Harvard and Yale publicly announcing its commitment to recruiting, retaining, and hiring undocumented students while constructing centers on campus specifically for this population. Many universities also offer full funding packages to undocumented students (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). Furthermore, 20 states offer undocumented students in-state (i.e. domestic) tuition fees and five states offer government financial aid to nonstatus students (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). In Canada, York University became the first post-secondary institution to launch a program in January 2017 whereby undocumented students could be admitted as a domestic student with associated fees. These are models for educators and administrators alike that would
greatly benefit this population and reduce stress and uncertainty. For clinical and educational providers, it is imperative to be educated and well-versed on resources such as these for this population so that cycles of disinformation or absence of information can be broken.
Paper 2 - Acculturation Patterns Amongst Undocumented Adolescents

Abstract

This qualitative study explored the acculturation process of 23 undocumented adolescents living in Canada, focusing specifically on identifying cultural influences, acculturative stressors, and critical sites where acculturation occurs. Semistructured interviews were conducted and data analysis was an iterative process consistent with thematic analysis. Results from the study were consistent with the Tridimensional Model of Acculturation (Ferguson et al., 2012) whereby undocumented youth identified attachment to native and host cultures and subcultures. Data from the study also revealed that school, work, service provision institutions, and national borders were the most influential sites of acculturation. Findings are discussed in terms of theoretical implications for research and practical considerations for healthcare providers and educators that take into account the unique acculturation factors for this population.

INTRODUCTION

Scant literature explores the lives of undocumented residents – persons living in a host country without legal immigration status – in Canada and most Western countries, despite ballooning numbers of this population in recent decades (Magalhaes et. al., 2009; Nyers, 2006). Although research in this area has been growing in fields such as economics, political science, anthropology, sociology, and other social sciences, this population has received marginal attention within the discipline of psychology. Within the limited literature available, immigration status has been found to be an important determinant of mental health (Gonzalez et al., 2013; Simich, 2006; Suarez-Orozco, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, 2015), with the process of acculturation in particular being one of the most critical predictors of well-being in this population (Arbona et. al, 2010; Ellis & Chen, 2013). Research has demonstrated that the difficulties associated with not
having immigration status result in increased levels of acculturative stress amongst
undocumented immigrants when compared to other immigrant populations (Arbona et. al, 2010;
Brabec, 2016; Perez & Fortuna, 2005; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). Despite such understandings,
little is known regarding undocumented immigrants’ acculturation process, the specific stressors
that amplify acculturative stress, or the most critical sites where acculturation occurs. This paper
aims to bridge these gaps and shed insight into the acculturation process and experience of
undocumented youth.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

1.1 Acculturation

Broadly defined, acculturation is the process of behavioural and psychological changes
individuals as well as groups experience as a direct consequence of extended contact with a non-
indigenous culture (Berry & Hou, 2016; Cobb et. al, 2017). More specifically, for individuals,
acculturation results in shifts in five primary dimensions: Values or beliefs, identity, behaviours,
language, and knowledge (Atkinson et. al., 2003; Ellis, 2010; Williams & Berry, 1991).
Throughout the process of acculturation, individuals and groups engage in a variety of
intercultural contacts—engagement that may produce a potential for conflict—and need to
actively negotiate the various cultures if they hope to achieve positive or adaptive outcomes
(Berry, 2005). Research in the past decade demonstrates that acculturation should be understood
as a multi-dimensional process, one in which both individuals and groups adjust to the dominant
culture while simultaneously retaining components of their indigenous culture (Ellis, 2010;
Gonzales et al., 2013; Kim et. al., 2001; Zea et. al., 2003). It is precisely this dynamic interaction
and negotiation between new and old cultural norms and values that comprises the process of
acculturation (Ellis, 2010; Farver, Bhadha et. al., 2002; Farver et. al., 2007; Williams & Berry,
Because acculturation experiences are a direct result of this interaction and negotiation, individual immigrant experiences of this process are dramatically affected and shaped by government policies towards immigrants, pre-existing race and ethnic relations within the host country, presence of various immigrant communities, as well as educational and employment opportunities (Brabeck, 2016; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Suarez-Orozco et. al, 2013; Williams & Berry, 1991; Yoshikawa et. al, 2013). This is important to note, as acculturation for undocumented youth occurs in a context where their “illegal” presence in the host country is feared, politicized, and often discussed in a negative or derisive manner within the public domain (Suarez-Orozco et. al, 2015). Consequently, their acculturation process is different from other immigrant groups, as undocumented youth face unique challenges, obstacles and difficulties within their social milieu (Arbona et al., 2010).

Among the myriad difficulties associated with migration, the acculturation process is understood to be one of the major stressors and has been identified as a critical risk factor associated with mental health problems in undocumented children, adolescents, and (Costa, 2008; Gonzales et al., 2013; Lee & Chen, 2000; Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998; Olague, 2014; Suarez-Orozco et. al., 2011; Suarez-Orozco et. al., 2015; Yeh, 2003). Research indicates that mental health difficulties are associated with an individual’s level of acculturation and it is crucial to better understand the acculturation process for the prevention of mental disorders in immigrant populations (Costa, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). It is important to note that acculturation and settlement context as migratory sequelae have been found to have more significant impacts on the development of mental health problems than the actual migration itself (Carswell et al., 2009; Hyman, 2000; Laban et al., 2011). Specifically, researchers have outlined how post-migration stressors were the strongest predictor of depression
and trauma (Laban et al., 2011); how asylum/immigration processes, occupational status and family issues post-migration best predicted development of psychopathology and emotional distress (Carswell et al., 2009; Cornelis et al., 2005; Schweitzer et al., 2011); and how perceived social support post-migration best predicted development of anxiety symptoms (Schweitzer et al., 2006).

1.2 Acculturative Stress

When individuals or groups have difficulties adapting to the values and customs of the host culture, they experience acculturative stress (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2016; Williams & Berry, 1991). Acculturative stress is associated with a plethora of poor mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, identity formation difficulties, identity confusion, increased psychosomatic symptoms, and feelings of exclusion, worthlessness, helplessness and powerlessness (Costa, 2008; Crockett et al., 2007; Ellis, 2010; Williams & Berry, 1991; Wei et al., 2007; Suarez-Orozco, 2016). First generation immigrants have been found to experience the most acculturative stress, although later generations also experience varying levels of stress (Mena et al., 1987; Padilla et al., 1986; Rogers-Sirin et al., 2014). Further, first generation immigrants who migrate during adolescence or early adulthood are at significantly higher risk for experiencing acculturative stress and adjustment difficulties than children and adults (Sadowsky & Lai, 1997; Wong et al., 2004), as they experience higher rates of bullying and peer aggression (Pottie et al., 2015), overall environmental stress (Lueck & Wilson, 2010; Lueck & Wilson, 2011) and difficulties in school (Sadowsky & Lai, 1997; Wilkinson, 2010). Typical stress models aver that perception of a situation as threatening or beyond the threshold of one’s ability to cope heightens stress and is associated with negative affect (Crockett et al., 2007; Barlow, 2002; Barlow, 2016). For nonstatus youth, the burden and tension of forced assimilation,
perceived discrimination, lack of intercultural competence, and feeling helpless about their lack of immigration status all contribute to a subjective understanding that their acculturative stress is greater than their coping resources and fuels a host of negative emotions (Crockett et al., 2007; Ellis, 2010). These associations are not surprising given that several research studies have shown the direct association between acculturative stress and negative affect (Hovey & King, 1996; Halgunseth et al., 2006; Hovey & Magana, 2000; Rodriguez et al., 2000; Roberts & Sobhan, 1992; Torres et al., 2004; Torres, 2014), and other studies have found that acculturative stress alone predicted higher levels of psychological distress even when controlling for other types of stress (Rodriguez et al., 2000). As a result, many researchers posit that acculturative stress accounts for the individual differences between maladaptive and adaptive psychological and behavioural outcomes in immigrants (Ellis, 2010; Williams & Berry, 1991). It is important to note that although few studies have examined the acculturative experiences of undocumented youth, the available literature suggests that lack of immigration status poses greater challenges to successful acculturation for individuals due to unique and more pronounced barriers to full participation in society (Ellis, 2010).

Language difficulties are one of the biggest challenges for recent immigrants and is associated with a host of negative outcomes, including increased academic risk for youth and feelings of helplessness and insecurity (Bhattacharya, 2000; Ellis, 2010; Mostowska, 2014; Yeh et al, 2003). Socioeconomic status is also a significant predictor of ease of acculturation and this relationship is of particular concern for undocumented populations given the precarious nature of employment within the informal economy. Further, annual income of undocumented populations is typically well below the poverty line, with no access to government assistance programs designed to structurally ameliorate the negative impacts of poverty (Brabeck, 2016; Magalhaes
et. al., 2009, Simich et. al., 2006; Salehi, 2010; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Another important variable that amplifies acculturative stress is if the value systems of the indigenous culture are significantly discrepant than that of the new culture (e.g. collectivist vs. individualist cultures) (Ellis, 2010; Farver, Bhadna et al., 2002; Farver, Narang et al., 2002). Research has demonstrated that the greater this difference, the more likely it is that individuals will experience acculturative stress (Farver, Bhadna et al., 2002; Farver, Narang et al., 2002; Zhang & Tsai, 2014). This variable is said to account for why certain immigrant groups, such as Chinese immigrants, incur more acculturative stress than other immigrant groups such as South Asians or Latin Americans (Ellis, 2010; Farver, Bhadna et al., 2002; Farver, Narang et al., 2002). Other factors such as length of time within the host country, availability of support from parents and/or peers, the social and political environment of the receiving community, along with educational and employment opportunities are also important factors that influence the degree of acculturative stress undocumented individuals experience (Bhattacharya, 2000; Crockett et al., 2007; Ellis, 2010; Kazemipur & Hulli, 2001; Kim et al., 2001; Suarez-Orozco, 2007; Suarez-Orozco, 2015).

1.3 Theoretical Models

Two divergent models of acculturation have dominated the acculturation literature, though a third model has emerged more recently (Berry, 2005; Costa, 2008). The two major models are referred to as the Unidimensional/Unidirectional/Linear Model of Acculturation (Gordon, 1964) and Bidimensional/ Bidirectional/Orthogonal Model of Acculturation (Berry, 1992; Berry, 1997), and the third emerging model is referred to as Tridimensional/Tridirectional/Interactive model (Ferguson et al., 2012). Although all three models hold that the acculturation process includes multiple domains and complex psychosocial adjustment, they promulgate
divergent understandings of the acculturation process and possible outcomes (Costa, 2013). For consistency purposes, this paper will refer to these models as Unidimensional, Bidimensional, and Tridimensional.

The Unidimensional model of acculturation understands the process of acculturation within a linear continuum, whereby the individual shifts from completely identifying with their indigenous culture (unacculturated) to completely assimilating and identifying exclusively with the host culture (Costa, 2013; Gans, 1979). Within the Unidimensional model, assimilation is synonymous with acculturation and the general goal is for minority groups and individuals to acculturate/assimilate into the dominant culture (Ngo, 2008). The model is largely predicated on the idea that the host and indigenous cultures are mutually exclusive and negatively correlated (Costa, 2008). In other words, the more an individual subscribes to the values and/or behaviours of one culture, the weaker their association with the other culture (Costa, 2008; Ryder et al., 2000). The typical or most frequent outcome within this model is that most groups and individuals, over a period of time, will assimilate (Flannery et al., 2001). This framework has been critiqued for various reasons, but most prominently its inability to account for not only changes that the host culture inevitably undergoes as a function of interactions with other cultures, but also its simplistic, zero-sum understanding that individuals are only able to successfully retain elements of one culture at the detriment of the other (Costa, 2008; Ryder et al., 2000).

The Bidimensional model of acculturation proposes that both individuals and groups acculturate through two cultural orientations – an individual’s orientation to their indigenous home culture and an individual’s orientation to the new, host culture – and thereby, allow for both cultures to coexist within an individual’s repertoire of values, behaviours, attitudes and
identity (Berry, 1980; Berry, 2005; Berry & Sam, 1997; Flannery, 2001). Within the Bidimensional model, individuals and groups need not withdraw from their indigenous culture to be subsumed into the dominant, host culture, which allows for a more culturally diverse model that supports the interconnectedness of cultures (Berry, 2005; Costa, 2008). This is particularly important because such models are predicated on the belief that loss of cultural identity does not contribute to an individual’s mental health and well-being, and that there is a bidirectional, two-way interaction between cultures (Berry et al., 2006; Ngo, 2008). During this interaction, cultures influence, and are influenced by, one another, and individuals belonging to both cultures are simultaneously shaped by and themselves shape the cultures in question (Berry & Sam, 1997). Although the Bidimensional model is ubiquitously used, it assumes that there are only two cultural interactions at play. Various researchers have demonstrated that this picture is incomplete, as most migrants interact not just with the host and indigenous culture, but also with various subcultures (e.g. African American/Black culture, Latino/Chicano culture, Asian-American culture, immigrant neighbourhood culture, South Asian immigrant culture, etc.) that are themselves distinct (Ferguson et al., 2012; Flannery, 2001; Phinney, 1990; Phinney, 2004; Ngo, 2008).

Given the limitations and critiques of the Bidimensional model, various scholars have, in recent years, begun to develop a new model of acculturation to better address these concerns: the Tridimensional model of acculturation. This emerging model builds on previous models and proposes that individuals acculturate to more than two cultures, particularly within multicultural societies such as Canada or the United States, where there are strong, distinct subcultures present. Researchers have found considerable evidence that immigrants interact with multiple cultures in pluralistic societies and they all shape the acculturation process (Ellis & Chen, 2013;
Ferguson et al., 2012; Flannery, 2001). This model goes beyond biculturalism insofar that it asserts that subcultures, along with home and host cultures, play an integral role in shaping the acculturation process, which makes it qualitatively distinct from typical hyphenated appellations used for immigrants (e.g. Jamaican-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian, which is understood as bicultural identity). The Tridimensional model posits that a myriad of cultures interact and shape acculturation and, on an individual level, a unique cultural combination is constructed, with its own set of attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviours. Scholars have recently begun to articulate how the Tridimensional model of acculturation addresses limitations of previous models and may be a better theoretical fit within the American and Canadian immigration context, which officially promotes ideas of multiculturalism and is situated within a climate where immigrants actively interact with a myriad of ethnic cultures, not just host and home. For the purposes of this study, data was examined to better understand which of these models best accounted for the experiences of undocumented youth, as no prior literature examined fit of acculturation model for this population.

1.4 The Present Study

In Canada, no existing literature to date explores the acculturation process amongst undocumented adolescents. In this qualitative study, I endeavoured to fill gaps by investigating more closely what the acculturation process for undocumented adolescents entails, specific stressors that amplify acculturative stress, and the most critical sites where acculturation occurs. In order to do so I examined the unique and combined contributions of home, host and subcultures, which ultimately determines how well undocumented adolescents acculturate and their lived experiences. By gaining a deeper understanding of these issues and processes, I hope to provide psychologists and other mental health professionals with critical information that will
allow them to effectively respond to the needs of undocumented youth, while helping shape policies that facilitate healthy acculturation.

METHOD

Qualitative designs are particularly useful for research involving topics in exploratory phases of academic research that seek to understand experiential phenomena (Oltmann, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). As little research has been conducted on the acculturation experiences of undocumented youth, this study functions as a preliminary exploration of how living without legal immigration status informs acculturation. Owen’s (1984) and Braun and Clarke’s (2006) process of thematic analysis, a distinct method of analyzing qualitative data, was employed to analyze the interview data and develop a broader base of understanding complex subjective experiences associated with acculturation. This kind of analysis aims to identify and describe explicit and implicit ideas within the data corpus, shifting beyond mere tallying of words and phrases to formulate and articulate the complex meaning within word-based data sets and identify core constructs being discussed (Guest et al., 2012). The study received university Research Ethics Board approval along with ethics approval at both organizations where recruitment was conducted (See Appendix C for ethics approval documentation).

2.1 Participants

Given difficulties associated with accessing this population, community partnerships with two organizations that service undocumented youth was developed. Despite the fact that both organizations provide a variety of social services for undocumented youth, neither collect nor maintain formal statistics on services for the undocumented because of funding restrictions. Based on findings that sample sizes of 20-30 are ideal for generating more robust conclusions in qualitative designs where research is still in its infancy (Mason, 2010), a purposeful sample of 23
undocumented youth, between the ages of 16-22, was obtained. Adolescents varied in length of years they spent undocumented in Canada, which ranged from 1 to 13, and total years spent undocumented in all countries (European Union and United States included), which ranged between 3-18. For purposes of gender parity and examination of potential differences based on sex, 13 females and 10 males were selected (see Table 3 for a summary of the sample’s demographic characteristics).
Table 3. Demographic characteristics of the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variables</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Origin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia-Herzegovina</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years Undocumented in Canada, United States, and European Union</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-8 years</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12 years</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-16 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17+ years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Working</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Completed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary Enrolment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;10k</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19k</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29k</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29k+</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Data Sources

Data sources include demographic form, interview, transcription and field notes.
2.21 Demographic Form

A demographic questionnaire, developed for the study, asked about personal information, including sex, age, country of origin, age of arrival, education, employment status, income, number of years living without status, and means of entry into Canada (e.g. tourist visa, student visa, etc.). The questionnaire was filled out prior to the interview and submitted to the social service organization responsible for recruitment. This was done to ensure eligibility criteria and reduce overall interview time.

2.22 Interview

Following a literature review of acculturation along with ethnic identity development (focus of first paper), a semi-structured interview was developed focusing on specific domains of associated with ethnic identity development. The domains were selected because of their applicability and association with primary themes explored in acculturation research: Social understandings and cognitions of host country and education system, cultural understanding and competency, social identity and sense of self, social stigma and challenges, and resiliency (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Questions were developed with the explicit purpose of inquiring into the undocumented individual’s overall acculturation experience, exploring stressors associated with acculturation, identifying where cultural learning occurs, what cultures are part of the acculturation process, and understandings of cultural identity. Once the final set of 14 questions was developed, three researchers with expertise in the academic area reviewed interview questions to determine whether they sufficiently addressed constructs related to acculturation and ethnic identity. This triangulation measure was taken to increase reliability and validity and is commonly used in qualitative research (Patton, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Feedback from
researchers confirmed relevant constructs were being measured with the interview questions and all recommendations were incorporated into final semi-structured interview.

Participants were given the option to choose the setting and time of interview, with all selecting to be interviewed in their home or at the headquarters of the organization where recruitment occurred after school or on the weekend. Prior to beginning the semi-structured interview, the researcher provided participants with information regarding confidentiality and highlighted the importance of not collecting or disclosing personal identifiers, including names, during the interview so as to ensure anonymity and address safety concerns. Directly after the interview, a debrief session occurred for 10-30 minutes in which participants were provided an opportunity to discuss their experiences, feelings, thoughts, and feedback – providing the researcher with a richer, variable dataset. After each interview, time was formally allotted for reflection and notetaking about ideas, thoughts, and themes following from the interaction. This process helps increase rigour of future data analysis, as multiple data sources along with reflective practices at multiple points in time provides a more nuanced dataset (Charmaz, 2014; Morrow, 2005).

2.23 Transcription and Field Notes

Due to the sensitive nature of collecting identifiable personal data with this population, no names were collected and participants were assigned a letter pseudonym. Interviews ranged in duration from 90-120 and were digitally recorded. Afterwards, all interviews were transcribed, along with debrief and reflection materials. In accordance with Research and Ethics Board protocol, digital files of interviews were permanently deleted following transcription.

2.3 Procedure

2.3.1 Recruitment
Based on the participant requirements set by the researcher whereby all individuals had to be 16-22 years of age and living without immigration status, recruitment was internally conducted at both organizations. Each organization selected 11-15 individuals and provided the researcher with their respective demographic questionnaire and contact information. Afterwards, the researcher contacted participants to establish interview time and location. As mentioned above, participants’ chose setting and time of interview, with the majority electing to conduct interviews at home.

2.32 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting data in qualitative research, was employed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is particularly effective for identifying both explicit and implicit ideas within a word-based data corpus, shifting beyond general practices of tallying words and phrases, and instead focusing on identifying core constructs being discussed and facilitating understanding of complex relationships, themes, and interactions (Guest et al., 2012). Owen’s (1984) and Braun and Clarke’s (2006) process of thematic analysis were both used to analyze the interview data. Owen’s (1984) three criteria for thematic analysis were used as techniques to identify themes in the data: 1) Recurrence focused on identifying two or more parts of the narrative that encapsulated the same meaning, though different words or phrases were used (e.g. “…felt kinda down” and “not as good as I felt before…less smiley face”; 2) Repetition involved noting the repeated use of a phrase or word (e.g. “afraid” and “left out”); and lastly 3) Forcefulness honed in on vocal inflections, pauses, tone and volume as markers of potentially important content, which translated to noting such occurrences during transcription and highlighting them on the transcript for review. This
technique was incorporated into Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase model of thematic analysis and is described in detail below.

As outlined in Braun and Clarke’s (2006) model, initial data analysis involved immersion with the data corpus to develop in-depth familiarity with its content and consisted of repeated reading of all data and noting initial ideas. The second phase involved coding interesting features to generate initial codes (e.g. listening to J. Cole, love of jerseys and skinny jeans, etc.) and collating data into relevant codes (e.g. hip-hop genre). The third phase consisted of developing themes from collated codes (e.g. urban cultural influence). During this phase of analysis, Owen’s (1984) recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness were employed as a technique to extract themes in the data. For example, discussion of somatic complaints; symptoms associated with anxiety or depression; cognitive dissonance; words/phrases such as ‘pressure’, ‘stressed’, ‘confused’, and ‘torn’ or ‘in between’ were categorized as acculturative stress if narrative focused on cultural difficulties. Also, special importance was paid during this phase to voice inflections, pauses and sighs in the data and carefully examined for thematic content. The fourth phase involved reviewing themes to build a thematic map of the analyses and the fifth phase consisted of defining and naming themes on the thematic map to ensure it provided an overall picture of the data and was representative of the analyses. This final phase of data analysis consisted of producing a chart report (referred to as ‘map’) of data within and across themes that comprehensively produced a vivid picture of the full data corpus. Major themes of this study are outlined in Table 4.

2.33 Data Credibility

The rigour of scientific findings in qualitative research necessitates the use of triangulation, a method that involves the utilization of multiple data sources to more fully
understand the phenomenon being studied (Carter et al., 2014). There are various types of triangulation and this study employed multiple variants in an attempt to enhance scientific quality. Method triangulation references multiple methods of data collection (interview, questionnaire, reflection, field and bebrief notes) and was employed to increase validity (Carter et al., 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Another means of increasing both reliability and validity is to utilize investigator triangulation, which involved the participation of multiple researchers providing detailed feedback (Archibald, 2015). As described earlier, the development of interview questions occurred with the support of three research academics in the area to ensure questions measured relevant constructs of ethnic identity and acculturation. Additionally, to reduce biases associated with data analysis conducted by a single researcher and evaluate inter-rater reliability, the primary supervisor reviewed several transcripts and concomitant coding and analysis. Throughout the remainder of the project, the primary supervisor also provided ongoing feedback regarding data analysis, as well as development of categories, codes, and theory.

RESULTS

Results from the study indicated strong evidence for the Tridimensional model of acculturation, as all 23 participants described the presence of multiple cultural influences and how the confluence of native, host, and societal subcultures shaped their experiences (see Table 4 for summary of coded factors). This section outlines the influence and impact of each of these cultures on the acculturation process while examining the tensions/stressors individuals experienced while navigating these cultures.
Table 4. Identified Themes: Cultural Influences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Influence</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native culture</td>
<td>Maintaining values and ties</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive views on home culture</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disengagement from home culture</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host Culture (Canadian/United States)</td>
<td>Adoption of new values/Active engagement with host culture</td>
<td>23 (total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning to be ‘illegal’</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcultures</td>
<td>Ties to neighbourhood and immigrant communities</td>
<td>23 (Total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban culture</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social justice milieu</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1 Native Culture

Native culture is the individual’s indigenous culture prior to migration, which typically references the culture of their parents or caretakers. For adolescents in the study, all participants described their native culture as impactful, particularly in the values domain. Participants described coming to Canada with generally positive views of their native culture and all participants retained a positive outlook post-migration. Most participants (91.3%) mentioned communal values of family and shared sense of responsibility within their family as indicators of maintaining close ties to their native culture. They described at length how their native cultures emphasized collectivist tendencies and how the sense of communal support is distinct from Canadian individualism. As one participant stated:

“It’s really different from Mixco [Guatemala]. Here [in Toronto], everyone kinda does [their] own thing, which is cool…but it’s different from how my family is. [Our family] is tight, super close, and how we take care of [each] other is a little bit different [than] Canadians. Like, my parents value family on a whole another level and they try and pass that onto us…I grew up doing things my family wanted for me…even [when I make] decisions, it’s not just me me me all the time, I think about [names sister, mother and father].”

Another participant described the distinction between collective and individualist cultures with a unique analogy:

“In Tamil culture, everything’s shared…everything. Like, the first time I went over to [Canadian friend’s name] house, it kinda stuck in my mind. All their food is really individual, like, each person gets one [piece of] salmon, five broccoli pieces [laughs]…but if you eat at my house, everything’s served in big pots…like, it’s all shared. There’s no one piece of this and that; it’s like everyone gets everything, it’s not in these individual [hand gesture indicating servings]. That’s [the] difference between [the] cultures in a lot of ways, Canada’s sort of more individual, which is lit [awesome] and I like that in so many ways, but I’m happy that my family is the way it is. I like that we’re so tight [close]…and a lot of my Canadian friends don’t get that.”

Similarly, almost all participants described retaining parts of their collectivist, native cultures, particularly as it relates to familial structures and interactions. Other elements of their native
culture that participants mentioned retaining were language, food and ethnic attire. All participants relayed some level of fluency in their native language and looked favourably upon being bi- or multi-lingual. They also described consuming native food at home and wearing ethnic attire to community/family events to commemorate their unique heritages. Interestingly, many participants (52.1%) reported disengaging more from families and their ethnic culture during adolescence, primarily between the ages of 12-18 years, but reconnecting with their native cultures and placing more emphasis on family support during transitional phase of late adolescence/emerging adulthood when faced with uncertainty about career and school prospects. When describing the rationale behind this, one participant eloquently summed it up:

“When I was young(er), I thought it was cool to be more Canadian in everything. It felt kinda whack [crazy] to talk [in] Hindi or Kashmiri or roll up somewhere wearing a lehengha – you gotta keep in mind this [is] before the Kardashians and Kylie Jenner started rocking lehenghas, like we didn’t think of it first, and making it cool. I kinda hated it sometimes, I just wanted to be more like other kids in everything…I’d tell my parents to make me sandwiches for lunch because I didn’t wanna eat roti at school and be lame. And kids [in Canada] aren’t constantly all about family all the time so I would wanna kinda not do stuff with my family even if I secretly liked some things [laughs]…and then you kinda grow up and realize you don’t need to be a clone of every[one] else and that you’re the person you are because of where you come from, like, whether that’s your family and how you got grown or your traditions or whatever…and I was forced to [realize] that in Grade 12 because that’s when the shit show got real and I had to have my family to help me figure out what to do.”

During the period when undocumented adolescents are finishing up high school with few opportunities for further schooling and employment, adolescents increasingly forge closer ties with their parents to get support during this difficult transition. This often facilitates greater ties to their native cultures and also helps explain why typical developmental patterns of individuating from family in adolescence and early adulthood is not as pronounced in this population as other immigrant populations.
The major stressor that all participants mentioned when discussing tensions with their native culture was the iterative and constant process of negotiating cultural values and ties to the community. Although all participants described maintaining ties to their native culture in multiple ways, they also described engaging with their native language, food, attire, families, and values in varying degrees. Participants reported varying levels of attachment to different aspects of their native culture. Their level of engagement varied based on developmental age, amount of years in the host country, and congruency of personal and cultural values. As one participant explained:

“It’s complicated. My feelings change depending on things…like, I feel good about knowing Bangla, Hindi, Urdu, a little bit of Gujrati, and I love parathas (food)…but there’s certain things about [the culture] that’s so damn backwards, it’s annoying. Boys still have more value, like, they get more respect and I don’t believe [in] that…I [also] have a gay friend and I’m not religious like my parents, I don’t really believe in all that stuff. As I’ve gotten older, my thinking’s sorta changed about a lot of it so, like, I still value a lot of the same things as people back home [in Bangladesh] and I’m proud [of my culture] because it makes me, me, but it’s also this constant clash with my parents and the culture because [my parents] don’t get me and how I see things on some [topics].”

Similar to that of other immigrant adolescents, undocumented adolescents struggle in the negotiation of values between native and other cultures they are exposed to – creating a space ripe for acculturative stress within the family domain.

The data from this study provide some evidence that selective and intentional disengagement from certain home culture values or beliefs (e.g., views on sexuality, religiosity, etc.) increases based on amount of time spent in host country and/or time of arrival. Individuals who migrated prior to their teenage years and those who lived in host country for eight or more years explicitly discussed intentional disengagement from more ‘conservative’ aspects of home culture:
“Dude, like, there’s some things that are just whack as fuck about [values in home country]. People are way more into other people’s business, like, things they got no business being in. Like, why do you care if that guy wants to be with another dude, you know, like, what’s the big deal? It’s fine, it’s his life, you know, so whatever…and like, who cares what [name of person] wears out, she’s living her life. Like, burqa or shorts or whatever you wan[t to] wear, do what makes you feel you. Straight up, that shit makes me sick. Like, things [back home] were kind [of] conservative and, like, uptight, in those ways, you know, and I just can’t get with that. Like, I don’t buy into it so maybe that means I’m more foreign [gestures word ‘foreign’ in quotes with fingers].”

The data revealed that individuals who migrated pre-adolescence or earlier and those living in host country for upwards of eight years endorsed views on sexuality, religiosity, and other social issues that are more consistent with dominant liberal perspectives within the host country. Based on the available data, it was difficult to ascertain whether time of migration (childhood, pre-adolescence, adolescence), years spent in host country, or a combination of these factors was more closely associated with selective and intentional disengagement from particular home culture values and beliefs. Participants who did not meet the above criteria either did not discuss such issues in their interviews or described varying degrees of discomfort or non-engagement (e.g. “I’m not really sure what to think of some of this stuff, it’s different [from back home].” and “It’s weird sometimes, people in [my] school see everything as normal and okay, like, it’s not weird that two [girls] are making out.” Overall, undocumented adolescents maintained strong ties to their native culture and endorsed more ‘communal’ values, maintained close ties to family support systems, and selectively disengaged from particular aspects of home culture (e.g., sexuality and religion) based on number of years in host country and/or time of arrival.

3.2 Host Culture

Host culture refers to the dominant practices and perspectives within the country an individual has migrated to. For adolescents in the study, all participants described their Canadian and American host culture as impactful and their experience as both positive and negative.
Participants described generally positive views of Canadian and American culture and all participants endorsed embracing values of diversity, multiculturalism, and political and social freedom, which they identified as Canadian or American values distinct from their native country. As one participant encapsulated:

“My [home] country is straight stupid with [some] things…election days were shady as f**k, like crazy [hand gestures]. There’s these insane strikes so all schools and office[s] are closed…and you can’t really go out because cars are on fire and stuff and you can’t say things…and you don’t get to meet peeps from all over [the world]. I feel like it’s pretty sick that I have friends from Iran and Philippines and Trinidad…that’s very Canadian, you know, like, it’s very multicultural and that’s a good thing that’s celebrated [at my] school. That would probably not happen back [home country.]”

All participants described adopting new values related to pluralism in host country and demonstrated engagement with host culture in adoption of music, celebrations (e.g., graduations, birthdays, etc.), clothing attire, culinary preferences, and language. Participants mentioned how these things were distinct from their home cultural practices and how, on these domains, they identify as more Canadian or American in their orientation.

Despite positive views of many host country values and practices, all participants endorsed feelings and experiences of exclusion, disconnection and discrimination in host country based on lack of immigration status. Adolescents detailed four spaces in which exclusion and discrimination occurred: School and educational institutions, service provision (e.g. driver’s license, healthcare, voting, police, etc.), employment/volunteer sites, and ports of exit/entry (i.e., restrictions on travel and movement). In each of these spaces, all participants experienced exclusion, which they understood as being distinct to their host country experience (see Table 5 for summary of sites). One participant described this extensively:

“I’d never really gone through anything like that at school in [home country] so it felt wrong…bad. Like, I couldn’t go for our literature project to Montreal because the school didn’t have a health card for me…so my class got to go, except for me…and
Experiences of perceived discrimination and exclusion serve as reminders to undocumented adolescents that they don’t quite “fit” a Canadian identity and have difficulties with acculturating within such climates. Based on the entire dataset, discrimination and exclusion were the most frequently coded themes, emerging 274 times. Given the prevalence of such narratives, it is important to note that although undocumented adolescents positively understood and adopted various host country values and practices, they also endorsed that discrimination and exclusion are woven into their experience of what it means to reside in Canada, the United States, and/or European Union. Interestingly, the results also showed that only older adolescents (17+ years) endorsed feelings of rejection from mainstream society in addition to discrimination and exclusion. From the narratives, it appears this theme of rejection is mediated by not meeting key developmental milestones at the end of high school, such as having options for university/college, employment, etc. Given that discrimination, exclusion, and rejection are major markers of acculturative stress within immigrant populations (Torres et al., 2013), it is particularly important to note that unique legal stressors and associated structural barriers make undocumented adolescents’ acculturation experience distinct from other immigrant groups given their experiences of structurally embedded discrimination and exclusion.
Table 5. Sites of Acculturative Stress/Discrimination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Nature of Discrimination</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School/Educational Institutions</td>
<td>Enrolment, financial aid, field trips, and eligibility for programs</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/Volunteer Places</td>
<td>Eligibility/authorization to work or volunteer</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Provision</td>
<td>Accessing driver’s license, healthcare and police</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port of Entry/Exit</td>
<td>Restrictions on travel and ability to reunite with family</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Subcultures

All participants in the study identified subcultures that shaped and influenced their acculturation experiences, including exposure to distinct cultures within ethnic neighbourhoods and urban culture in metropolitan cities.

3.3.1 Ethnic Neighbourhood

The majority of participants identified various subcultural influences within their ethnic neighbourhood. Participants detailed how their neighbourhoods have been influential in the acculturation process and how these neighbourhoods function as their own distinct enclave in various respects. As one participant stated:

“Lots of things are weird about how I grew up and stuff, like being in [Toronto neighbourhood name] is kinda wild in [some] ways, you know. It’s like its own lil’ world…there’s a bunch of us Bengali and Paki[stani] kids in this neighbourhood so it’s like, you gotta bunch of parents who are real[ly] like, ethnic [laughs] in some ways but adjusting to being in Canada and then you gotta bunch of us kids who are growing up in this ‘hood going to school with Canadian kids and then having a bunch of Bengali and Paki friends here too and it’s like, we’re not all the way up Canadian or Paki[stani] or Bengali…and this [area] kinda shows that a bit, you know. Like, it’s this weird place where you see different cultures blend and it creates [its] own shit. Like, there’s these events that we throw that’s like each of us reps a part of our own culture but with a twist, you know. Like, you do bhangra and borrow beats from another West African dude’s song…so like, yeah, I mean we take pride in our own [culture] but it’s turn[ed] into something else that’s dope. It’s kinda deadly [laughs] how this [neighbourhood] kinda takes a lil’ bit of each of where we come from and makes something else.”

Almost all participants (20/23) discussed the unique attributes of growing up within distinct ethnic neighbourhoods and how the presence of particular cultures (e.g. West African, Pakistani, Bengali) give rise to a unique interplay between them, and ultimately combine to create a unique ethnic neighbourhood culture. As one participant aptly stated, “It’s kind [of] like blending families, like, you put different culture[s] and pe[o]p[le] together and you get this whole new thing, like, blend, you know.” In other words, neighbourhood cultures are distinct and represent a
unique set of characteristics or ‘blend’ of their parts (individual ethnic cultures). These fusions of various different ethnic communities shape the cultural milieu of each neighbourhood and undocumented adolescents are influenced by their respective neighbourhood culture.

3.32 Urban Culture

All participants in the study described how growing up within a metropolitan city impacted their understanding of culture and detailed how these experiences have shaped them. In particular, undocumented adolescents described the experiences of growing up using subways and buses, attending urban schools, listening to particular kinds of music, attending games and events in the city, and integrating themselves into a “fast [and] intense” city environment as one individual aptly stated. Most participants (16/24) made references to “the six,” “TO,” or “Tdot” (Toronto references) and described how urban culture in particular has had significant impacts on their understandings of culture and identity. As one participant explained:

“You hear all these [hip-hop] songs about whatever, like, Chi-town and New York and Brooklyn and that’s how I feel about T.O., you know. It’s that same love for the city that raised you so you gotta show some love that way. Like, I grew up in [Toronto neighbourhood] and there’s something real different about that, you know, and where you grow up. Like, [the] area is known for things, you know, good and bad, but it was the first time I really got [exposed] to rap and hip-hop and like, you know, the style at school… how people walk, talk, like, the slang they use and stuff. I wasn’t used to that [back home] and, like, you know, I didn’t really know about all this stuff when I watched, like, English (referencing American shows in English) shows in Sri Lanka. So it was kind of like a bit of a shock that there’s this different, like, I don’t know, different kind of life and world in [Toronto neighbourhood]…but, like, it’s made me really love certain things, like rap and fashion and stuff…[laughs] like, my Mom noticed this big change in me, I guess, because she’s like, why are you wearing tighter jeans than your sister [laughs] and these big shirts [points to T-shirt]. Like, I just like different things now so it’s kind of made me see things different[ly], you know.”

Narratives such as these illustrate the realities of how subcultures, particularly urban, inner city culture, are an integral and important component of undocumented adolescents’ acculturation process. Their experiences within urban landscapes distinctly shape their preferences in music,
attire, vernacular language, beliefs and values. Given that the majority of participants in the study detailed how urban culture has influenced them, these kinds of subcultures are relevant and considerable within the acculturation process.

3.33 Social Justice Milieu

The majority of the participants in the study (14/23) discussed exposure to community efforts to address issues related to social justice as being impactful culturally. All participants were recruited from service-related organizations that have strong advocacy programs for youth and the data from this study shows heightened sensitivity and commitment to social justice and values of fairness and equality. As one participant described:

“There’s this weird responsibility sometimes you feel to do something because it’s, like, so wrong what people go through. Like, my family doesn’t deserve this B.S. and it’s really unfair…like, it’s not good, it shouldn’t be okay to treat people like this. I feel like it’s just not okay. Everyone deserves to live life to the fullest, but how can we? It’s stupid that people aren’t all treated equally good…I mean, [being undocumented] has kind of, like, made me think about things differently…like, the other day, I saw this guy on the TTC say something racist to this other girl and I went and sat next to her and asked if she was alright…I don’t think I’d have done stuff like that before, but I feel for people more sometimes because I know things can be, like, hard and you feel blah [rolls eyes], but this place (referencing service organization) has really taught me to kinda stand up for myself and others, whatever’s happening. Like we talk about how even if it’s not your struggle, it’s still struggle and everyone, like, struggles differently but we can all help, you know. And that’s how everyone here is so that’s cool, it’s made me be more like that.”

The exposure to this distinct culture of activism influences undocumented adolescents’ values and behaviors as they acculturate to social justice spheres. It is interesting to note that those who endorsed social justice environments as playing a significant role in the acculturation process were all older participants (19+ years of age), which may indicate that, developmentally, undocumented adolescents require extended exposure to this environment for several years before internalizing some of these values and behaviorally activating within this domain.

DISCUSSION
Drawing from prior models of acculturation, this study examined the various cultural influences that comprise undocumented adolescents’ acculturative experience. Results from this study offer evidence supportive of the Tridimensional model of acculturation whereby individuals endorsed acculturating to multiple cultures, not just host and home. Data indicate that various home, host and subcultures interact in combination with one another, often giving rise to a unique set of acculturation experiences for undocumented adolescents that significantly impacts their attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviours. Furthermore, the results underscore increasing support that any comprehensive model of acculturation is not necessarily just the presence and interaction of one, two or even three distinct cultures, but rather the interaction of multiple cultures and subcultures, as participants described various cultures fusing together in their neighbourhoods. Consequently, as acculturation occurs at various levels with respect to country, province/state, city, neighborhood, and institutional exposure, it is salient that the very process of acculturation varies greatly based on these factors, along with the types of subcultures individuals find themselves immersed within. Thus, it may be more accurate to understand acculturation within the Tridimensional model whereby various cultural interactions give rise to a separate and unique cultural combination at the individual level. The findings provide insight into the sites and cultures within which acculturation occurs and provides rich data regarding the spaces in which acculturation is most impactful for this population. Given the dearth of research in this area, this study offers some important contributions to better understand the complex realities associated with growing up undocumented, including identifying the major sites where acculturation occurs, specific stressors endemic to this population and evidence for a newer model of acculturation that better accounts for individuals lived experiences.

4.1 Theoretical Implications
Acculturation has generally been understood within the framework of dual host and home cultural interactions whereby individuals equally understand and adjust to both cultures adaptively (Berry et al., 2006). The Bidimensional Model, which is most frequently cited in the literature, asserts this narrative and has garnered significant support over the past two decades. However, researchers are increasingly discovering the complex realities of acculturation and how multiple cultural influences shape the acculturative experiences of various immigrant groups (Ellis, 2010; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Flannery, 2001). The results of this study support the Tridimensional Model, whereby individuals acculturate to multiple cultures and subcultures, not just host and home cultures. Moving beyond typical hyphenated appellations used for immigrants (e.g. Korean-Canadian, Jamaican-Canadian, etc.), in this model subcultures play as integral a role as host and indigenous culture, and the acculturation process is an interplay of these cultures. This interplay ultimately results in the construction of a unique cultural combination on an individual level, with its own set of attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviours. Similar to research in psychodynamic literature that discusses the creation of a conceptual “third space” – one in which the patient and therapist co-create a distinct, new space through their unique dyadic interaction, which is shaped by both but owned by neither separately (Quatman, 2015) – the results from this study provide evidence of an emerging “third cultural space”, one that includes various cultures but is more than the sum of the parts. This third cultural space represents the interaction and presence of multiple cultural contributions (home, host, and subcultures) that give rise to a unique set of attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviours for the individual. The third space is fluid and may change or shift over time based on what cultural contributions an individual is exposed to at a particular moment in time.
The results from this study are inconsistent with the Bidimensional Model, which assumes that successful acculturation necessitates equal part retention of home culture and immersion in host culture. In the present study, participants did not equally acculturate to cultures but rather selectively chose what parts of each culture to retain and/or adopt. From the qualitative descriptions, none of the participants endorsed equal adoption of cultures, which speaks to the fluidity with which individuals acculturate to multiple and simultaneous cultural influences. Thus, it may be more accurate to understand cultural adoption and retention on continuums, rather than fixed, binary variables. This would accord space for a more nuanced understanding where individuals and groups acculturate in different degrees to various cultures and subcultures, and whereby successful acculturation does not necessitate people adjust in equal parts. However, future studies are needed to corroborate the findings, particularly due to the fact that this is one of the first studies in Canada to explore the acculturative correlates of being undocumented, as well as to address the limitations of the current study.

4.2 Clinical Implications

For clinical providers servicing this population, it is important to understand that multiple cultures influence the acculturation process and facilitate exploration of how undocumented adolescents understand culture, help identify cultural influences, and promote a buffet idea of cultural adaptation whereby individuals can ‘pick and choose’ what parts of each culture to retain—essentially promoting choice and freedom in relation to their cultural identity. Clinically, this orientation allows for the creation of a safe environment in which individuals are able to actively and thoughtfully make meaning of their own, unique “third cultural space”, which is a representation of their specific beliefs, values and practices and developed from a combination of cultural influences.
Additionally, bearing in mind that discrimination and exclusion were the most frequently coded themes in the study, it is necessary for clinical providers to be aware of the psychosocial impacts of marginalization, discrimination and racism. Similar to other populations that experience prejudice, validating the social experiences of such individuals is important and necessary in order to facilitate conversations about how discrimination impacts their daily reality (Fulani, 2014). By initiating such conversations, clinical providers can more accurately gauge the adolescent’s self-concept and ascertain the impacts of discrimination on the individual’s sense of self. Given widespread evidence that marginalized groups internalize negative messages from society regarding their cultures and themselves (Fulani, 2014), it is imperative to explore such impacts and build resiliency in these moments by helping adolescents actively identify their strengths and reflect on how discrimination itself may be contributing to negative understandings of self. In so doing, clinical providers are able to support reality testing in terms of how much of self-concept is a reflection of societal issues versus personal self-esteem related concerns – in other words, helping clients ‘own’ the parts of self-concept that are compromised because of their own insecurities vs projections of discrimination (Fulani, 2014).

4.4 Limitations

Particular features of this study must be considered when evaluating the findings. Firstly, the sample of participants was recruited in Toronto, one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, which may have impacted exposure to multiple, diverse cultures. Therefore, it is possible that the present findings in support of the presence of multiple cultures within the acculturation process may not accurately represent the realities of other undocumented adolescents. However, there is an argument to be made that absence of diverse cultural influences may itself be the presence of a particular variant of subculture. Furthermore,
acculturation research has identified that an individual’s ethnic background significantly shapes the acculturation process (Pires & Stanton, 2010), which poses generalizability concerns in this study since the majority of participants were of South Asian descent. Additionally, given the small sample size and qualitative nature of the study, more robust understanding of the factors impacting selective acculturation (i.e. intentional disengagement from one element of a culture and selective engagement with another part of culture) was particularly difficult to disentangle. From the dataset, it was unclear whether age at migration, total years in host country, or a combination of these factors was responsible. Lastly, extensive research in the area of acculturation and gender has demonstrated significant gender differences in the acculturation process (Kulis et al., 2013; Mansyur et al., 2016; Nicholson et al., 2013), which this study was unable to adequately address, as small sample size made analyses based on gender challenging. Specifically, it was unclear in the dataset whether differences in experience were related to gender or other factors such as age entering host country, pre-migration issues, and a host of other considerations. In light of such limitations and the paucity of research in this area, future studies are needed to corroborate or refute these findings.

4.5 Future Directions

Given the evidence for the Tridimensional model of acculturation, future studies are needed to corroborate and build upon this model. Studies developed could address how many cultures significantly impact the acculturation process (e.g. if there is a cultural saturation factor involved in the number of cultures that impact acculturation), whether certain cultures are more impactful than others, if specific cultural combinations have greater difficulties with acculturation and experience more stress, and explore how the unique combination of cultures impacts individuals over an extended period of time by gathering more longitudinal data. By
examining these areas, a more robust understanding of this model as it relates to this population and others could be established.
General Discussion

The research presented in this dissertation deepens our understanding of the impacts of undocumented status upon adolescents via an analysis of developmental stages of identity development and its impact on mental health, and an empirical investigation of the process of acculturation for this population.

5.1 Implications for Research

5.1.1 New Ethnic Identity Development Model

Given the lack of available literature with this population and, more specifically, in the area of ethnic identity development, the first paper contributed a new model/emerging theory on undocumented adolescent development, outlining four distinct stages of ethnic identity development: revelation, (dis)engagement, developing undocumented consciousness, and sense of identity: negotiating undocumented consciousness. Developmental concerns centred on a lack of coherent self-identity, compromised self-efficacy and relationships, and acculturative stress. Literature in the field has yet to posit a cogent model of ethnic identity development amongst both undocumented adolescents and transitional-aged individuals, with this study marking the first to articulate such a model. This model builds on earlier models with undocumented college and university students (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Maduena, 2015) and furthers research in this area by expanding the range of undocumented individuals studied, both with regard to age and educational background, as this study included transitional aged participants not enrolled in university/college or the workforce. The findings from this study are consistent with both models, as all discussed initial stages of discovery, learning the implications of not having status, and an iterative process of constructing and rebuilding identity. An important contribution from the data in this study has been the identification of the specific difficulties in the transition from
adolescence to emerging adulthood. Although this period consists of challenges for typically developing populations (Arnett, 2014; Zarett & Eccles, 2006), undocumented populations experience unique challenges with regard to ethnic identity development, as many contend with the structural realities of not being able to fulfill important developmental milestones (e.g. going to college/university, getting a job, securing a driver’s license, traveling, etc.). This period of transition is fraught with struggle and how adolescents navigate through this transition has repercussions in their ability to construct a coherent sense of identity and make meaning from their challenges. As outlined in both Ellis and Chen’s (2013) and Maduena’s (2015) models, individuals discussed at length how making meaning of their experiences later in life (early to mid 20’s) was very much informed by their experiences during this transitional period, which saliently underlines the importance of unpacking and understanding the transitional stage of ‘developing undocumented consciousness.’

Furthermore, it is particularly important to understand the full impacts of discrimination and exclusion, as this was the most frequently coded theme in this study, which is consistent with Maduena’s (2015) identification of ‘inclusion/exclusion’ as the most salient theme in their study. Given that models of ‘typical’ development outline the pernicious effects of failing to consolidate a coherent self-identity by emerging adulthood, it is important to understand if being the perceived “other” (tied to narratives of exclusion and discrimination) itself leads to developmental difficulties, and it would be prudent for future studies to examine this phenomenon more closely. It is important to also note that the main mediating variable ameliorating the negative impacts of incoherent self-identity is feelings of personal agency – the higher the level of personal agency, the less likelihood that the individual will experience the negative impacts of incoherent identity (Schwartz et. al, 2005). However, results from this study
reveal that nonstatus adolescents report low levels of agency and control, as they feel 
immigration status, not personal will, dictates their success. Consequently, this has implications 
for research insofar as investigating ways to cultivate greater sense of personal agency within 
this population and examine literature with other populations who have also faced similar 
obstacles to establish how this can be done effectively. Furthermore, given the sample 
characteristics within the study, research with varied populations of undocumented adolescents 
(e.g. Roma, African, etc.) is needed to gauge whether this model accurately reflects the 
experiences of a diverse and heterogeneous group. It would be interesting to explicitly design a 
study to understand the ways in which undocumented adolescents’ developmental stages and 
outcomes vary based on contextual, social and personal factors and what specifically accounts 
for these differences.

5.12 Support for Emerging Tridimensional Model of Acculturation

The second paper drew upon prior models of acculturation and examined the various 
cultural influences that comprise undocumented adolescents’ acculturative experience. Results 
from this study offer support the tridimensional model of acculturation whereby individuals 
endorsed acculturating to multiple cultures, not just host and home. Data indicated that various 
home, host and subcultures interact in combination with one another, often birthing a unique 
constellation of acculturation experiences for undocumented adolescents that notably shapes 
their perspectives, values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. Furthermore, the results underscore 
increasing evidence that a comprehensive model of acculturation is not necessarily just the 
presence and interaction of one, two or even three distinct cultures, but rather the interaction of 
multiple cultures and subcultures. Given the reality that acculturation occurs at multiple levels 
with respect to country, city, neighborhood, etc., the very process of acculturation is reflective of
these experiential factors, which is more accurately accounted for within the Tridimensional Model since it asserts that cultural interactions fuse into a unique cultural combination at the individual level. This study marks the first to provide data and propose that acculturation for undocumented adolescents is more consistent with the Tridimensional model of acculturation, as previous studies often examined this population’s experiences from the bidimensional perspective (Ellis, 2010; Gonzales et al., 2013; Maduena, 2015). Whereas prior models discuss the acculturation process as the interplay between only home and host cultures, findings from this study also supported the integral role of subcultures in shaping the individual’s beliefs, values, understandings and practices. This model hopes to account for the complex realities of acculturation by identifying the presence of multiple cultural factors that impact an individual and acknowledges the interplay of a host of cultures.

5.2 Implications for Practice

For clinical providers servicing this population, one of the important findings within the study involved identification of the primary sites in which acculturative stress occurs: school/educational, employment/volunteer spaces, service provision sites, and ports of entry/exit. This is critical given that acculturative stress is associated with mental health difficulties (Gonzales et al., 2013), decreased self-confidence and self-worth (Claudat et al., 2016), and a host of negative developmental outcomes (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2014). Consequently, by identifying primary spaces where acculturative stress is most salient accords clinicians and educators with an opportunity to intervene at the appropriate site. The two most frequently mentioned sites of acculturative stress were school/educational institutions and employment/volunteer spaces. As mentioned earlier, various institutions in the United States have creatively provided access to post-secondary opportunities, ideas that are slowly beginning to
also take root in Canada with York University being the first to offer a pathway to university for undocumented students. These pathways offer the possibility of reducing acculturative stress within the educational context by reducing exclusion and discrimination. For clinical providers servicing schools (high school and university), these institutions are one of the primary spaces where undocumented adolescents can be accessed. Given that most undocumented populations actively retreat from public spheres and do not access majority of services, schools and other educational institutions offer a unique opportunity to access, work with, and support these individuals who may otherwise receive little attention or service. Similar to public health models in the United States that have on site primary care providers and mental health staff at clinics based out of schools to service the uninsured, having such providers at schools who understand the clinical needs of undocumented adolescents could help facilitate much needed psychological support at critical transitional moments, particularly in the last two years of high school and first year of college/university since this period is particularly stressful.

Another idea for clinical providers to consider is the option of possible peer support circles that facilitate undocumented youth meeting and supporting one another in an attempt to break cycles of isolation, fear, and lack of information that are part of their acculturation narratives. Several social service agencies in Toronto and university counseling centres in the United States (e.g. University of California Los Angeles, Yale University, Berkeley, Harvard, etc.) have built groups for undocumented adolescents and students so that they have a “safe space” to discuss difficulties, share resources and support one another. For providers and educational personnel at schools or institutions where there are few, maybe even one, undocumented adolescent(s) who is experiencing isolation and feels like the designated ‘other’, developing wider networks with regional school districts or larger geographic areas could help
locate other students in similar predicaments. Then, with the utilization of technology such as electronic video conferencing, isolated adolescents could connect with one another within electronic support circles. This option has the added benefit of reducing anxiety associated with having a cohort of undocumented individuals in a physical space that could be targeted by immigration authorities. Similar to the research with LGBT and other marginalized populations whereby electronic support circles were found to reduce isolation, increase social support, and create a shared sense of belonging (Ybarra et al., 2015), exploring electronic options may also have similar benefits for undocumented populations.

5.3 Implications for Policy

Bearing in mind the pervasive influence of the distal context and how policies and legislation impact the daily experiences of undocumented adolescents, policies addressing systemic barriers are necessary and important to reducing acculturative stress and improving developmental outcomes. The counter to acculturative and developmental stressors of discrimination, exclusion and rejection is inclusion on a policy level, which could have significant positive impacts on the overall acculturation process. By developing policies in which immigration status is not a prerequisite for receiving support, access to services, and institutions, individuals would feel included and part of society at large. As such, Access without Fear/Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT)/Sanctuary City policies could be developed and implemented, and in fact, are already in effect in over 150 cities across the United States (Salvi, 2015). Such policies effectively prevent service providers and administrators from inquiring into or asking for immigration documents as a prerequisite of accessing services, and also prohibit providers from sharing immigration-related information of clients with immigration authorities. Furthermore, other policy interventions such as issuance of municipal identification cards for all residents,
irrespective of immigration status, could help undocumented adolescents meet some developmental milestones such as getting their driver’s license. In the United States, 12 states allow undocumented immigrants to procure driver’s licenses (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2016). By providing policy interventions that reduce exclusion and discrimination and bearing in mind the impacts of distal contexts on this population, such policies could have a trickle down effect of reducing acculturative stress and improving developmental outcomes.

5.4 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There were several limitations in this dissertation that should be considered when interpreting the results. One of the major limitations is that data is based on one source: the adolescent. Given the complex nature of acculturation and the primary sites where it occurs, having multiple perspectives on the process from parents/caregivers, siblings/family members, teachers, and peers would provide richer data and increase validity of findings through the use of multiple informants. Similar to the limitations around self-report measures, bias remains an issue when findings are based on a singular informant. Given that there are so few studies examining identity development amongst undocumented adolescents, future studies employing multiple informants would help provide more rigorous data about the developmental and acculturation process and confirm whether findings were consistent. Furthermore, the ability to generalize findings from this study is limited by the demographic characteristics of the sample, which does not reflect the diverse ethnic backgrounds of undocumented populations in Canada.

Research examining ethnic identity development and acculturative patterns associated with being undocumented is in its infancy in Canada with much remaining to be studied and understood. An interesting area of study concerns the various subcultures that impact both the acculturation process and ethnic identity development. Though this study uncovered evidence of
the impact of a myriad of cultures, future research in this area could investigate whether particular subcultures are more influential than others and if some combinations of cultural fusion are associated with better developmental outcomes, and conversely, if some cultural combinations lead to poorer developmental outcomes. Additionally, examining ethnic identity acculturation patterns of undocumented adolescents in various provinces/states and different countries (e.g. Australia, Britain, Germany, etc.) would allow for comparisons both within and between countries and provide rich data on how distal contexts impact individuals’ sense of ethnic identity. Within immigrant population studies at large, many scholars have increasingly critiqued the ongoing focus of research on deficits, difficulties, exclusion and discrimination, which they argue has further fuelled stereotypical perceptions of migrants as problematic and at odds with the general population (Bourbeau, 2014). Similar to the positive psychology movement in mental health that sought to shift the conversation in the field from that of deficits to a more strengths-based approach, future research focusing on the resiliency of undocumented populations and specifically attending to effective/positive coping strategies may provide useful information about how to support this population. Furthermore, what is saliently absent from the literature are comparative and longitudinal data that assess the impacts between undocumented populations and other immigrant groups, as well as understanding longer-term impacts of growing up undocumented and their developmental trajectory into adulthood and beyond. Also, exploring the experiences of a more heterogeneous sample of undocumented youth would provide important information about the similarities and differences within this group with regard to acculturation, ethnic development, resiliency, and general mental health difficulties. For example, focusing exclusively on specific populations of undocumented youth, such as individuals with existing pre-migration or migration trauma, individuals who do not disclose
their status to others, those who disclose their status, particular ethnic groups (e.g. Roma, El Salvadoran, Sri Lankan, etc.), those who did not graduate high school, individuals who completed post-secondary education, etc., would provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how various individual characteristics inform identity and acculturation. In light of the fact that this is an exploratory study, more research needs to be conducted to confirm, expand and/or amend these findings before any generalizations can be made.

CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this study was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the undocumented adolescent experience by examining acculturation and ethnic identity development. In contributing a new, four-stage model of undocumented ethnic identity development and providing emerging evidence for the Tridimensional model of acculturation, whereby individuals acculturate to multiple cultures simultaneously, results from this study address gaps in the available literature and provide important information about the development of undocumented adolescents by highlighting how lack of immigration status impacts individuals’ understandings of themselves and the world. Findings from this study offer concrete suggestions of how service providers can better address the needs of this population by facilitating information sharing to counteract confusion and fear of the unknown, and outline policy prescriptions that could potentially build resiliency and reduce stress on a population level.
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Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

Age: ______________________

Sex: _____ Male      _____ Female

Are you currently in school?    _____ Yes     _____ No

What grade/university? ______________________________

Are you currently working?     _____ Yes     _____ No

Are your parents currently working? ______ Yes     _____ No

When did you move to Canada: _____________________ (Month/Year)

Do you consider yourself: ______ Your ethnic nationality (e.g. Indian, Mexican, etc.)
    ______ Canadian
    ______ Ethnic nationality-Canadian
    ______ Other (please specify: ____________________)

Thank you for filling out this questionnaire. All information given is strictly confidential.
Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview

“So I will be asking you some questions about your life and how your immigration status has impacted you. If you feel uncomfortable answering a question, or need clarification, just let me know and we can move to a different question, or stop. Do you have any questions or concerns before we start?”

Questions measuring social cognition:
1. What were your expectations or understandings of Canada before you moved? What are your expectations or understandings now? (If applicable, “Why do you think this has changed?”)
2. How do you find the school system? How have you been treated by Canadian peers and teachers?

Questions about cultural competence:
3. What are some important aspects of living in Canadian society?
4. To what extent do you feel you are or are not part of Canadian society? Do you feel you hold similar beliefs, values, and customs to those of Canadian society?

Questions about social identity:
5. We all have a sense of identity or sense of our self. Who or what has shaped your understanding of yourself?
6. How, if at all, has your immigration status affected your view of yourself? Your family?
7. In what ways has not having immigration status impacted your educational and/or career/work development?
8. How has not having immigration status impacted your interests or values?

Questions about social stigma:
9. How much have you felt a need to hide your immigration status, and in what situations? When you’re hiding your status, what does that look like? What do you say or not say, what do you do or not do to hide that you’re undocumented? How stressful is that for you? In what ways has your status impacted your interactions with Canadian peers? Interactions with other immigrants? Is there a difference, and if so, how do you understand that difference?
10. How have people responded to your lack of immigration status? How have you been treated by peers/teachers?
11. What messages do you receive from society and the media about being undocumented? How do you interpret these messages?

Questions about resiliency:
12. What are some of the most difficult barriers you’ve faced as a result of being undocumented?
13. What has helped you deal with these barriers as a result of being undocumented?
14. What are some resources that would help you deal with challenges you face in relation to being undocumented?