

EXAMINING FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE RESILIENCY OF
UNACCOMPANIED IMMIGRANT STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL

by

Clara I. Peña, MS

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Clara I. Peña, MS

APPROVED BY

Felix Simieou, PhD, Co-Chair

Judith Márquez, PhD, Co-Chair

Amy Orange, PhD, Committee Member

Lisa Jones, EdD, Committee Member

RECEIVED BY THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION:

Joan Y. Pedro, PhD, Associate Dean

Mark D. Shermis, PhD, Dean

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ABSTRACT

EXAMINING FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE RESILIENCY OF
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Clara I. Peña
University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2017

Dissertation Co-chair: Felix Simieou, PhD
Co-chair: Judith Marquez, PhD

The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze the resiliency factors that influence academic achievement in unaccompanied alien children in high school. To determine factors that motivate unaccompanied alien children (UAC) from Central America to have academic success, data from three student participants in a Texas high school, their parents, and several educators were collected and triangulated through interviews, observations, and photo-elicitation. Resiliency contributing to the student participants' success in school was analyzed in two parts, internal and external protective factors. Overall, the internal factors derived from the individual character traits were similar for the three student participants to include: a high internal locus of control, personal competence, and religiosity and spirituality. The external factors in the study examined environmental and socio-cultural factors implemented by the school to engage and support UAC academically. Institutional structures that facilitated learning included

curriculum and instruction, as well as a cohesive team of educators. The school culture and climate reinforced clear learning goals by setting high, yet reachable expectations for students while developing trusting and caring relationships. Specific teaching strategies, such as cooperative learning, encouraged students to socialize, facilitated acculturation, and supported both the student participants and the school's goals for learning. Findings from the study indicated that the student participants experienced high academic achievement due to their personal character traits and the educational structures in place at their school that promoted resiliency.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Juan started ninth grade in a Texas high school in 2009. At sixteen years of age, he arrived from Honduras alone, with a sixth grade education and little command of the English language. Forced to leave his country after gangs threatened to hurt his family, he fled on an arduous four-month journey to the United States. Finally reaching his destination after seven failed attempts that included physical harm and threats by strangers and authorities alike, he was apprehended at the United States border. After several months of legal proceedings, which eventually determined his immigration status as a refugee, the judge permitted Juan to stay in Texas under the care of an uncle. Due to the fact that he lacked proof of his academic aptitude, he was matriculated into high school as a freshman. Initially hopeful of the new educational process, Juan soon realized very limited assistance was available for interpreting assignments and content information during instruction. Culturally and personally, it was important for him to succeed academically. Therefore, he continued to do his work and ask for assistance from the teachers he trusted. At his high school, the teachers and his school counselor fostered relationships with him to ensure he was aware of programs designed to assist English language learners (ELLs).

During his second year, Juan grew frustrated with his deficiencies in the English language, which caused him difficulties as he continued to strive to meet graduation standards. The concept of graduating high school often seemed unreachable for Juan.

However, the relationships he established with his mentors and his own resilience when faced with adversity enabled him to persevere to pass classes, meet the minimum credit requirements, and eventually score well enough on standardized tests to earn a diploma.

While Juan's story is hypothetical, it represents the lives of many unaccompanied children who arrive alone in the United States every day. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 created the term "unaccompanied alien child" to define a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States, has not attained 18 years of age, and who has no parent or legal guardian in the United States, or no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody" (Neal, 2007, p. 3). A person who reaches age 18 or is under the care of a parent or guardian is no longer considered an unaccompanied alien child (Neal, 2007). This study used unaccompanied alien child (UAC) to refer to any "child" or "children", as defined by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Neal, 2007). Congress transferred the responsibility of caring for UAC from the Naturalization Service to the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in 2002 in order to provide services specific to minors in education, medical and mental health, socialization, and family reunification (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), 2016). The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for a person who is no longer considered UAC, or an accompanied child (Neal, 2007). Most of the UAC are predominately from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador (Jones & Podkul, 2012; Kandel, 2017). The high influx and growing trend of UAC arriving from these three countries are known as "the lost boys and girls of Central America" (Jones & Podkul, 2012, p.1). These children leave their countries to escape gang violence, altercations with police, and extreme poverty (HHS,

2016; Jones & Podkul, 2012). Other reasons for departure from their countries of origin include: escaping circumstances of abuse or persecution, forced transportation by human traffickers, fleeing from natural disasters, reuniting with family members in foreign countries, seeking an education, and seeking employment to support family remaining in the home country (Carlson, Cacciatore, & Klimek, 2012; HHS, 2016).

Juan's account considers aspects of his academic concerns and goals, but there are other factors not mentioned that affect his success in school. His migration from Honduras to the United States was lengthy and complicated. The train ride from Honduras to the U.S. was dangerous and long. It took seven unsuccessful attempts before he was able to enter into the U.S. The absence of family to provide financial and emotional support left Juan with limited basic needs while he traveled. He relied on the goodwill of strangers and his street savviness to keep out of harm's way. Juan's hopes for living in the United States consisted of a better future for himself without the fear of death or daily threats of violence and gang involvement. After settling into his uncle's home and getting emotional and financial support, academic success was difficult to attain due to his limited English proficiency, the sadness he felt about leaving his family and friends behind, and the difficulty of adjusting to a foreign culture and a new educational system.

It is estimated that there are 1.3 million school-age undocumented immigrants in the United States, or 2.4% of children ages five to 17 years old (Camarota, 2012). On average, 40% of undocumented students drop out of high school, and only 49% of undocumented students acquire a diploma and enroll in college, compared to three-quarters of their peers who are legal immigrants or native born (Perez, 2014). The

educational attainment for undocumented children arriving in the United States improves significantly if arrival takes place by the age of 14 or younger (Passel & Cohn, 2009; Perez, 2014).

At present, 7,000 – 13,000 undocumented students, or five to ten percent of undocumented students, enroll in college in the U.S. each year (Passel & Cohn, 2009; Perez, 2014). There is limited information available of the academic achievement of unaccompanied and undocumented students. In order to understand what drives students like Juan to register and remain in school, this qualitative study examined the experiences of three previous UAC students who registered in a Texas high school and successfully met educational challenges.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative case study examined the lives of three previous UAC high school students who traveled to the United States from Central America, explored their life experiences, personal traits, and the resiliency characteristics prevalent in their schools that contributed to and/or detracted from their attaining a successful high school education. The researcher developed themes by triangulating data gathered from interviews and observations with student participants, teachers, and other school staff. The study sought to improve the early arrival intake process and educational attainment of UAC by increasing awareness of the impacts of resiliency, cultural background, and psychological aspects on student success. The current study addressed the following research questions:

1. What life experiences and personal traits of unaccompanied immigrant students support and motivate resiliency in school in Texas?

2. What resources support resiliency in unaccompanied immigrant high school students in Texas?

Statement of Problem

This study provided data indicating which factors of resiliency aid UAC in obtaining a high school education to eventually earn a diploma. Findings may answer questions about UAC attending high school such as: What types of experiences and support efforts assist students academically? What types of district supports are available to ensure the academic success of UAC? What types of support systems should be available for these types of students? What types of training and preparation should educators have to help UAC? Although this study may not provide definitive answers to these questions, it is intended to suggest potential improvements to school structures and processes currently utilized by schools to address resiliency of unaccompanied immigrant children in high school.

The majority of children migrating alone from foreign countries into the United States has a homeless status upon arrival and often do not have proof of their academic transcripts (National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH), 2009). The U.S. educational system academically places students according to their school age. Thus, students who are 14 years of age or older are often matriculated into high school without consideration of their academic aptitude. Repercussions of these legal decisions create burdens for high schools. Schools are faced with the task of assisting unaccompanied immigrant children to meet standardized test expectations, earn credits, and graduate high school with career readiness.

Congress enacted the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistant Act in

1987 to ensure homeless children receive equal educational access as is provided to all children (NCH, 2009). The act mandates that U.S. schools identify homeless students and decide how to help them by guaranteeing access to education through funding and services. Despite the efforts put forth by the McKinney-Vento Act, barriers to education continue to exist for UAC, primarily in areas of enrollment, attendance, and limited funding for proper implementation of the act (NCH, 2009).

School serves as a stable constant location in the lives of UAC, so it is imperative for them to have access to this institution. Although schools have traditionally provided bilingual education for immigrant students who are limited in English proficiency at the elementary level as a means to mainstream learning, limited incorporation of their culture of origin has been interlaced into learning. Moreover, many UAC do not have advocates, such as parents or relatives, because they migrated alone, or have guardians who are unfamiliar with the educational system in the U.S. Some of the barriers faced by these students include limited or no knowledge of the host country language, limited financial means, and concerns of deportation. This population rarely asks for help, and thus, encounters difficulties navigating through the system.

The lack of parental support means many unaccompanied adolescents struggle with more daily responsibilities compared to peers with parental support (Julianelle, 2009). For example, while attending school, some students may work full-time, lack stable living quarters, encounter legal and financial difficulties, or face language barriers. In addition, when youth do not have the support of family, healthy activities conducive to a stable lifestyle become limited, making the situation increasingly detrimental and escalating risk factors (Riden, 2011). Challenges compound for UAC transitioning into

adulthood; as soon as they reach the age of 18, many services cease, increasing the likelihood of homelessness for them (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

Most studies about undocumented students address the successes of high achieving college students, which only account for a small percentage of the total undocumented immigrant population. Little research is written concerning the experiences and resiliency of UAC in high school, as they encounter academic and acculturation obstacles, and acquire educational habits that lead to academic success.

A case study of an unaccompanied Sudanese immigrant's experience as a minor who fared well in the U.S. was compared to the life his half brother had when they migrated together (Carlson et al., 2012). The Sudanese minor was placed in a foster home with caring parents and a supportive environment where he received services for mental health and attended a school to learn English. With the support he received at home and in school, he lived a stable, optimistic life and eventually received a higher education. As an 18 year old, his half brother was considered an adult and received few services. Although he was intelligent and spoke English, the lack of protective factors to support his transition to the U.S. correlated with the development of post traumatic stress disorder, ultimately leading to his decline in mental health and then his death. Through extensive interviews, the study determined which protective factors helped the Sudanese minor adapt to a new life. Individual character traits, such as possessing an easy temperament, utilizing problem-solving skills, regarding education highly, maintaining a strong sense of family, building relationships with caring adults, and feeling strong ties to community and social organizations improved resiliency particularly, when cultural

factors were encouraged. Reed-Victor (2008) referred to character traits leading to positive outcomes as “protective factors,” with the potential to decrease negative experiences. For children with backgrounds involving great loss, poverty, violence, and few supportive structures, as seen in many UAC, resiliency is usually unstable. However, it is possible to foster protective factors by providing supportive and positive interactions in the areas of family, school, and community (Carlson et al., 2012; Reed-Victor, 2008). Ungar’s (2008) work found resilience is developed through cross-cultural experiences. In other words, life occurrences intertwine patterns that represent an individual’s culture and life experiences (Ungar, 2008). For example, although they left their country of origin and traveled alone without adult supervision, many UAC maintained positive outlooks, despite encountering a higher occurrence of negative life events compared to that of non-UAC peers. Individual and community protective factors facilitate productive management of losses and risk factors by these youth (Carlson et al., 2012; Reed-Victor, 2008).

Definitions

Acculturation. A bidirectional process, by which immigrants arriving to new settings or countries identify with the culture of the host group, and reciprocates by contributing aspects of their own culture. This process constantly changes, altering the customs and practices of the persons entering the environment and changing the established dominant culture (Hunt, Morland, Barocas, Huckans, & Caal, 2002).

Culture. A social structure that considers the individual learned affiliation to customs, as well as structures of politics, social expectations, and religion, among other things (Hunt et al., 2002). Subclasses of expectations vary within classes, ethnicities, and

groups.

Homeless. Persons residing in a public or private place, such as shelters, group homes, and residential treatment facilities are considered homeless because they are without fixed living accommodations (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). Homelessness interferes with academic successes and increases school absences and problems with psycho-social development (Riden, 2011).

Problem behaviors. Conducts that cause self-harm or harm to another is included in this definition. Using illegal substances, partaking in violent or delinquent behavior, engaging in reckless sexual activities, and exhibiting poor academic performance are examples of problem behaviors (Hunt et al., 2002).

Resilience. Resilience is attributed to strength derived from social supports, circumstances, or traits that help individuals face adversity positively (Hunt et al., 2002). Resilience considers (a) the development of the individual to exceed expectations, (b) the manner in which the individual is proficient in dealing with personal threats, and (c) coping strategies for recuperating from trauma (Ungar, 2008). As situations in life are altered, resilience may change to accommodate strong functioning; navigation through this process helps to develop self-esteem (Ungar, 2008).

Risk and protective factors. Circumstances or social conditions that may influence the increase or decrease of negative, maladjusted, or deviant behaviors are considered risk or protective factors (Hunt et al., 2002). Perceptions of risk and protective factors are prescribed by societal expectations and norms. Protective factors include: support from a family member, “high intelligence, easy temperament, good coping and problem-solving skills, female gender, and faith in a higher power or a religious

orientation” (Carlson, et al., 2012, p. 262). Risk factors are associated with undesirable behaviors due to few personal and environmental resources. Risk factors may lead to poor decision-making, depression, few close emotional relationships, potentially poor health conditions, substance abuse and addiction, and legal woes (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2009).

Sheltered Instruction. A variety of integrative teaching methods are combined to provide content in a new language in the core curriculum and to concurrently develop English proficiency in English Language Learners (Short, Fidelman, & Louguit, 2012). The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model is a particular approach of sheltered instruction.

Unaccompanied alien children. Also known as unaccompanied alien youth or undocumented immigrants, these foreign-born nationals are unmarried and under 18 years old, and who migrate to the United States without parents or guardians physically present in one of two ways: (a) they arrive legally as visitors to the country or under the approval of a visa to work or study, but remain after the visa expires, or (b) they enter without authority or permission (Hunt et al., 2002; HHS, 2016; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). The subjects of this study will meet the latter classification. The terms children, youth, and adolescents will be used interchangeably in this dissertation. Hunt et al. (2002) classified individuals between the ages of 13-17 as adolescents or teenagers.

Unaccompanied refugee minors. Immigrants fleeing their native countries who are not able to return due to fear of death or persecution (Hunt et al., 2002). These individuals may receive approval to stay in the United States either before or after fleeing their native country.

Undocumented immigrants. A person entering the United States without prior permission or application is considered to be in the country illegally or unauthorized. Also, a person who entered the United States using a visa as a visitor, a student, or a temporary employee, who did not leave upon expiration, is considered unauthorized (Hunt et al., 2002). A temporary status permits certain persons provisional stay if it is proven that personal safety is threatened in the home country.

Limitations of Study

The present study consisted of three UAC who arrived in the United States during the last four years. The three students came from Central America and attended the same high school located in a large urban school district in Texas. Due to the small number of participants in this study, the results are not generalizable to the larger population. The study provided a portrayal of UAC students as depicted through personal accounts of their educational attainment and the factors that aided them in achieving academic success.

The case study methodology was comprised of data gathered from interviews and observations of a small number of participants in their natural settings. This type of methodology required the researcher to maintain awareness of personal involvement with the participants in order to control subjectivity for the study and to refrain from intentionally creating change of the setting (Nurani, 2008). Furthermore, case study methodology necessitated much devotion of time and focus from the researcher in order to gather data from indirect and direct observations of the participants (Nurani, 2008). Observer bias, and the manner in which the researcher interacted with the participants, was closely monitored to prevent problems in collecting accurate and honest data

(Nurani, 2008).

Summary

This study examined the resiliency factors used by three previously unaccompanied immigrant adolescents to determine how their experiences in their country of origin, their journey to the U.S., and their personal traits influenced their academic successes in high school. An examination of the environmental factors in the school structures and climate that influenced the UAC's academic success is also included.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The majority of unaccompanied alien children (UAC) who arrive in the U.S. are of high school age, but face obstacles when attempting to integrate into the U.S. educational system. An unprecedented increase in the number of undocumented children arriving in the U. S. from Central America without parents or guardians in the last few years has greatly challenged school districts and communities (Lee, 2014; Prah, 2013). Despite this, limited research is available regarding UAC in general, and even less information is available pertaining to the academic experiences of UAC attending high school (HHS, 2016; Lee, 2014; Perez, et al., 2009). While they experience similar stressors faced by other Hispanic immigrant peers, their illegal immigrant status creates additional obstacles for UAC, such as disqualification for academic scholarships and other financial assistance, lacking emotional support from family, ineligibility for a driver's license, and constant threat of deportation (Perez, et al., 2009). However, with the benefit of both personal and environmental protective factors, some Central American UAC handle the academic challenges they encounter and successfully navigate through school (Cortina, Raphael, & Elie, 2013). This chapter reviewed literature describing the backgrounds of UAC, including how risk factors and resiliency are present in their migration journeys, social interactions, and school structures, and how these impacted the learning process for this population.

Immigration Factors of Unaccompanied Alien Children

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 created the term “unaccompanied alien child to define a child who has no lawful immigration status in the United States, has not attained 18 years of age, and who has no parent or legal guardian in the United States, or no parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody” (Neal, 2007, p. 3). In 2014, 76% of UAC apprehended at the Mexico-U.S. border were native to Central America’s “northern triangle”, or the countries of El Salvador (16,404), Guatemala (17,057), and Honduras (18,244) (Kandel et al., 2014; U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2016).

According to the Congressional Research Service, the population of UAC has grown exponentially, from 10,146 minors detained in 2012, to approximately 52,000 in 2014, as seen in Figure 1 below (Kandel et al., 2014; Sterling, 2013). In 2016, the apprehensions were approximately 47,000, a slight decline compared to the number of UAC detained in 2014, but nonetheless illustrating that UAC continue to migrate at staggering rates, as seen in Figure 1 below (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2016). More undocumented children under 18 years of age enter the U.S. compared to adults. In 2013, the majority of UAC were between the ages of 14-17, while 12% were below 14 years of age (Prah, 2013). The majority of UAC are males from Honduras, although an increase of female UAC were apprehended in 2013 (Prah, 2013; Wasem & Morris, 2014). The leading reasons to explain the sudden rise in the number of migrating unaccompanied alien children arriving from Central America are to escape from violence in the country of origin, or to reunite with family that migrated without them (Kandel et al., 2014).

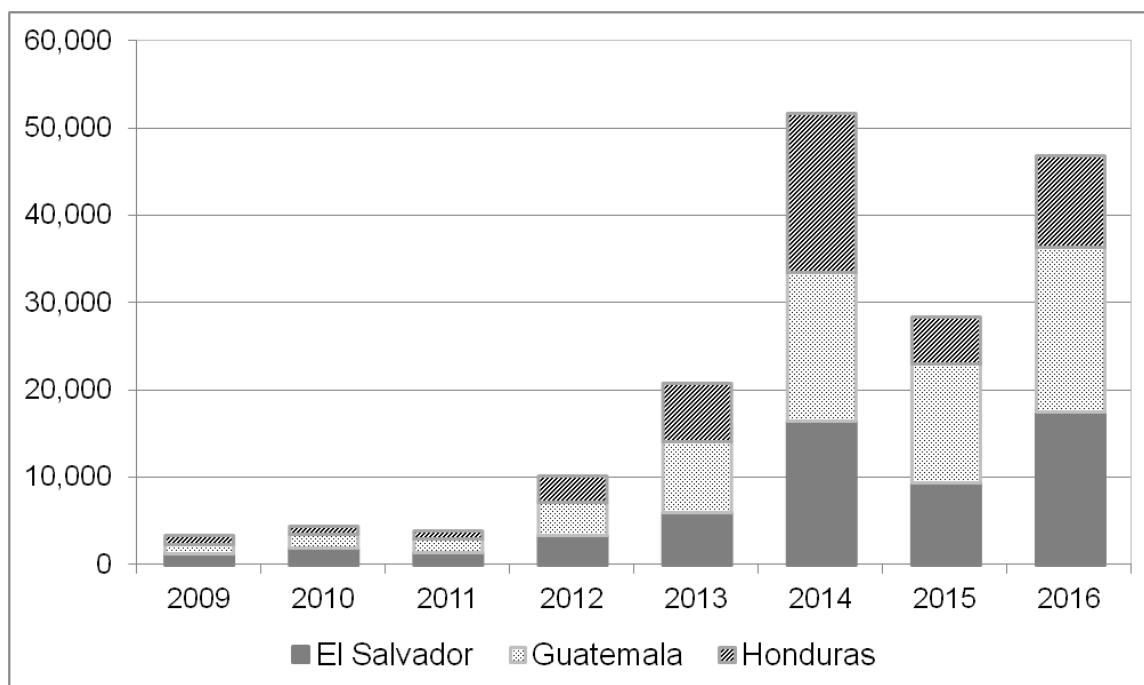


Figure 1. Unaccompanied alien children apprehensions from fiscal years 2009-2016. U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2016.

Reasons for UAC Migration

For UAC, migration is a dramatic life transition involving legal difficulties, stressors of loss, and adjustments in acculturation and personal ethnic identity (Luster, Qin, Bates, Rana, & Lee, 2010; Perez et al., 2013). Academically, individuals are expected to adjust to new educational settings with limited English proficiency, and have the potential to encounter peer and cultural misunderstandings due to different upbringings (Luster et al., 2010; Perez et al., 2013). In order to better understand the needs of UAC, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) (2012) conducted a four-year study to identify patterns that led to referring UAC and unaccompanied refugee minors (URM) to long-term foster care placement. USCCB/MRS (2012) is one of two national organizations placing children into the national networks of URM foster care programs. The goals for the analysis were

to inform the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and other organizations responsible for the care of UAC and URM of the reasons these children were transitioning into URM facilities, as opposed to staying in ORR-funded facilities that assist UAC; to explain how the changes in demographics of the children would create additional challenges for foster placement; and organize planning and development with partner organizations to address the therapeutic and behavioral needs of the UAC and URM (USCCB/MRS, 2012). The USCCB/MRS (2012) developed profiles from the sample by analyzing the records of UAC and URM-eligible children referred from ORR to USCCB/MRS for foster care. The data came from the referral documents submitted to USCCB/MRS, such as intakes and assessments of children conducted at ORR-funded facilities, case notes entered by USCCB/MRS staff, and legal documents from attorneys and the Department of Homeland Security (USCCB/MRS, 2012). The 98 children who participated in the study from 2007 to 2011 reported the primary reasons they traveled to the U.S. were to reunite with friends or family and to find employment. UAC also reported leaving the country of origin to flee from community and gang violence, or from domestic abuse, and to pursue an education (Kandel et al., 2014; USCCB/MRS, 2012). Since the 1990s, violence has increased in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador due to gangs, drug trafficking, kidnappings, and theft (Savenije & van der Borgh, 2009). The most common types of trauma faced in the three Central American countries included abandonment and physical abuse by parents or guardians. In addition, the researchers found that in approximately 25% of the cases, the children had witnessed a violent crime, such as the murder of family members (USCCB/MRS, 2012).

In a similar study, the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR)

(2014) interviewed 404 UAC who arrived in the U.S. after October 2011 and were in the custody of the ORR. The purpose of the interviews was to determine reasons that UAC were migrating to the U.S. and whether the youth required international protection. A random process was used to determine which children were interviewed. Responses to the five questions were thematically organized under categories (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2014). The study found 48% of the UAC participants from the northern triangle countries reported receiving serious harm or threats from criminal groups. In addition, 20% said they experienced domestic abuse (UNHCR, 2014). Some are sent by their families to escape violence and physical atrocities occurring in their native countries, such as civil war or gang initiations (Kennedy, 2013; Sterling, 2013).

Immigration Reforms for UAC

In order to meet the specific needs of minors, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 transferred the responsibility and care of UAC from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (INS) to the ORR, a department under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to utilize the “welfare-based-model of care,” a contrast to the former adult detention model used by the INS (Carlson et al., 2012; HSS, 2016). Children apprehended by immigration authorities or other federal agencies, whether while crossing the border or after crossing, are placed under the care of ORR. Through licensed care-providers, ORR provides services for UAC, which include: “classroom education, mental and medical health services, case management, socialization and recreation, and family reunification service, or sponsors that provide care” (HSS, 2016, p.2). On average, UAC stay in the ORR program for 35 days until they are reunited with family members, placed

in an alternative home, or deported to their country of origin. Living accommodations for UAC may include shelters, group homes, living alone, or foster care (Carlson et al., 2012).

Differences between Services Provided to UAC and URM

Due to their effects on resiliency, it is important to understand the different types of care and services provided to UAC and URM. Upon arriving to the U.S., UAC are detained at the border. Within 72 hours, the minors are moved to detention facilities run by the ORR (Kennedy, 2013). The ORR sends the UAC to one of 63 facilities in the U.S. where an average of 146 minors per facility reside. At the facilities, UAC receive assistance from staff to locate family or sponsors within a brief span of six to eight weeks while they await court decisions on immigration eligibility (Kennedy, 2013). Brief stays and limited resources at these facilities prevent appropriate medical and mental health care. Many mental illnesses, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse go undetected and untreated (Kennedy, 2013).

In contrast, URM are placed in facilities housing an average of 20 minors for stays of three to four years. The longer stays allow the minors access to better medical and mental health services compared to their UAC counterparts (Kennedy, 2013). The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) (2012) states that “the URM program provides intensive case management, therapeutic services, vocational and independent living training, and assistance adjusting immigration status, while supporting and maintaining each child’s ethnicity and religious and cultural heritage” (p.2). Living in quarters with fewer URM, receiving services for an extended period of time, and developing relationships with medical and mental health providers, URM are able to

address health factors that may impede adequate coping of transitioning to living in a new country. The UAC are not afforded the same benefits due to the larger population and quicker processing time of removing them from the ORR detention facilities.

Psychological Factors of UAC

Traumatic experiences faced in their country of origin, during migration to the U.S., and during acclimation in the U.S. create vulnerability in UAC, which can lead to emotional and mental health issues. Many studies “have successfully correlated a direct association between an exposure of violence and trauma to depression, anger, anxiety, dissociation, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other trauma symptoms,” with PTSD being one of the most common diagnoses (USCCB/MRS, 2012, p. 10). Mental health symptoms seen in the UAC included higher-than-average suicidal behavior, substance use, “anxiety, flashbacks, self-injurious behaviors, emotional deregulation, aggression, behavioral or emotional issues” (USCCB/MRS, 2012, p. 11). UAC reported using controlled substances to help cope with depression and stress when still residing in their country of origin and often in the presence of a parent or guardian (USCCB/MRS, 2012).

For UAC, stressors intensified when they left their families because they feared persecution or experienced violence from wars and gangs in their communities. It is common for UAC to have exposure to various traumatic events, such as human trafficking, rape, witnessing murder, receiving torture, and deprivation of basic needs, such as food, water, and shelter. For example, in *Enrique’s Journey*, Nazario (2007) recounted stories of children from Central America who resided in small, crowded homes, sometimes with no electricity, and who routinely rummaged for food among the

trash in the local dumpsite while fending off the buzzards.

Traveling through foreign countries poses additional challenges. After leaving their countries of origin, about 10% of the children reported sexual abuse while traveling to the U.S., usually by the smuggler responsible for transporting the children.

Kidnappings often occurred when traveling through Mexico with ransoms demanded from relatives residing in the U.S. Unpaid ransoms often resulted in the children being sexually exploited or forced into criminal activity (USCCB/MRS, 2012). Post-traumatic symptoms from traveling and depression when resettling often increase the likelihood of psychiatric disorders, with depression being the most common, closely followed by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Carlson et al., 2012; Hodes, Jagdevn, Chandra, & Cunniff, 2008). Due to the distance and time spent to travel from Central America to the U.S., and exposure to domestic abuse and violence from war, there is a higher occurrence of PTSD reported for UAC from Central America. As a result, problems with academic performance in U.S. schools are common (Carlson et al., 2012). Immigrant boys usually do worse academically when compared to female counterparts with similar backgrounds (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). In addition, UAC who are homeless are at risk of being sexually, physically or criminally victimized, or seized for deportation. For example, in order to survive and avoid deportation, youth might exchange sex for shelter and other basic needs (Julianelle, 2009). The stress from these conditions increases the likelihood of problem behaviors, such as substance use, self-harm acts, and psychological turmoil (Hunt et al., 2002; Julianelle, 2009). Children might also experience difficulties with trusting and attachment, develop identity issues, and suffer from isolation (Carlson et al., 2012).

A cross-sectional study conducted in London by Hodes, Jagdevn, Chandra, and Cunniff (2008) examined whether 78 unaccompanied children who resettled in a new country and who dealt with past adversities had more psychological distress due to past traumas compared to accompanied children. Most of the subjects completed self-reported questionnaires in a classroom setting. Hodes et al. (2008) found that unaccompanied youth coped better when resettling into a setting that included supervision from an adult. The increased supervision from caretakers benefited the youths psychologically by providing stability. A reduction in psychiatric problems occurred in UAC who lived in an adult supervised setting, such as with family or in a foster home, as opposed to a detention center, where privacy and relationship building was limited. More independent environments, where youth lived with little or no adult guidance and fewer restrictions, provide less stability for UAC. The unaccompanied youth experienced higher rates of posttraumatic stress symptoms than accompanied youth. Another finding from the study was that females experience higher rates of depression and posttraumatic stress compared to unaccompanied immigrant males (Carlson et al., 2012; Hodes et al., 2008). Youth facing longer stays in shelters while awaiting a decision on their immigration status experienced increased feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or depression due to emotional instability, further negatively impacting them (USCCB, 2012).

The level-of-care options for UAC in the ORR program include “traditional, therapeutic, group, or residential treatment” (USCCB/MRS, 2012, p. 13). UAC who have been diagnosed with mental health disorders, are pregnant, are human trafficking victims, and UAC with physical illnesses or behavioral challenges are placed in therapeutic family settings because the environment resembles more traditional home-life (USCCB/MRS,

2012). However, UAC approaching their eighteenth birthday, or with mental health needs and no appropriate matches, were rejected from therapeutic residences and were not placed (USCCB/MRS, 2012). UAC near the age of 18, or over, faced the additional challenge of receiving limited or no support. Instead, these youths were often transitioned to adult detention facilities with little guidance (USCCB/MRS, 2012).

Academically, psychological factors may serve as obstacles to gaining scholastic success. Porche, Fortuna, Lin, and Alegria (2011) found that the effects of traumatic events from childhood, or exposure to high stressed environments as experienced by UAC in their county of origin and during migration to the U.S., limit learning due to maladaptive behaviors, such as absenteeism or disruptiveness in the classroom. The correlation of increased risk factors to lower resiliency creates a cycle of events that may eventually affect other life areas of UAC. For example, immigrant youth who have difficulty obtaining a high school diploma are unable to enroll in college and gain career-sustaining skills (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Factors for increased dropout rates amongst UAC include family structure (from a one parent household), impoverish living conditions, exhibiting less resilience or personal resources, limited English language proficiency, and immigrant status (Randolph, Fraser, & Orthner, 2004). Limited educational resources and inadequate school climates that foster low academic expectations disenfranchise students even further (Borman & Overman, 2004). For example, little attention is given to UAC's cultural values and their mental health in the school setting (LaRoche & Shriberg, 2004; Porche, Fortuna, Lin, & Alegria, 2011). When enrolled in a school, immigrant youth are placed under the broad umbrella of the English Language Learner (ELL) to become proficient in the English language and

gain skills for high stakes testing, many times disregarding other factors that influence learning. As a result, Hispanics represent the largest minority group to drop out of high school (Lutz, 2007; Randolph, Fraser, & Orthner, 2004). Fortunately, some UAC possess academic resilience to overcome the obstacles they face to complete high school successfully.

Resilience

Some UAC use resiliency to cope with the new and unfamiliar environment they face while in U.S. schools. Resiliency involves the inner resources or traits developed by an individual to survive life's difficult situations and the coping skills utilized to deal with trauma (Henderson & Milstein, 2003; Ungar, 2008). Resiliency is a multidimensional construct, reliant and derived upon factors that are both internal and external to the individual (Ungar, 2008). Resiliency is a process that can be learned and promoted by families, schools, and communities (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). Resilience happens as a byproduct of adversity and stems from: (a) a collection of characteristics that a person is born with to grow successfully despite having an underprivileged upbringing, (b) a person's ability to handle stress competently, and (c) functioning positively in response to recovering from trauma (Ungar, 2008). Thomsen (2002) states resiliency is an unconscious response to a particular challenge the individual must overcome, or a response to life's changing circumstances. Children who are resilient are motivated to manage life's stresses with skills such as critical thinking and problem solving in order to accomplish goals (Arastaman & Balci, 2013; Henderson & Milstein, 2003). Benard (1991) stated that resilient individuals are goal-oriented, have a sense of purpose, and are optimistic about their futures. Resilience manifests differently in each

individual, however, it can be generically described as occurring when the accumulated protective factors overcome the negative accumulated effects of stressors, adversity, and risks, as seen in Figure 2 (Benard, 1991; Grover, 2005; Henderson & Milstein, 2003).

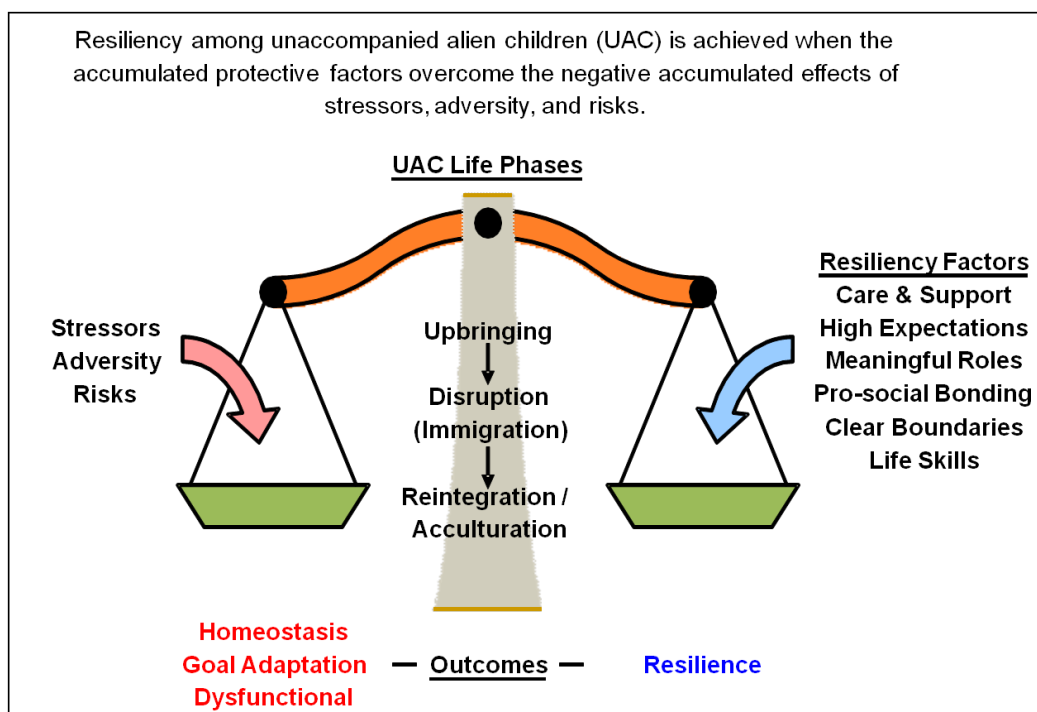


Figure 2. The Resiliency Model.
Adapted from Henderson & Milstein, 2003

Protective Factors (Internal and External)

Protective factors enable an individual to build resiliency. Arastaman and Balci (2013) state, “Internal protective factors are the individual’s own unique characteristics (internal locus of control, self-respect, self-efficacy, autonomy and problem-solving skills); whereas external factors are classified as school, community, and family” (p. 923). Internal factors that promote resiliency include temperament and the ability to communicate to obtain positive reactions from others. Internal factors for resiliency develop high self-esteem, a sense of purpose, the ability to communicate needs

effectively, and empathy for others (Thomsen, 2002). Although there are a number of protective factors, the actual process of utilizing and determining when to incorporate protective factors into any given situation is not only important, but unique to each individual (Arastaman & Balci, 2013; Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007).

In Ungar's (2008) mixed methods study involving 1500 youth on five different continents, he hypothesized that resiliency is different across cultures, influencing how individuals deal with adversity; individual resiliency is dependent on structural conditions (external resiliency factors), such as those encountered at school. Using self-report questionnaires in community settings, Ungar (2008) examined the cultural and contextual aspects of resiliency to determine how adolescents negotiated and navigated for health resources through the service system. A community advisory committee selected participants for the study who experienced at least three risk factors and adapted well. The three risk factors were "exposure to community violence, institutionalization, mental health problems (depression, violence, and drug abuse), social dislocation (immigration or forced migration), homelessness, poverty, exposure to political turmoil, and war," (Ungar, 2008, p. 223). The study found that resiliency factors varied among the subjects and were influenced by the global, contextual and cultural factors related to the subjects' lives (Ungar, 2008). Societal structures influenced resiliency of families and communities as much as the individual protective factors, to determine the level of functioning in adverse situations (Ungar, 2008). Moreover, environmental factors significantly contributed to, or limited, resiliency, particularly for children who depend on adult assistance to maneuver through life (Grover, 2005; Ungar, 2008). Gilligan (2004) stated this clearly:

While resilience may previously have been seen as residing in the person as a fixed trait, it is now more usefully considered as a variable quality that derives from a process of repeated interactions between a person and favourable features of the surrounding context in a person's life. The degree of resilience displayed by a person in a certain context may be said to be related to the extent to which the context has elements that nurture this resilience (p. 94).

Contextual factors derived from the individual's environment, such as family, school, and the community, promote survival, supply support from caring adults, and promote opportunities for which individuals may participate and promote their talents, which in turn improves resiliency (Thomsen, 2002; Ungar, 2008). For example, a UAC male joins a gang to avoid the everyday harassment in his neighborhood (Grover, 2005; Ungar, 2008). Under these circumstances, his actions for resiliency are deemed as culturally unacceptable but are appropriate for survival. Alternatively, acceptable coping skills may mean the UAC male enlists in the military to defend his surroundings. The same male gains a sense of belonging, experiences self-efficacy, and achieves independence in either situation. The decisions and actions taken by the individual are influenced by his environment and by the available resources.

Perkins and Jones' (2004) study found that exposure to stressful life events, such as physical abuse does not indicate higher risk behaviors if appropriate protective factors are present to counteract the effects and to reduce risky behavior, such as heavy drinking, tobacco and drug use, sexual activity, and antisocial behavior. The data was collected from self-reported surveys administered by teachers in the classroom. Over 16,000 sample. A subsample of 3,281 children reported experiencing physical abuse in their past,

permitting a final comparison of youth who exhibited risk behaviors to youth who exhibited thriving behaviors (Perkins & Jones, 2004). The study determined that there was a high correlation for specific protective factors to increase resiliency and reduce risk behaviors: religiosity, positive school climate, family support, and peer group characteristics (Perkins & Jones, 2004).

Risk Factors

Risk factors are aspects of the individual's temperament, or of the environment, which expose individuals to conditions that lead to adverse consequences (Finn & Rock, 1997). Although the literature is limited regarding the academic success of UAC in high school, evident risk factors for UAC include being a minority, acclimating to a new educational system, limited English language proficiency, and risk for deportation. The prevalence of risk factors increases the likelihood of high-risk behaviors or problematic situations, such as skipping school, not completing assignments, and arguing with teachers. As the number of risk factors increase, a negative feedback loop can occur, increasing academic barriers as risk behaviors also increase (Finn & Rock, 1997). For example, if school does not provide individuals with supportive relationships that are meaningful in the context in which they are familiar, the environment will not contribute to resiliency and may foster risk behaviors (Ungar, 2008). In Werner and Smith's (1982) longitudinal study, which examined resiliency in the lives of 505 subjects from birth to their 40s, all of the subjects were from the same area. Only one third of the participants who experienced adverse living conditions, such as substance abuse or addiction, or parental divorce, developed into competent adults compared to the other two thirds, who had problematic adulthoods. The competent adults possessed a high internal locus of

control, a protective factor that aids individuals to believe they have control of their lives, as opposed to outcomes being influenced by environmental factors (Werner & Smith, 1982).

Resilience and Unaccompanied Alien Children

Although the literature on the academic resiliency of UAC is minimal, an awareness of certain risk factors experienced by this population is evident, as well as certain protective factors used by UAC to reach academic success. Much of the research on resilience that is available regarding undocumented immigrant students considers support from parents and families as an environmental protective factor to serve as a supportive network during difficult times (Perez et al, 2009). UAC often utilize relationships and practices to acquire new ways to manage situations in order to acclimate to their environments. Studies have demonstrated that youth benefit by having at least one positive relationship with an adult, particularly if the adult is an educational agent, such as a teacher, counselor, or principal (De Leon, 2005; Perez et al., 2005; Thomsen, 2002). Aviles de Bradley (2011) found that youth possessing a healthy relationship with at least one teacher or school official improved development and academic achievement. School mentors counterbalance negative incidents by inspiring optimism and self-confidence in students who are overloaded (Brown, 2004).

A challenge to attaining academic success for most UAC is unfamiliarity with the U.S. educational process. Immigrant students struggle to meet graduation requirements, and passing state tests and achievement exams. Low grades and attendance often lead to students dropping out and losing interest in secondary and college education (Suarez-Orozco, et al., 2010). Undocumented students face additional limitations to educational

opportunities due to their non-legal status. Applying for financial assistance and scholarships is restricted, for example. Perez et al. (2013) found undocumented students reported feelings of frustration, shame, and fear. When youth perceive their environment as unsupportive, deviant behavior provides the outlet for attaining support, power, attachments, and feelings of competence (Ungar, 2005). For example, if adolescents are marginalized due to their undocumented status and other related circumstances, the resilience factors they utilize may include joining a gang to gain control and improve self-esteem. With continued marginalization, hopes are diminished, increasing the chances for delinquency. Nonetheless, school is the biggest agent for promoting resiliency (Thomsen, 2002). While negative treatment from school officials promotes a sense of isolation and fear, research found undocumented students often benefit from relationships with school counselors and teachers (Gonzalez, 2010; Perez et al., 2005).

Perez et al. (2009) reported that academically resilient students consistently utilize personal and environmental resources as their protective factors to do well in school. For UAC, the resilient characteristics counter the educational barriers that exist for this population. Personal factors used most for countering scholastic barriers include self-evaluation of their academic performance and the confidence in one's own potential. Environmental protective resources used by high achieving students include the supportive relationships they develop with family and school personnel. Since educators are often influential to UAC, institutional programs and cultures are key to promoting resiliency in education. In a study examining the resiliency of 509 Turkish high school students as it correlated to the external protective factors present at school, Arastaman and Balci (2013) used a correlational survey design. The dependent variable for the study

was the students' resiliency. The independent variables were students' perceptions of the support they received from teachers, parents and family, and school climate to promote resiliency. The study found that academic achievement and communication skills are connected; conversely, absenteeism related to students with least resilience (Arastaman & Balci, 2012). The same study found that surveyed students considered family and community as the most important external resiliency factors compared to school structures and teacher attitudes, thus requiring schools to work with families to develop resiliency (Arastaman & Balci, 2013).

Another viable individual protective factor includes religiosity and spirituality. Religion is a set of beliefs and practices in God or in a higher power, typically involving church attendance and other formal rituals (Raghallaigh, 2011). Spirituality is a broader concept, involving a personal quest for divine communion that does not depend on institutional procedures from organized religion (Markstrom, Huey, Stiles, & Krause, 2010). Raghallaigh's (2011) research found immigrants rely on religion during difficult circumstances when they are brought up practicing religion and when it is easily accessible. It serves as a protective factor for marginalized populations such as the UAC, who can cope with leaving their country of origin and all that is familiar to them. In Raghallaigh's (2011) study, 32 unaccompanied immigrant minors from 13 different countries were interviewed during their stay in a hostel in Ireland. Religion provided a continuity in the minors' daily lives that was easily accessible, helping them cope to determine their identities in a new country. This was especially important because, without the presence of parents, religion was no longer enforced. Many of the participants in Raghallaigh's study (2011) continued to attend church services while

living in Ireland, and several used the ease of prayer to gain a sense of control over their lives and to draw hope from their belief in God.

Resilience-Promoting School Programs

With all the obstacles faced by UAC, they can be labeled as victims and, consequently, have their strengths overlooked. Traditionally, the school system serves as a significant structure in the lives of immigrant youth, “wielding the power to either replicate societal inequalities or equalize the field” (Gonzales, 2010, p. 471). School serves as a stable place to offer structure and the opportunity to nurture resiliency for this population. Schools can create resilient environments with educational approaches in which protective factors in individual students are encouraged and offset negative situations (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). The right learning environment is one where teachers build resiliency in students by setting appropriate reachable goals while motivating students to recognize their own importance, strengths and potential through close relationships and problem solving methods (Arastaman & Balci, 2013; Henderson & Milstein, 2003). Schools instill a “social consciousness” (Gonzales, 2010, p. 471) in UAC by providing structures that encourage relationship building with peers and school officials. In turn, useful information and resources for locating resources and finding out about educational opportunities is provided; for example, by providing assistance when applying for college or financial assistance. Education personnel help students learn to trust and interact with those outside their immediate circle. The factors provided by the school environment, such as learning and fostering healthy relationships with peers and supportive adults, encourages at-risk youth, such as UAC, to stay in school longer and improve self-control, particularly because school is usually a prominent factor in the lives

of adolescents (Aviles de Bradley, 2011). In the Resiliency Wheel, Henderson and Milstein (2003) determined six components necessary to cultivate resiliency within a school setting: (a) increase bonding, (b) set clear boundaries, (c) teach life skills, (d) provide caring and support, (e) communicate high expectations, and (f) provide opportunities for meaningful participation.

One approach to accessing these components is participation in extracurricular activities, which serve as protective factors for students to participate meaningfully and promote bonding with peers and teachers (Perez et al., 2013). Similarly, Ungar (2005) found at-risk youth benefit when related agencies servicing youth collaborated with the schools to increase support and to prevent their falling through the cracks. Ungar (2005) stated that organizations and institutions servicing at-risk youth, such as UAC, build resilience by providing structures to counterbalance negative effects from impoverished backgrounds and traumatic experiences (i.e., war, violence, and loss). Consequently, these children may exhibit behaviors or needs requiring additional services not included in the American educational system (Ungar, 2005).

School Institutional Structures

The literature presented earlier in this chapter indicates not only that UAC face many obstacles to succeed academically, but also infers that school personnel encounter many challenges in their effort to cater to their needs. The increased influx of immigrant students over the last several years is problematic for school systems to manage, requiring increased attention by administrators to provide for the needs of UAC (Gonzales, 2010).

Student Support

The significant challenges faced by UAC make them one of the most vulnerable groups served by U.S. schools. Perez et al. (2009) found that certain environmental factors can improve resiliency among this population, “such as parental support, adult mentoring, or community organizations that promote positive youth development,” (p. 154). Structural resources are implemented by schools and districts to support students and directly address the academic and social emotional risks faced by UAC. Methods that enhance resiliency can reduce risk factors that lead to school dropout and disengagement (Arastaman & Balci, 2013). The structural components include counseling, mentor programs, transitioning into college or career preparedness, tutoring, and extracurricular activities.

Counseling. It is imperative for UAC to have access to school counselors as an external protective factor to foster social emotional support. The school counselor serves as a guide to help immigrant students adjust to new expectations in academic settings different from those they are familiar with in their countries. Immigrant students are often unfamiliar with the support structures available in U.S. schools. Apart from relying on informal structures, such as family and friends, as is the case in most Central American countries, the counselor helps students understand the formal supports available from teachers and other supportive staff resources (Goh, Wahl, McDonald, Brissett, & Yoon, 2007). The main purpose of counselors is to form relationships with students and encourage them to have relationships with other school staff by supporting students through the acculturation process. Individual counseling helps students with academic dexterity by improving their self-esteem, lessening the isolation they are subject to, and

eliminating some of the barriers typically experienced in the academic settings by these students (Goh, et al., 2007).

Helping to develop programs and activities that provide a positive transition for UAC requires that effective school counselors build partnerships with teachers and administrative staff to understand different cultures, diversity, and migration stressors that affect UAC. Professional workshops and classroom guidance lessons facilitated by school counselors build bridges between the community and school personnel to understand the needs of these students (Goh et al., 2007; Suarez-Orozco, Onaga, & de Lardemelle, 2010).

Mentor programs. Brown (2004) reported that resilience is increased in students when they are positively influenced by mentors; this is particularly true for UAC, who are typically impacted by a higher number of risk factors compared to their native counterparts. Ehrich, Hansford, and Tennent (2004) stated that formal mentoring programs improve psychosocial support for the mentee by providing encouragement, advice, and guidance to complete assignments. A well-organized mentoring program includes establishing clear goals for participants, developing structured events to support mentees, with careful consideration for appropriately matching mentors and mentees. The role of mentor can be filled by adults or by peers of the UAC. Research indicates that the most harmful academic risk faced by immigrants is school transitions due to the immigrants' limited ability to communicate in the primary language and to their unfamiliarity with the school rules, culture, and routines (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011). For this reason, encouraging relationship building and psychosocial support is particularly important for this population, who has limited resources available.

Mentoring, whether by peers, older students, or adults, academically benefits the mentees by improving self esteem, increasing attendance, reducing school dropouts, improving grades, and growing school connectiveness (Crul & Schneider, 2014). Suarez-Orozco, Onaga, and de Lardemelle (2010) reported that mentoring programs reduce delinquency and aggressive behaviors while aiding in acculturation to the new rules in novel settings. Students are exposed to new ways of developing a social network while in a supportive educational setting. Suarez-Orozco, Onaga, and de Lardemelle (2010) recommend that schools develop mentoring programs between both teachers and students, and between students and the community in collaboration with after-school programs and mentoring services.

College transition. Information relevant to this type of support is limited (Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009). Students recently arrived to the United States often begin school in a new arrival program for the first two to three semesters. Although there is no set structure for new arrival programs, the goal is for students to graduate from high school and have adequate preparation to pursue employment or a post-secondary education (Short, 2002). Rodriguez and Cruz (2009) noted limited information is available from secondary schools and districts providing information to undocumented immigrants about post-secondary education.

Career preparedness. Research does not indicate whether schools or districts provide necessary job training and placement after graduating that is specific in assisting UAC, a population that is already facing barriers due to their limited job skills, lack of education, and deficiencies in English (Short, 2002). The House Bill 5 of 2013 enacted the Foundation High School Program, to change graduation requirements beginning in

2014-2015 to include specific classes in the areas of: science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); business and industry; public services; arts and humanities; and multidisciplinary studies (TEA, 2013b). These changes are an attempt to enhance the curriculum these students learn, but include limited or no hands-on training for them. Information in career development and internships is needed for students to develop real workplace skills (Short, 2002).

Study Environment & Tutoring. UAC require additional academic assistance compared to their native peers. UAC may not have access to a study space or necessary study materials. Educators and schools can help students overcome these obstacles by implementing study areas during and after school with peer or adult tutors to help UAC students complete assignments and homework, and ultimately promote the development of academic resiliency (Hopkins, Martinez-Wenzl, Aldana, & Gandara, 2013).

Extracurricular activities. Unaccompanied immigrant students are often reluctant to participate in extracurricular activities (i.e., sports, clubs, and organizations), although research indicates students who join these activities benefit in several ways (Deckers & Zinga, 2012; Hopkins, et al., 2013). Participation in extracurricular activities is a social avenue for students to connect with their school and with the community, which, in turn, positively affects their academics. Through extracurricular activities, UAC learn new social norms, adjust to the school setting, and practice English with native-born peers in non-threatening environments (Deckers & Zinga, 2012; Hopkins, et al., 2013). By creating new social opportunities, new relationships with peers and school staff are established; this way, students foster positive outlets while improving self-esteem and encouraging resilience towards positive participation in school.

Curriculum and Instruction

Educators in institutions with supportive school programs recognize that flexibility is important to promote high school completion by UAC. Some successful programs facilitate training for future employment through workforce instruction and the attainment of college credits while in high school (Julienne, 2009). Others provide scheduling and location flexibility by offering evening classes or setting up alternative high schools. Coursework allowing students to earn dual credit (earning high school and community college credits concurrently) provides students academic autonomy (Julienne, 2009). Furthermore, career and technical classes providing students credits through hands-on experiences are also beneficial for unaccompanied youth.

New Arrival Centers

Often, the immigrant students arriving unaccompanied from Central America have a limited understanding of the formal education system in the U.S. The new arrival centers (NAC) were developed to augment traditional English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual programs. Primarily, the goal of NAC programs, or ESL programs, is to accelerate the development of English skills of immigrant students so that they can transition into mainstream classes. NAC are more commonly available in urban areas as opposed to suburban or rural schools (Short, 2002).

Unlike traditional language learning programs, entry into an NAC program is limited to students who are older, to those who possess the lowest academic skills, and to immigrants that have been in the country for a year or less. To promote education and to ensure that students are not segregated from native English-speaking students, enrollment in the NAC is limited from one to four semesters, after which time students are placed in

mainstream courses. Additionally, NAC programs help students navigate socially in schools and in their communities by teaching a range of classes and skills. Examples of skills may include schedule planning, and learning how to write, as well as how to work out math problems (Short, 2002). Additionally, NAC programs include assistance for the students' families, by facilitating school-community partnerships to provide access to social, health, and employment services (Short, 2002).

Depending on the availability of staff, learning materials, and transportation, school districts determine whether the NAC program is located within the home school, or at a separate school. This program benefits both students and staff. It allows students to participate in activities for meaningful integration with mainstream students for at least part of the day. Staff can work with students in this program and non-ELL students in other classes on campus. Once the students exit the NAC program, they may remain at the home school, or transfer to other schools within the district (Short, 2002). Students who attend NAC programs at separate sites typically attend classes in their home school for part of the day and then are transported to another school or leased location for the other part of the day for specialized instruction (Short, 2002).

Educational attainment gap

Crosnoe and Lopez Turley (2011) concluded that educational attainment is influenced by the school as well as the residential neighborhood of the student. For example, Hispanic immigrants usually reside in areas with increased crime, lesser performing schools, and weaker relationships between students and adults. In addition, Hispanic immigrants typically begin with increased academic risk due to socioeconomic status, language proficiency, and ethnic discrimination (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011;

Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). Despite the problematic conditions of certain schools, research supports that most immigrants exhibit higher resiliency in negative school conditions compared to peers (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011). Little information is available regarding how pre-immigration factors affect UAC academically once in the U.S. (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011). Furthermore, data examining the academic skills of immigrants in the primary grades are limited, prohibiting an accurate assessment of academic readiness as it relates to secondary grades (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011). Crosnoe and Lopez Turley (2011) found that, while Hispanic immigrants score the lowest among immigrant groups on school readiness, the disparities diminished significantly from kindergarten to third grade, indicating that Hispanic immigrants were able to catch up to peers in academic skills. The same does not hold true for immigrant students arriving after age fourteen, as they lack a scholarly foundation, a mastery of the principal language, and knowledge of social norms. They struggle with meeting graduation requirements, passing state tests, and scoring adequately on achievement exams. Low grades and attendance are derived from the aforementioned factors, which often lead to students dropping out and losing interest in secondary and college education (Suarez-Orozco, et al., 2010). U.S. formal education uses pedagogical practices focused on individualistic ideals and academic concepts, which is in stark contrast to the collectivism culture of most Latin American countries (Decapua & Marshall, 2011). Providing instruction that is more culturally in tune with UAC is not the focus for public school teachers, who have limited time to address the unique needs of UAC while meeting their other obligations, such as preparing all students for high stakes testing.

The home environment also promotes educational expectations. Often, the

disparity between the culture in the UAC's native country and U.S. culture influences academic outcomes negatively. For example, UAC are unfamiliar with the process for seeking assistance and applying for aid in postsecondary education, thus promoting academic problems among UAC (Crosnoe & Lopez Turley, 2011).

Staff Awareness and Development

Teachers contribute to developing students' resiliency by looking beyond students' shortcomings and focusing on opportunities to build relationships with UAC to teach concepts useful beyond the classroom (Thomsen, 2002). These concepts, in turn, allow students to trust their environment and believe in themselves. Teachers and other school staff must know their own biases and attitudes towards UAC by considering them "as resources instead of liabilities" (Thomsen, 2002, p. 11).

School Culture and Climate

School cultures promote resiliency by setting high expectations for students and providing support (Thomsen, 2002). Thomsen (2002) stated that principals and administrators model a culture of resiliency by recognizing staff for their work and incorporating factors in the school day to encourage successful outcomes. Resilient instructional staff focus on students' assets, such as engaging with teachers, attending school regularly, and asking for assistance, instead of their deficits, such as not completing work or disruptive behavior in the classroom. Affirmative relationships help UAC to have positive experiences in the school setting. In order to promote successful coping strategies in UAC, instructional staff must be knowledgeable of school structures and resources that promote and support resiliency.

Staff Attitudes

According to Harvey (2007), resiliency building in schools must begin in teacher-administrator relationships before student-teacher relationships. Teachers require supportive environments to foster respectful, positive relationships with students. Suggestions for improving the school structures to promote trust and confidence in UAC include time in the school day to build relationships, for example, during homeroom or in after-school sessions. Also, block scheduling and reduced teacher-to-student ratios allow students time to interact with adults who can praise their efforts publicly and provide appropriate constructive criticism privately (Harvey, 2007). School staff can also aid UAC in recognizing and expressing their negative emotions accordingly (Harvey, 2007). Harvey (2007) advocates for school administrators to include students in setting school rules, forge consensus, reduce disruptiveness against school policy, and most importantly, to build resiliency. Cooperative learning encourages peer relationship building to promote learning and “pro-social behaviors, such as helping, sharing, cooperating, collaborative problem solving, and treating others with respect and courtesy” (Harvey, 2007, p. 35). Administrators and teachers help UAC develop academic competence by setting clear expectations and manageable goals. They help develop academic competence by: providing prompt feedback, supplying resources and points of contact to help, and teaching strategies to students to track individual measurable progress (Harvey, 2007).

Summary

Schools as a whole serve as strong agents to promote resiliency for all children, but particularly to UAC (Henderson & Milstein, 2003; Thomsen, 2002). To develop

resiliency, a school culture advocates positive interactions between students and staff to promote the academic achievement of UAC (Gonzales, 2010). This chapter reviewed the literature describing the backgrounds of UAC, factors that promote resiliency and risk factors that affect the academic success and the learning process for this population.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The experiences of unaccompanied alien children (UAC) arriving to the U.S. and attending high school were discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Two. Furthermore, the six-step strategy posited by Henderson and Milstein (2003) to promote protective factors for resiliency-building for this type of student population was considered. Additional research was necessary to determine the factors that promote resiliency for UAC students in the school setting. Moreover, this research determined how participants' internal protective factors and environmental characteristics contributed to academic resiliency (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). This study considered factors that contributed to academic resiliency for the student participants of the study. This chapter explains the methodology used, how the student participants were selected, and the design ultimately used. The discussion of this qualitative case study includes the procedures used for data collection and analysis.

Setting

The school selected for the study was a traditional public high school within a large school district located in Texas. The school houses grades nine through twelve. In 2015-2016, there were approximately 2,682 students, with approximately 1,500 immigrant students enrolled in the school. Data from the district homeless liaison indicated 250 students met the homeless status for the current school year. The ethnic distribution of the student population in 2015-2016 was: 1.8% were African American,

94.3% were Hispanic, 3.5% were White, and 0.4% were Asian (Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2016). There were 490 English Language Learners (ELLs) at the school (TEA, 2016). The high school was located in a community that was predominantly composed of immigrants from Mexico and Central America, thus making this school appropriate for the selection of participants for this study. The district in the study had a high population of UAC that arrived from detention centers located within the state of Texas.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select the three student participants who met the eligibility criteria (Shakir, 2002). A small sample size is adequate for life history research (Baker & Edwards, 2012). In life history research, inductive data is compiled from multiple interviews and observations to allow an arena for participants' insight on their personal life perspectives to unfold. Large quantities of data was produced from the smaller selection of the appropriate participants from the study to permit a "fine-grained analysis" of their histories (Baker & Edwards, 2012, p.18).

Participants for the study were chosen from a purposive group from a high school in a Texas school district. The countries with the highest percentage of UAC arriving to the U.S. are from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The three student participants were from El Salvador or Guatemala, were UAC upon arriving to the U.S., and established residence in the U.S. within the previous three years. The participants were 16 years old, with similar maturity and cognitive understandings of their school participation and had the ability to express their goals and resiliency. They were eligible to participate in the study due to their determination to obtain a high school diploma and expressed aspirations for post-secondary studies. The student participants indicated their motivation

for going to college by seeking scholarship and post-secondary information from the counselor's office. These academic pursuits serve as indicators of the individuals' resiliency. Eligible students agreed to participate in the study and to share their experiences and backgrounds. The use of pseudonyms protected the identities for each student participant and the focus group participants. Pseudonyms were used for all educator participants as well.

The selection of adults was also purposeful, as only those in contact with the participants were asked to participate. Adults participating in the study included school personnel, such as the administrators, ESL counselor, teachers' aides, and teachers active in assisting the student participants with academic needs. The researcher requested interviews from respective teachers and school staff that were named by student participants as most supportive. When the researcher identified possible participants, adults received an invitation letter describing the study that requested their input through interviews and observations.

To protect the privacy of participants and school officials, the use of pseudonyms concealed identities in transcribed materials. Additionally, a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office maintained all interviews, transcriptions and taped materials of the study.

Research Design

This qualitative study focused on UAC's experiences within high school and their perceptions of internal and external factors that contributed to their resiliency to strive for academic achievement. The study utilized case study methodology to examine the real life context of a phenomenon with data collected from the student participants in their

natural settings (Yin, 2012). This method was appropriate because the researcher focused on individual participants' experiences as unaccompanied immigrant children and the factors that contributed to their resiliency; a multiple-case study design allowed the researcher to compare and contrast across the student participants' experiences. A collection of data that originated from interviews, participant observation, and photo-elicitation delivered collaborative contributions of experiences from participants to the researcher (Pink, Tutt, Dainty, & Gibb, 2010). The participants' cultural backgrounds, as they pertain to individual resiliency and academic progress, were intertwined with the data collection to provide their personal perspectives to explain situations and were not manipulated by a group or by an academic setting (Nurani, 2008; Yin, 2012). The research questions considered for this study are:

1. What life experiences and personal traits of unaccompanied immigrant students support and motivate resiliency in school in Texas?
2. What resources support resiliency in unaccompanied immigrant high school students in Texas?

Data Collection Procedures

Before identifying participants, approvals from the school principal, the school district Research and Development Department, and the University of Houston-Clear Lake Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) were obtained. The researcher received information from the campus ESL/LEP counselor of eligible students who possessed all the criteria to participate in the study and who were interested in volunteering. The ESL/LEP counselor was aware of students' residency status either at the time of new student registration, when documents establishing proof of residency

were requested, or when students resubmitted the annual enrollment card at the beginning of every school year to confirm residency, as required by the McKinney-Vento Act (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

Once students were identified as potential participants by the researcher, a form letter that included the researcher's contact information, the details of the study, and an invitation to participate in a focus group were sent to the students by the campus ESL counselor. The methods used to collect data included a focus group, interviews, observations, and photographs taken by the student participants to illustrate elements of resiliency in their lives. Data collection took two months, as observations of the students' interactions with school personnel at the high school were necessary. Interviews with the student participants and the school personnel provided images of the experiences the participants have as students who were previously UAC.

Focus Groups

The focus group method generated conversation in a forum that was participant-led, not facilitator-led, to supplement other traditional methods. The interaction and discussion among participants produced natural conversations with "a very different type of evidence than is possible from a one-to-one interview," that explored broader perspectives and stories of the members (Milward, 2012, p. 413). This study had one homogenous focus group comprised of five students from Guatemala and El Salvador. The group consisted of two female students and three males. The students were between the ages of 16-17 years old and in ninth or tenth grade. The focus group answered the same interview questions that the individual student participants received.

Interviews

The interview structure utilized open-ended questions. According to Yin (2012), the conversational nature of the open-ended interviews delivered richer information compared to surveys and questionnaires, especially in a case study where small groups were the focus. The researcher asked student participants to recount key events starting from their migration to the U.S., to registering for high school, and finally to reaching their goals towards graduation. The flexibility and openness of this type of interview allowed participants to impart unique details about their individual realities. Pictures taken by the three main student participants were discussed during the sixth interview. Student participants provided feedback regarding the persons, places, or objects they perceived affected their academic resiliency. All of the interviews took place in the student participants' school, except for the last interview, which took place at two of the student participants' homes and a restaurant for the third student participant. In addition to finding out about student participants' insight on their personal life perspectives, the interviews revealed insights on the students' self-perception, their communication with school staff and administrators, and the students' perception of their experiences at the school. The interview questions were available in Spanish and English. A certified translator was hired to translate the questions. The questions created dialogue with participating students about their experiences regarding helpful school programs and the personal factors that led them to persevere when faced with obstacles. Data was collected through six interviews per student participant, a meeting with a focus group, and interviews with several school personnel, chosen by each of the participants. Each participant was interviewed individually and recorded for transcription. The duration of

the interviews with student participants took place for approximately one hour at a time, once a week.

Interviews with school personnel were for approximately thirty minutes to one hour and focused on the student/educator relationship and how they supported the UAC. School personnel, such as counselors and teachers, were asked to discuss the professional support they received from administrators to serve the three UAC. These interviews took place in school employees' classrooms or offices.

Observations

Informal observations of the subjects took place during the course of data collection. Yin (2012) stated the researcher's neutral and factual observations of the subjects' interactions allows for information gathering from different standpoints. The purpose of the observations was to determine the student participants' interactions with peers and school staff, the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with peers and others, and determine if patterns of activities and events they choose are congruent with information provided during the interviews. The researcher conducted four observations of the participants in the classroom, in non-instruction settings, or recognition events. Observations for each student participant occurred at least once per week for four weeks during the three-month period. For classroom observations, teachers were contacted ahead of time to pre-arrange the observations. Student participants did not know of the visits ahead of time. Additionally, the student participants were observed in non-instructional settings interacting with peers, for example during lunch or at sporting events. The length of time for observations was 30 minutes to one hour.

Photo-Elicitation

Liebenberg, Ungar, and Theron (2014) recognized that studies of resilience are “further complicated because patterns of coping often remain hidden and unarticulated, with no language to describe process and experience” (p. 533). The use of photo-elicitation creates a “living story” when participants share their views of the pictures taken in their environment (Creswell, 2007, p. 129). The pictures improved the articulation of the stories in two ways: (a) by allowing the researcher to have access to unfamiliar spaces and (b) encouraging the youth to think thoroughly about the context of their experiences prior to the interviews (Liebenberg, Ungar, & Theron, 2014). Furthermore, the researcher developed rapport by altering the role as the authority, or the position of power, to the student participants, to direct the focus of the interview to interpret elements of resiliency from photos of daily interactions (Creswell, 2007; Liebenberg, Ungar, & Theron, 2014).

For this study, each of the three main student participants received a disposable camera to photograph the people, places, and objects that encouraged resiliency in their lives. The pictures allowed for more direct involvement from the student participants. Each student participant was asked to take at least six photographs. The researcher retrieved cameras distributed to the student participants and developed the film. Reflections on the photos were discussed and thoroughly examined during the sixth interview with student participants.

Data Analysis Procedures

Techniques used to analyze the data for this study were described by Yin (2012) as explanation-building and time-series analyses. The time-series analysis examined

events to provide a chronological pattern of the resilience factors aiding participants academically. The student participants' persistence to migrate to the U.S., the events leading to registering for high school, fostering support from instructional staff and other school structures to eventually gain assistance with learning, all demonstrated resiliency (Yin, 2012).

Interviews, field notes of observations, and photographs were compared to determine patterns and identify central themes or issues. Key events in the participants' histories were chronologically sorted (Yin, 2012). The NVivo computer-assisted qualitative software analysis program was used to analyze data from the interview transcripts and field notes (QSR International, 2013). The coding and themes determined from the data analysis were not predetermined by the researcher but emerged through the analysis process. The analysis process used in this study (a) began with categorical aggregation to determine a commonality of themes and additional subthemes; (b) led to an examination of single events recounted by participants and direct interpretation by the researcher by taking apart data and making meaningful assessment; and (c) relationships were created between categories by comparing and contrasting coding from the different cases (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2012). The themes that emerged were derived from the students and the school staff's expectations as to how each UAC participant exhibited resiliency in achieving academic success in high school.

Validity

To ensure validity while collecting data and during data analysis, information was recorded and transcribed. Triangulation of data points utilized multiple sources of data from multiple observations and interviews of student participants, their teachers, and

other pertinent school officials, and from the elicited pictures, to ensure validity and to promote accuracy and consistency (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). The triangulation of the interviews, observations, and document analyses improved the study's validity, to reveal complexities in the participants' histories, and minimized researcher biases (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). The inclusion of additional information from the school data, such as policies and contemporaneous event news, further triangulate data analysis and interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

Per the district's request, the researcher received permission from the school district's administrative officer to conduct the study before collecting the data. Additionally, an application to the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Houston-Clear Lake was approved before proceeding with the study. The specific district, the school participating, and all participants' identities remain confidential, complying with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); pseudonyms were assigned to protect identities. Participants' data was masked to hide identifiable characteristics and maintain confidentiality.

To ensure participants understood the procedures for the study, consent and assent forms were written in both English and Spanish. Signatures on assent forms from each subject under 17 years of age were required to participate. Participants also received information that they could discontinue participation in the study at any time with no penalty.

The researcher of this study is a licensed professional therapist trained to counsel children and adolescents faced with trauma. Physical and psychological sensitivity to

student participants occurred by establishing a protocol in which they selected the times and safe locations for the interviews (McCosker, Barnard, & Gerber, 2001). Also, the researcher had the name of the counselor responsible for each student participant. The researcher had a list of counseling referrals available.

The data collected from the study was saved in a password-protected computer and hard copies of the data stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher had access to the data stored on the computer and in the locked file cabinet. The data will be kept for five years from the completion of this study and then destroyed.

Summary

The case study methodology used to answer the research questions in Chapter One was described in this chapter, and included the participant selection, methodology, and data collection procedures. The focus of the study was the participants' experiences as students in a U.S. school after migrating from Central America as unaccompanied alien children. Participants provided perspectives on personal traits and school environmental characteristics that positively or negatively contributed to academic resiliency in high school, including personal perseverance and school support services.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to understand the academic experiences of adolescent students who were previously UAC from Central America. Interviews of the student participants and educators determined factors that led to academic success. Additional data was obtained from pictures taken by the student participants depicting elements of their lives and from parent comments during student interviews conducted at their homes. The researcher examined the three student participants' experiences as told through their perspectives. The school structures contributing to student achievement are described to provide information about factors that improve student motivation for learning. The aim of this study was to examine how the life events of the student participants and protective factors at their school encouraged high resiliency and influenced their academic success. Patterns and themes were extracted from the information shared by the participants describing the students' experiences.

Description of the Participants

Parents or guardians agreed to let the selected UAC students participate in the study. Data was obtained from a focus group with five members and three individual student participants. All the student participants were between 16-17 years old at onset and agreed to participate in the study. Data collected from a fourth student participant was not included in the results after it was determined she did not meet the requirement as a minor migrating unaccompanied from Central America. All the student participants

were from Central America and arrived in the U.S. within the last three years. All students immigrated unlawfully to the U.S., unaccompanied by parents or guardians, and were apprehended by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection before reuniting with family members who reside in Texas. Each reported that their intention was to come to the U.S. in search of a better future for both themselves and their families. All were students in a large urban high school in Texas that served approximately 2,682 students in grades 9-12 (TEA, 2016). The student participants were identified as English Language Learners (ELL) and participated in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The focus group consisted of five students with two female and three male students between the ages of 16-17 and in the ninth or tenth grade. The individual student participants selected were two male students who were in the ninth grade, and the female student who was in tenth grade. All three students had many of the same teachers for core classes.

Portraits of the Participants

The interviews from each participant included stories and recollections relating to the student participants' individual biographies, which were examined to determine risk factors and personal resiliency traits. During the course of the study, the student participants provided a snapshot of their personal life. Information about their lives in their home country, their experience immigrating to the U.S., and their current living arrangements as they attend school were discussed. All except one set of student interviews were conducted during the school day in the privacy of the counselor's office or in the school's library. The sixth interview took place in the student participants' homes. The educators' interviews were all conducted separately in the teachers'

classrooms during their lunch or conference periods.

The following sections describe each student participants' biography. Each biography starts by describing the student's family background, reasons for emigrating, and an overview of their journey to the U.S. These sections describe many of the risk factors each student faced. Then, the biographies explore each student's attitudes and environments related to resiliency factors and are organized by their living arrangements, perspectives on education, motivations, connections, and religiosity and spirituality.

Diego

Introduction

Diego was a 16 year-old male from Guatemala. He arrived in the U.S. in March 2016. He is the oldest of five children with two younger brothers and two younger sisters. Diego lived with his mother and four siblings in Guatemala. His brother was 15 years old, his sister was 13 years old, his other sister was 12 years old, and his youngest brother was 10 years old. His grandparents and other extended family lived next door. He shared that his family was very close and routinely spent time together. His grandfather was a pastor of a church that he and his family attended regularly. Diego never talked about any hobbies or personal interests, though it seemed that his biggest preoccupation was to earn money to pay back his uncles for helping him to travel from Guatemala to the U.S. Diego is the first of his family to enroll in a U.S. high school and learn English formally. He does not have any relatives that have received a formal education.

Throughout the interviews, Diego was polite and soft-spoken. He answered questions honestly and thoughtfully, although he maintained a reserved demeanor at each meeting, almost as if to guard secrets. He got along well with others, but did not seem to

have many friends, probably due to his quiet manner and his recent arrival from Guatemala. Diego and the researcher met six times over the course of the study. The first five interviews took place at the school and the sixth interview took place at a local restaurant. Diego did not want the researcher to meet him at his home.

Reasons for emigrating. Two main reasons drove Diego's decision to leave his country. The first reason for leaving involved his obligation to his family. From the first session until the last, Diego detailed his altruistic actions in his yearning to provide help for his family left behind in Guatemala. His parents were divorced and his father provided no financial support to the family. Diego said he often helped to supplement his mother's income by doing agricultural work. The bad economy in Guatemala meant that Diego and his family often struggled to make ends meet. Although he worked long hours, he shared that he made little money from his work. He said, "La gente vive, bueno, la mayoría es bien humilde, como...sí. Es como muy baja la economía y gana poco. [People live, well, the majority are humble, like...well. It's like the economy is bad and [people] earn little.]" It was easy for Diego to find work in the fields, and as a result he often worked instead of attending school. Diego's family did not have the money to pay for tuition for Diego to attend the closest school, which was hours away from their home.

The second reason for emigrating involved the lack of safety in his country. He talked briefly about feeling unsafe in his country. He said he thought the U.S. was "blessed" because his country had few police with limited power to help citizens. He said, "Sí, policías hay, pero pocos. Pocos y casi no pueden ayudar, a resolver sus problemas. [Yes, there are police, but few. Few [police] and they almost can't help to resolve your problems.]"

His decision to emigrate came after he realized he could make more money if he worked in the U.S. To implement his plan to leave Guatemala, he contacted his maternal uncle to ask for help. It took his uncle three months to get things in order for Diego to travel. He needed a loan of \$10,000 to pay a “coyote,” or a person that helps persons to illegally travel across borders for a fee. His uncle agreed that Diego could reside with him in Texas while he earned money to pay back the loan. When his uncle agreed to help Diego, his second step was to talk to his mother about his plan to emigrate. Diego shared that he did not tell his mother about his plans earlier because he wanted to minimize her worries by first ensuring that his uncle would help him.

Initially, his mother did not want Diego to take the long, dangerous trip to the U.S. Diego stated he had to convince her about his decision. When she finally agreed, he promised her that he would find a way to continue helping the family financially once he was in the U.S. In his conversation with his mother about emigrating, he shared that he said, “‘Yo te voy a ayudar siempre. Voy a mandar dinero y que mis hermanos tengan un buen futuro’ ¿Verdad? ‘Yo los ayudo,’ le dije. Y ella se convenció ¿Verdad? La convencí. [‘I am always going to help you. I am going to send money and my siblings will have a great future. Okay? I will help you,’ I told her. And I convinced her, right? I convinced her].” He explained that he did not want his mother to think he was abandoning their family, but instead he reasoned that he would have more opportunities to help the family by going to the U.S. He remained responsible for his family’s needs and did not leave the country until his mother consented.

The journey. Diego explained his decision to emigrate required conviction due to the danger and risks he would encounter. Diego said, “No, porque, imagínese cómo viene

uno. Es riesgoso, trata de vida o muerte; uno tiene que estar decidido [de hacer el viaje]. [No, because imagine how you are coming. It's risky, it's a life or death [decision] so you have to be resolute [about taking the trip]].” When remembering the trip from Guatemala to the U.S., Diego explained, “Bueno todo lo que dice el libro de Enrique – no sé si lo ha leído. Sí, todo eso pasé [en mi viaje para los Estados Unidos]. [Well, everything that is said in the book about Enrique - I don't know if you have read it. Yes, I experienced all of that [when I traveled to the U.S.].” He was referring to Enrique's Journey by Nazario (2007), detailing the true account of an adolescent male who traversed from his Central American country to the U.S. to reunite with his mother. The book details that Enrique traveled on the dangerous roof tops of cargo trains and by foot, many times without money, food or water, and in fear of altercations from other travelers or the policing agents. Diego stated his trip was similar to Enrique's experiences. He stated, “Cuando vine de Guatemala vine en troca o en carro, y de ahí, para entrar en México, en Arriaga, tomamos el tren...sin comer...tal vez [con] agua pero poco. [When I came from Guatemala, I came by truck or by car, and from there, to enter Mexico, in Arriaga, we took a train...on an empty stomach...maybe with water, but very little of it.]”

He explained, almost gratefully, that his trip was cut short when he was detained by “inmigración,” or U.S. Customs and Border Protection, otherwise he would have had to walk in the desert for over a week, where many immigrants often die. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection handed the custody of Diego to the Division of Administration for Children and Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), where he was detained for 20 days. He said, “Iba cruzándome y me agarraron inmigración y estuve encerrado veinte días. [I was crossing and immigration caught me and I was locked up for

twenty days.]” Diego explained that his loan was reduced to \$6,000 instead of \$10,000 when the coyote was not successful in keeping Diego from getting arrested. While detained, a judge determined that Diego would live with his uncle and attend school temporarily, until a decision was made about whether or not he would remain in the U.S. as a resident. During Diego’s last interview, he shared he had a court date scheduled at the end of summer to determine his status on remaining in the U.S.

Living Arrangements

Diego currently lives with his two maternal uncles, ages 30 and 36, his uncle’s wife, and a three-year old male cousin. He shared that he was not very close to his uncles when he lived in Guatemala as they emigrated when Diego was very young. Occasionally, he spoke to his uncles in phone conversations before immigrating to the U.S.

In several interviews, he explained that he was very thankful for his uncles’ assistance. He feels they treat him like a son. They support him financially, encourage him to pursue an education, and share words of wisdom with Diego. His uncles told him to do better than they did and learn as much as possible in school. They told Diego to focus on his school assignments instead of looking for work. His aunt cooked for him and washed his clothes. She also taught him how to cook. He explained that both his uncles and his aunt worked long hours, so he contributed to the household in his own way. He demonstrated his work ethic and camaraderie to his new family by doing chores around the house, such as cleaning the home and washing his uncle’s truck. From his responses, it was inferred that he participates and interacts with his uncles and aunt as normally as possible, but he remains cautious about getting too close to them. The uncertainty in his

relationships with his uncles, he explains, is that they may have to leave some day, either by will or due to deportation. At the time of the study, Diego had only been with his uncles for a couple of months so it is possible his responses stemmed from learning to adjust to his new living arrangements and from missing his family in Guatemala. For example, despite all of his uncles' requests to focus on school, he continued to contemplate ways to help his mother and siblings back home. He shared:

Sí, aunque lo poco que pueda, pero sí pienso en ayudarlos. Como le decía, no tengo papá, y mi mamá se hizo cargo de mis hermanitos. Yo soy el mayor. Y sí, yo estudiaba allá, pero igual trabajaba. Y sí, ayudaba a mi mamá. Le daba, bueno, aunque ella trabajaba un poco; lo que uno gana no es igual que [en los Estados Unidos]. Ganar un poco más y sí puedo ayudar a mi mamá, pero [no puedo ayudar] sin trabajo. [Yes, even if it's a little, I still think about helping them. Like I told you, I do not have a father, and my mother is responsible for my siblings. I'm the oldest. So, yes, I studied in my country, but I also worked. So, yes, I used to help my mother...Even though you make little money there, since it's less compared to what you can make in the U.S. I can make a little more here and help my mother, but [I cannot help] without a job.]

The messages he received from his uncles, his mother, and his teachers in both his native country and in the U.S. were clear: Work hard, ask questions, set goals for a brighter future, and work toward those goals by getting an education. During his last interview, he shared that he was definitely going to pursue an education and obtain a high school diploma.

Perspectives on Education, Past and Present

Diego stated that he attended school in Guatemala as often as he could, but his school was far from his home, requiring a lengthy commute. The commute was costly for Diego, who had little money to spare. He explained:

...donde yo vivía no tenía escuelas cercanas. Tenía que pagar bus para llegar y casi estudiaba más de medio día. Tenía que llevar algo de dinero para gastar y, bueno, como le decía que yo trabajaba también y nuestros gastos casi no, con mi mamá, casi no nos alcanzaba [el dinero]. Sí, por esa razón también me vine [para los Estados Unidos]. [...where I lived there were no schools nearby. You had to pay for a bus to get there and you studied more than half of the day. You had to take money to spend and, like I told you I worked too and with our bills, with my mother, [the money] was not enough. Yes, for that reason I also came [to the U.S.]].

Culturally, in Guatemala, education is considered an important institution. He shared, “Bueno la educación es lo más importante, ¿verdad? [En Guatemala] sí te dan [una educacion]... te enseñan pero uno no puede ir a la escuela porque tiene que pagar para entrar a una escuela. [Well, education is very important, right? [In Guatemala] they give you [an education]...they teach you, but you cannot go to school because you have to pay tuition to attend school.]” He pointed out that teachers in Guatemala encouraged him to get an education. They emphasized that getting an education was the best thing he could do to ensure a brighter future for himself. Diego had similar views on education. He shared that he enjoyed learning, but being economically disadvantaged stalled his efforts of attending school.

As a condition to stay in the country, a judge ordered Diego to enroll in high school in Texas or face deportation. He was placed in ninth grade due to his lack of English language proficiency, although he was nearly age 17 and had only one year left before graduating from high school in his native country. The ESL aides and teachers recognized Diego's academic abilities. His reading teacher said, "I gave him a [test]. He wasn't even here, really, to cover the material. I just let him take a chapter test and I said [to Diego], 'It's not for a grade. Just want to see how you're doing.' He got [a grade of] 85. He's really smart." His math teacher shared that Diego is a quick learner and helps his peers, despite only recently starting school. She shared that sometimes Diego appears confused or frustrated when he does not understand the process or structure of the class. When asked if she thought he was goal-oriented, she shared, "It looks like it, but I think his not being able to get out of [high school] fast enough is probably pushing him back, or he's starting to realize 'wait a minute, it's probably not gonna be as easy as I thought.' So I don't know if that sets him back a little." In several observations of Diego in classes, he was attentive and quiet. He asked for help from the teacher or ESL aides if he did not understand the assignments. On one occasion, he helped his teacher figure out how to use her Promethian board, an interactive electronic white board used in the classroom.

The pictures Diego took of his surroundings were all of objects or people at the school that have helped him to be a successful student. Although he was private and spoke little about his home life, it was evident that he felt comfortable and safe at school as he explained each picture. He expressed that all the teachers helped him, and the ESL aides helped to translate when needed. Also, he said about his classmates, "[Mis compañeros], nos ayudamos entre todos. [[My classmates], we all help each other]."

Diego selected the picture of his reading teacher as his favorite, out of gratitude for all the efforts his teacher has made to teach him English. He said:

Él es mi maestro, ahí en la foto, y [enseña] lectura. Y sí, él nos enseña palabras [en inglés], cómo escribir en inglés,...cómo hay palabras similares, y lo que es correcto o no es correcto [uso de las palabras]. Y del sonido, cómo se escucha y eso se escribe, y él me enseñó eso, y cómo leer [inglés]. [In the picture, he is my teacher, and he teaches reading. So, yes, he teaches words [in English], how to write in English,...how words are similar, and the correct or incorrect [use of the words]. And about the sound, how it sounds and how to write, and he taught me that and how to read [English]].”

He explained he did not speak English before coming to the U.S., but Diego understood that his success in the U.S. was contingent upon learning English. Several pictures were of his reading class alone due to the support he received in the class. He liked that the ESL aide was available to help him get over the initial confusion of understanding instructions given in English. He explained, “En la clase de lectura, el maestro hablaba en inglés, y yo no entendía; [la aide] me explicaba, me traducía, y también con las tareas que el maestro nos da, [la aide] nos explica en español. Sí, me ayudó bastante esta maestra [In reading class, the teacher spoke in English, and I did not understand; [the aide] would explain, she translated, and also with my assignments that my teacher gave, [the aide] explained in Spanish. The teacher [the aide] helped me a lot].”

In the same class, Diego used programs on the computer to hear himself speak English. One of his pictures was of a computer screen depicting Rosetta Stone, a

computer-based language learning program in which Diego had to speak into a microphone and repeat words that flashed on the screen. Pictures of objects associated with the words that he repeated were also displayed. Diego attributed learning many new words to Rosetta Stone. He shared that learning English was much easier with Rosetta Stone because he could hear himself speak the language. Another picture was of the school itself. He explained he took the picture because school is a second home for him, a place where he can learn many new things and continue mastering English.

Motivation

Although Diego enjoyed learning, it appeared he was ambiguous about his goals regarding education. At one point, he said he might study to be a physician. In contrast, at other times Diego inquired if there were ways he could finish school quicker. Some of his ambiguous comments may have stemmed from the court directive to attend school as a requirement to remain in the U.S. He never thought he would get arrested while crossing the border, or that it would impede his goals to earn money in the U.S. From his comments it was evident he was concerned about finding work to help his mother and siblings in Guatemala, even though his mother approved of Diego attending school. When he shared his mother's views regarding school, he expressed an urgency to help her. He stated:

... bueno, tal vez esto no eran nuestros planes ¿verdad? Pero, sí, ella está bien, no dice nada...Que nosotros proponemos las cosas, pero Dios dispone. Es la voluntad de Dios que yo estoy y tengo que estudiar. Ella verá cómo ayudar a mis otros hermanitos, por el momento. Quiero ayudarla. [Well, maybe these were not our plans, right? But yes, she [my mother] is fine, she doesn't say anything [about

me not working and going to school]...one proposes [a strategy] and God disposes [the plans]. It's God's will for me to be here and have to study. She will figure out how to help my siblings, for now. I want to help her.]

Though Diego lacked direction in setting educational goals, he had a strong sense of responsibility to his family, to his teachers, and to himself. His decision to leave his country, to plan the trip with his uncle, and to convince his mother to let him leave are obvious examples of Diego's perseverance to make changes towards his goal to help his family. His maturity was evident when he talked about his family. Along with considering ways to earn money to support his mother and siblings, Diego looked forward to the day he could pay back the \$6,000 loan to his uncle. He explained that his uncle did not ask him for the money, but he said, "Él tiene familia y por cualquier cosa me [puede pedir el dinero]. [He has a family and for any reason he [could ask me for the money]]." He helped his aunt and uncle around the house; he contacted his mother regularly and confided events about his life to her. He turned in his school assignments on time and asked for help when needed. He was rarely absent from school as he knew his attendance was a factor considered at the upcoming immigration hearing. He stated that he was determined to get residency to stay in the U.S. He understood he had opportunities available to him that he did not previously have in Guatemala. It seemed that he was deciding how to make the most of his new life while remaining connected to his previous one. He shared he would like to return to Guatemala one day. He said: "Bueno lo que pienso es que sí quiero volver a mi país, pero quiero estar un tiempo [en los Estados Unidos]. [Well, what I think is I would like to return to my country, but I want to stay [in the U.S.] for a while.]" Until his return, Diego looked forward to learning

English proficiently and finishing high school in three years.

Connections

Diego was not involved in any extracurricular activity or group setting in or outside of school at the time of the study. Although he was enrolled in ROTC as an elective, he did not participate in any of the events that took place outside of school hours, such as awards banquets or summer camp. He was not interested in any summer camps mentioned to him by the school counselor. Diego said he wanted to work with his uncle during the summer. Although his uncle provided for him financially, it was difficult for Diego to allow himself to depend on someone else entirely. He shared, "... aunque sí, él me apoya yo no puedo confiar en todo lo que él me da. Sí, porque yo, a veces quiero algo, ¿verdad? Pero es imposible de comprarlo, no puedo. [...although he supports me, I cannot trust in everything that he gives me. Yes, because I sometimes want things, right? But it is impossible to buy [everything I want], I can't]."

Diego was still considered a new student at the time of the study. His introverted demeanor limited his openness towards others. In the pictures he took for the study, there were mostly pictures of educators, and only one picture he took with a friend. It was an awkward picture of him and a female classmate. She was sitting down with her elbows on the desk, covering her face with her hands, as Diego stood next to her looking towards the camera. He shared that this classmate had all the same classes he did. When he began school, he explained, "...cuando llegué, ella me ayudaba cuando no sabía algo, mis clases, dónde irme y ella me ayudó...Nos ayudábamos en las tareas. [...when I got here she helped me when I didn't know something, with my classes, where to go and she helped me... We helped each other with assignments]." With lowered eyes and a pensive

tone, he seemed hurt as he stated he liked this picture the least because he could not understand why she covered her face. She had been so helpful to him. He tried to redirect the discussion to say he had not heard from her and was not sure if she would return in the new school year.

Although he was slowly developing relationships with his teachers and other instructional staff, he was most comfortable talking to the ESL aides about himself. He was aware that teachers thought he was intelligent as they often commented on his ability to do the work well. He realized his capacity to learn things quickly. Diego said he attributed his relationship to his uncles as the reason he stayed in school and altered the goals he had when he immigrated to the U.S. He looked up to both uncles, but especially to the younger one. Years before, his uncle came to the U.S. for the first time, returned to Guatemala after a few years, married and had a child, and then returned to the U.S. four years ago. Diego appreciated his uncle's money management. He explained about his uncle, "Tiene terrenos, vehículos y, bueno, en mi país...tener una buena administración no sólo de dinero, ¿verdad? Sino de lo que uno gana. Siempre tiene que administrarlo [el dinero] bien, comprar cosas que sí valen la pena, ¿verdad? [He has real estate, vehicles, and, well, in my country...you have to not only manage money well, right? But what you earn. You always must manage [money] well; buy things that are worth buying, right?]." Diego respected his uncle's entrepreneurial skills to care for his family by purchasing real estate and acquire the things needed to live comfortably. He asked his uncle for advice on how to "survive" living in the U.S., which helped him overcome being homesick. He stated:

Le pregunto sobre las experiencias de él que ha vivido [en los Estados Unidos], cómo fue cuando se vino. Vino solo y no tenía ningún familiar aquí...Y él me explica todo y de ahí es donde yo saco [conocimiento de] experiencias...de sobre lo que él me dice y así no estar triste. [I ask him about his experiences since he has lived [in the U.S.], how was it when he came. He came alone and didn't know anyone here...And he explains everything to me, and that's where I gain knowledge about experiences...from what he tells me and then I don't feel sad.]

It seemed that his relationships with adults both at home and in school helped him to adjust slowly to his new environment, while feeling supported when facing new challenges.

Religiosity and Spirituality

In his country, Diego went to church regularly with his mother and siblings. Attending church was as common to his family as eating together. Diego explained that his grandparents were important to his life, and his grandfather was a pastor. Regarding his beliefs, he shared:

Siempre decíamos que, que nosotros tenemos que buscar a Dios no en momento cuando lo necesitamos, tenemos que buscarlo siempre para que, bueno de lo que yo he escuchado dice que cuando uno tiene problemas ahí busca a Dios, pero Dios hace como que, si no lo oye, lo ignora porque lo busca cuando él quiere, cuando tiene necesidad y no cuando, cuando él, bueno porque nosotros tenemos que buscar a Dios en todo el tiempo, ¿verdad? Y no cuando tenemos necesidades. [We always say that, that we have to look for God, not in moments when we need him, but we have to look for him always so that, well what I have heard is that when

you have a problem and you look for God, but God will act like he doesn't hear you, he will ignore [you] because you looked for him when you needed something, and not when he, well because we have to look for God all the time, right, and not just when we have needs].

He does not have the same religious practices since living with his uncles in the U.S. He has only been to church twice since leaving Guatemala, but he continues to have a strong belief in God. He explained that his uncles and aunt work six days a week and on Sundays, "Sí, quieren [ir a la iglesia], pero también ellos trabajan y están aprovechando su tiempo, pero ellos también siempre le agradecen a Dios [They do want to go to church, but they also work and they are making the most of their time, but they always are grateful to God]."

Diego brought up God often in his interviews, especially when he expressed gratefulness or to indicate when he needed patience. He shared, "...la verdad yo siempre agradezco a Dios cada amanecer, cada anocheecer... [...the truth is I always thank God, every morning and every night]." He relied on his faith to help him face the risks during his trip from Guatemala to the U.S. where he knew so many died. He said:

Bueno, el grupo que veníamos [a los Estados Unidos], veníamos como 20 personas y sí la verdad siempre también agradecíamos a Dios, ¿verdad? Por ayudarnos y protegernos y por, por guardarnos, ¿verdad? Ante las autoridades y todos y porque eso, es sobre la voluntad de Dios si uno pasa o no, si llega con vida, o porque muchos también en el camino se mueren, pero nosotros siempre le pedíamos a Dios que nos guiara, y sí y siempre nos dábamos consejos unos a otros...[Well, in the group that came [to the U.S.], there were about twenty people

and yes, the truth is we always were grateful to God, right? For helping us and protecting us and for guarding us, right? Before the authorities and everything, and because it is God's will if you pass or not, if you arrive alive, or because many die on the trip, but we always would ask God to guide us, and we all would give each other advice].

Diego said he confided his problems to God in prayer before he talked to anyone else, including his uncles. His religious convictions resounded when he said, "Confio en Dios. Y yo siempre le cuento, en mis oraciones... Yo siempre le pido a Dios por cada cosa que quiero o si me pasa algo [I confide in God. And I always tell him, in my prayers, I always ask God for the things I want and if something happens to me.]

George

Introduction

George is a 16-year-old male from El Salvador. He enjoys soccer and spending time with his family. George and his twin brother are the youngest of five children. He also has two older brothers and an older sister. Except for his sister, who resides in El Salvador, George and his three brothers live with his parents in Texas. His parents have been married to each other for 28 years. His teachers describe George as serious, quiet, and studious. Throughout the interviews, the personality traits used by George's teachers to describe him are evident. He was open about his responses in a direct and determined manner. He arrived in the U.S. during the 2014-2015 school year. He began eighth grade upon registering for school. He was in ninth grade for the first time during the time of the study.

Reasons for emigrating. When George decided to leave El Salvador, he lived

with his sister and his grandmother. His goal for going to the U.S. was to reunite with his family and to continue his studies. Two years prior to leaving El Salvador, George refused his parents' offer to bring him to the U.S. because he did not want to leave his grandmother. His grandmother had raised him for most of his life after his parents left El Salvador. His twin brother decided to emigrate in George's place. After two years without his twin, George decided it was time to reunite with his family in the U.S. He explained he had never been away from his twin for so long, and he knew he could not manage it much longer. When he told his grandmother about his intentions of leaving El Salvador, she did not want him to leave her. During the time of this study, after two years in the U.S., George still considered it difficult to talk to his grandmother on the phone because he fears he will never see her again. He shared that he misses his grandmother and sister very much.

George reported that school was always a priority and he desired to attend the university one day. In El Salvador, the long distance between the school and his home and the high crime rate were barriers for George to attend school. In his hometown, most were not educated because it was difficult to study and work at the same time. In his determination to go to school, George explained he would get up at six a.m. to get ready for the day and walk for approximately two hours to get to school. The school day ran from noon to five o'clock. He shared that his teachers recognized his potential and motivated him to continue in school. He said:

[En El Salvador] siempre los maestros nos decían "te veo que quieres ir... que quieres tener una carrera" y...vas a poder. Y, pues, me dijeron que a donde quiera que vaya siempre tenga en mente que vas a ir a la universidad. Y, pues, les quiero

agarrar el consejo. [In El Salvador, my teachers always said ‘we see that you want to go...that you want to have a career’ and...you can do it. And, well, they told me that, no matter where I go, to always keep in mind that I’m going to the university. And, well, I want to take their advice].

The high crime rate and threats from neighborhood gangs acted as a barrier to attend school. He explained about the gangs:

Lo detienen y le dicen que ya no lo quieren ver más por allí cerca. Y aunque usted diga “pero es que yo voy a ir a estudiar,” [ellos dicen] “no, pues ya no vas a ir a estudiar, porque te estamos diciendo que no.” [They detain you and they tell you that they no longer want to see you near the school. And even you say “but I’m just going to study” [they say] no, you are not going to study because we told you that you can’t].

In another interview, he explained about threats he received after school, “...siempre lo amenazan a uno después de escuela, le dicen que le den dinero,...y, si no le dan [dinero] pues [ellos] lo matan [...they are always threatening you after school, and they tell you to give them money,...or if you don’t give them [money, they will] kill you].”

If attending middle school seemed difficult in El Salvador, George’s lifelong dream of going to college seemed almost impossible. The universities were located in cities where many fatalities occurred due to the high crime. He explained, “...y además [en El Salvador] casi no se puede estudiar. Si quiere uno ir a universidad tiene que ir a la ciudad donde hay más delincuencia. Ahí es donde están las universidades. Y a muchas personas han matado [yendo a la universidad] [...and [in El Salvador] you can barely study. If you want to go to a university you have to go to a city where there is high crime.

That is where the universities are. And lots of people have died [going to the university]].” In addition, the cities where the universities were located were hours away from his home. He explained that if he had stayed in El Salvador, his family would have had to move because the nearest university was three hours away from where they lived. Living apart from his family was not a consideration for George.

The journey. George considered himself fortunate because his parents paid for him to travel by bus to come to the U.S. instead of relying on the train for transportation, to avoid some of the possible dangers he could encounter. As George talked about his journey, he said, “Muchos llegan a través de los trenes, pero yo no. A mí, mis papás mandaron mucho dinero para que viniera en bus porque el viaje en tren es muy peligroso. [Many come [to the U.S.] by train, but I did not. My parents sent a lot of money for me to come by bus because traveling by train is very dangerous.]” Nonetheless, George stated that his trip was difficult. He had no food or drink on the bus. There were twenty others traveling with George on the bus. Two coyotes traveled with them. The coyotes were strangers to him and his parents. George trusted the coyotes based on what they had heard from others that had emigrated from El Salvador.

George was aware of the risks he was taking when he decided to cross the borders of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico in order to reach the U.S. As he told his story, he expressed amazement that his bus was not detained at any of the borders and that the trip was virtually uneventful, albeit lengthy. He said:

Me costó ocho días llegar hasta la frontera de Estados Unidos con México...
porque en Guatemala estuvimos como tres, cuatro días ahí porque estaba difícil
cruzar el río de Guatemala y México...nosotros pasamos en lanchas, porque [el

río] estaba muy grandote. Estaba bien peligroso. [It took me eight days to get to the U.S. Mexican border...because we were there in Guatemala for about three, four days because it was difficult to cross the river between Guatemala and Mexico...we crossed on a ferry because [the river] was very large. It was very dangerous.]

Near the U.S. Mexican border, the coyotes put George on a train with instructions to turn himself in to Customs and Border Patrol once he crossed the border in Laredo, Texas. These instructions would prevent George from crossing the desert. Once he turned himself in and was detained, he stayed in an adult detainment facility for a day and a night. He shared that the facility was full and not welcoming. The air conditioner was on high, making conditions very cold. There were no blankets available and the only food distributed was cold ham sandwiches. George believed the unpleasant conditions at the adult detainment facility were intentional, a type of punishment to dissuade immigrants. From the adult detainment center, George was sent to a detention center for children, where conditions were better.

After spending a day at the children's detention center, George was sent by plane to a refugee shelter in Chicago, where he stayed for 27 days. In Chicago, he was finally able to call his father for the first time. In contrast to the detention center, George explained he was comfortable in the refugee shelter. He received warm blankets and clothes, ate three meals a day, took English classes, and watched movies for entertainment. He shared, "...una casa solo para menores. Y [los menores estaban] bien cuidados...y nos ponían a ver películas, como cualquier casa normal [It was a house only for minors. And they took good care of [the minors]...and we would watch movies, like

any other normal house].”

While George was at the refugee shelter in Chicago, his family was contacted by the ORR to send certain paperwork to the court to release George into their custody. Due to his parents’ illegal status and fear of deportation, they asked George to give his aunt’s name as his contact at the court. When the court decided that George could live with his aunt, a letter was sent to his aunt requesting that she send his birth certificate and enough money for two airplane tickets, one for George and one for a chaperone who would deliver George to his aunt. He was flown to Texas to meet his family.

Living Arrangements

When the study began, George reported that he lived with both his parents and his three brothers. The arrangement changed during the time of the study. George, his twin brother, and his parents moved into one apartment, and his two older brothers moved into a separate apartment right next to where George lived. When talking about what family meant to him, George said, “Bueno, la familia para mí es todo porque sin ellos yo no estuviera aquí. [Well, family for me is everything because without them I wouldn’t be here.]” George described a time when all his family lived together and how important it was for him. He said, “[En El Salvador] donde nosotros vivimos hay dos casas, pero había, vivíamos toda la familia. No como [en los Estados Unidos] que se separan, allá todos estan juntos. Nietos, tíos, primo...[Where we lived, there are two houses, but there was, the whole family lived there. It’s not like [in the U.S.], where everyone separates, [in El Salvador] everyone stays together. Grandchildren, uncles, cousins...].” When he was young, fifteen people lived in the family houses in El Salvador. When George emigrated, eight family members were left in the houses, as other family members, like

George's uncles, had emigrated also.

Perspectives on Education, Past and Present

From the start of the study, George acknowledged that he is a good student. His grades are always passing, he has passed the STAAR, the state exam, and he stayed after school for tutorials, often to get help when he did not understand something that was taught in class. George explained that a huge reason that he decided to come to the U.S. was to pursue his studies in order to “tener un mejor futuro [have a better future].” He shared it was a hard decision to leave El Salvador, but he knew he could get an education in the U.S.

The pictures taken by George depict his strong interest in school. He took pictures of several teachers, instructional aides, of the tablet the school provided, and of his parents helping him with a school project. In the picture taken of his parents, George explained with pride that his father inquires regularly about George's progress in school. He shared that even though his father doesn't read English and his mother is illiterate, they both find ways to help George. George related this story with an understanding that he has his parents' full support, although he was the first to do something that no one else in his family has done, to have success in a U.S. school. He shared that his grandmother and mother each support him. His grandmother has said, “Si te fuiste es por algo, si dijiste que ibas a estudiar y que...era mejor para ti, me dijo. Y si pasas por algo tienes que estudiar y sí, ya que ninguno de nosotros ha estudiado [If you left, it is for a reason. If you said you were going to study and it was better for you, she said. And if you go through something, you need to study, and yes, since none of us has studied].” About the support he receives from his mother he shared, “Pues mi mamá que siempre también está

ahí...Porque mi mamá no sabe leer, y dice, ‘Sea un ejemplo para todos ellos, si tú que eres un gemelo, si tus hermanos no quieren estudiar [tú puedes]’” [Well, my mother who is always there for me also...because my mother doesn’t know how to read, she says, ‘Be an example for them, if you are a twin, and if your brothers don’t want to study, [you can]].’”

Motivation

George explained that his decision to leave his grandmother and sister behind to join his immediate family in the U.S. was not 100% comfortable. Though the decision was difficult, he knew he had to reunite with his parents and take advantage of the opportunities available to him in the U.S. He said:

Pues, si estaba [en El Salvador] pues siempre iba a estar como incómodo porque mi papá, mi mamá, mi gemelo y mis otros dos hermanos estaban aquí [en los Estados Unidos]. Y también si estoy aquí, también estoy incómodo porque mi hermanita y mi abuelita que también las quiero bastante están allá. Pero si no era una era otra. Y también como aquí hay más oportunidades, pues me vine para [los Estados Unidos]. [Well, if I stayed [in El Salvador], well I would always be uncomfortable because my father, my mother, my twin, and my other brothers are here [in the U.S.]. And also, if I’m here, I am also uncomfortable because my sister and my grandmother, whom I love very much, are there [in El Salvador]. But if it wasn’t one thing it was another. And also like there are more opportunities, well, I came [to the U.S.]].

One difficulty he encountered when he began to live with his parents was gaining familiarity with them again, particularly his mother, after living with his grandmother for

so long. He reported, “Yo casi no había convivido con mi mamá [por muchos años], no más con mi abuelita. Hasta se me hacía raro decía, que no me gustaba vivir con [mi mamá]. Cuando llegaba yo [no me agradaba], no, después sí me acostumbré. [I had not lived with my mother [for many years], I only lived with my grandmother. It even seemed strange to me and I would say I didn’t like living with [my mother]. When I first arrived [I didn’t like it], but later I grew used to it.]” George often remembers his difficult past and the struggles he encountered before reuniting with his parents. He expressed that his struggles motivated him to do more. His grandmother in El Salvador reminded him of present opportunities that were non-existent in his country of origin. He reported that he was grateful for anything that he received. He said:

Me conformo con que tenga techo, mis papás vivos y mi abuelita también, que [mi abuelita] tenga [la casa] donde nos crió y que [nosotros] tengamos [dónde vivir], que podamos ir a la escuela y tengamos comida para estar vivos. Yo le digo con eso estoy conforme, no me importa lo caro, si tenemos, bueno...pero siempre tenemos a Dios que nos está cuidando. [I’m content if I have a roof [over my head], my parents are alive and my grandmother also, that she has the home where she raised us and that we also have a home, that we could go to school and that we have food to remain alive. With these things I am satisfied, I don’t care for expensive things, if we have [things], good...but we always have God caring for us.]

One motivating factor for George was his decision to repay his parents one day as a sign of gratitude for the sacrifices they have made for him and his brothers and for the support and encouragement they have given him. He shared, “Y no es porque ellos me

estén recordando siempre sino porque...me nace del corazón, porque ya cuando estén viejitos, y todo lo que se esmeraron por ayudarnos, y ya que nosotros no los ayudemos se me hace feo. Y yo quiero ayudarlos bastante. [And it is not because they remind me about it all the time, but because...it comes from my heart, because they are old and everything they have done to help us, and if we don't help them it would be ugly. And I want to help them a lot.]” For George, school was more than a means to accomplishing his goal to go to college or to help his parents in their older years. He pushed himself in school because he enjoyed learning and excelling in something that once was almost taken away from him. One ESL aide shared about George:

He asks a lot of questions and if he's confused about anything, [he asks,] ‘what does this mean or how do I do this?’...he would come up to school [for tutorials] if he didn't finish his work in class. He would come in after class and I would stay with him and help him finish whatever. He's very willing. There are some kids, they may have a lot of potential, but they're not very willing to stay after school.

At home, George was motivated by his father's attitude about his schooling. He said his father was always excited to know how George was doing in school and how he could help. He said, “Pues, porque le veo entusiasmo cuando estoy haciendo un trabajo. Llega y me dice, ‘¿Qué es eso?’ Y cuando no entiendo una pregunta le digo y ya él me dice cómo podría hacerlo. [Well, because I see his enthusiasm when I'm doing an assignment. He comes and tells me, ‘What's that?’ And when I don't understand a question I tell him, and he tells me how I can figure it out].”

He understands that his parents and family in El Salvador did not have the opportunity he had to attend school. They told him stories about not being permitted to go

to school in order to work. He shared that his father somehow learned to read, although his mother doesn't know how to read or write at all. He shared his thoughts about his motivation to follow his dream to go to college, "Y por eso yo la quiero aprovechar ya que nos están dando la oportunidad de estudiar [And that is why I want to take advantage of this opportunity to study]."

Connections

George has created relationships with people that helped him to strive for his goals. George credited his family, particularly his parents, as supportive of his goals. Several times in his interviews he mentioned that his father was always available for him, vigilant of George's needs. He said, "...él siempre está ahí al pendiente. Como por ahorita siempre le llegan cartas de la corte, ahí está él al pendiente...que le habla al abogado que, y también de la escuela...Siempre está ahí checando los papeles de la escuela, si no hace falta nada. [...he is always there ready to help. For now, he always gets letters from the court, he is there ready...to talk to the lawyer, and also with my school...he is always checking papers sent by the school, to ensure that nothing is missing]."

With regard to his brothers, seeing his two older brothers working hard in construction jobs, facing the elements, and making little money, encouraged George to continue pursuing an education. His twin brother saw school as a social outlet, instead of a stepping stone to changing his life. George understood his twin brother did not like school, so George knew he had to develop relationships with people outside of his family to continue achieving. George acknowledged his friends do not regard school as highly as he does. In one interview he lamented that they are letting this time of learning slip away. He shared, "Les va a hacer falta mucho lo que un día ellos

rechazaron, les va a hacer falta mucho [lo que tuvieron hoy]. [One day they will sorely miss the things they are rejecting today; they will miss [what they had today]].”

He created a support system for himself at school by building relationships with his teachers, the aides, and the ESL counselor. The pictures he took for the study indicated factors that have helped him with resiliency in school by depicting his connection to certain educators. He took several pictures of teachers and the ESL aides. As he spoke about each of the pictures, he praised the people in the images for helping him do well in school. For example, he was grateful that his history teacher made time to give additional instruction during the class period and after school to get him up to speed with the class lesson. In class, he explained she gave the lesson to the class during the first part of the period. During the second part, she sat with small groups to thoroughly explain the lesson. During tutorials, his history teacher often brought pizza to eat while they talked about vague or confusing parts of the lesson from class. He said, “Ella hace el esfuerzo para que nosotros aprendamos lo que ella nos está enseñando... Porque ella quiere que estemos a nivel de los demás [los que hablan inglés]. [She makes the effort to make sure we learn what she is teaching...because she wants us to be at the same level as the others [the English speakers]].” He spoke positively about his reading teacher also. He recognized that what he learned about grammar and writing was invaluable to learning English and to his success as a student. About the ESL counselor, George shared, “...siempre anda detrás de nosotros diciéndonos y recordándonos cosas que van a haber... ella anda bien interesada en [cómo nos va en] nuestras clases, grados...[...she is always after us, telling us and reminding us of upcoming events...she is always interested in [how we are doing] in our classes, grades...].”

Religiosity and Spirituality

In his country, George would attend church meetings twice a week, on Tuesdays and Sundays. He was raised to believe “que nada es posible sin Dios [nothing is possible without God].” On his journey to the U.S., he shared, “...me vine, le venía orando porque me viniera bien y que esta, que llegara con mis papás y sin ningún problema. [...I came, I was praying that I could get [to the U.S.] well, that I would reunite with my parents without any problems].”

Since members of George’s family work six days a week, on Sundays they usually spent time together at the park instead of at church. Although George was not able to go to church, he explained he prayed regularly and had a strong faith. He said that with God’s help, he planned to continue living a better life than the one he left behind in El Salvador, one that allowed him to follow his dreams.

Vicky

Introduction

Vicky was a 16-year-old female from El Salvador. Vicky enjoyed being active in sports and social with peers. She enjoyed participating in ROTC at school. At the time of the study, she was in ROTC for two years, with expectations to remain in it for another two years. Vicky had a younger brother that was 13 years old. She lived with her father, her stepmother, her brother, two stepsisters that are in their 20s, a three-year-old boy and an infant girl, who were the children of one of her stepsisters. She was completing tenth grade for the first time when the study took place. She began school in the U.S. during the last three months of eighth grade. She had successfully completed ninth grade during the 2014-2015 school year.

It was obvious from the onset that Vicky was an optimistic person. Throughout the study, she smiled often. As she provided extensive responses to questions, she spoke openly about her life and experiences. Her words and demeanor exhibited traits of resourcefulness and gratefulness. She acknowledged she was a successful student because her grades were high, the teachers helped her whenever needed, and she made huge efforts to do well, as she stated “le estoy echando ganas” [I am giving it my all].” Although she recognized she was optimistic in the U.S., she explained things were very different when she lived in El Salvador. She described herself in her previous life as pessimistic, consistent, and tough in order to survive her circumstances.

When Vicky was five years old her father left El Salvador to emigrate to the U.S. She maintained a relationship with him by phone and by correspondence. Vicky was raised by her maternal grandmother until she was nine years old. At nine, she began to live with her mother and younger brother after her grandmother became ill. She explained it was difficult to live with her mother and brother as she had never had a close relationship with either of them. When Vicky was nine years old, her mother developed colon cancer. Even after surgery, her mother’s health continued to decline. Vicky had a great sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of her family. In addition, serving as the primary caregiver to both her mother and her grandmother during their illnesses, Vicky emotionally cared for her younger brother, as he became anxious and saddened by his mother’s worsening condition. She shared:

Y él lloraba mucho y se deprimía mucho en las noches, ya ninguno de los tres dormían. Ni mi mamá, ni mi hermano, ni yo porque, yo no dormía porque tenía que estar al pendiente de que si a ella le dolía algo, llevarle su medicina o

ayudarla a levantarse a ir al baño, cosas así. [And he cried a lot and was very depressed during the nights, and none of the three of us slept. Neither my mom, nor my brother, nor me because, I did not sleep because I had to be watchful for pain my mother could have, to take her medicine and help her to get up to go to the bathroom, and things like that].

Throughout the interviews, when Vicky mentioned her mother's illness, her focus was her brother's feelings instead of her own. As the oldest sibling, she explained that she understood the situation of her mother's pending death from cancer, and her concern was to console her brother during the difficult circumstances. Her words reflected her resilience to protect herself and act altruistically as an anchor for her brother's needs.

Reasons for emigrating. Vicky's decision to emigrate was not by her own volition. After determining her mother's illness was fatal, the doctor advised that a new guardian care for Vicky and her brother. Vicky's mother contacted her father in the U.S. and made the arrangements for Vicky and her brother to go live with him. Initially, Vicky and her brother refused to leave their home in El Salvador, their mother, and their grandmother. Vicky was also afraid of the risks they might encounter on their travels from El Salvador to the U.S. Vicky did not want to leave her sick relatives at a time that they seemed to need her the most. Vicky contemplated living with her maternal grandmother, but her grandmother's illness excluded her as a viable guardian. Additionally, her brother was nine months old when their father moved to the U.S., so it was difficult to convince him to go live with a person that was practically a stranger to him.

During the time that her mother and grandmother were ill, Vicky explained she

was unable to attend school. As the primary caregiver for both, Vicky spent hours on public transportation taking her family members to doctor's appointments, getting their medication, doing the household chores, and figuring out how to get money to pay the bills. She described commuting with her mother and grandmother when she was twelve years old, "...y iba los lunes, los jueves y los sábados con mi abuela. Iba los martes, los miércoles y los viernes con mi mami, o sea pasaba toda la semana viajando, toda la semana viajando. [...and on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays I would go with my grandmother. On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays I would go with my mother, I mean, for the whole week [I was] commuting, the whole week [spent] commuting]." The doctors' appointments were hours away from Vicky's home and it required multiple bus transfers to get to most destinations. Her mother's condition left her too weak to travel without assistance from Vicky. Her grandmother could not stand or walk for long periods of time without risks of her legs giving out and a possible fall. Vicky recounted an occasion when her grandmother went to a doctor's appointment alone. The appointment was two and a half hours away from their home. Her grandmother could not remember where to catch the bus and was lost for hours walking around the city until she ran into a person from church. The church friend returned her safely back home. Vicky vowed to never let her go to her doctors' appointments alone and, as a result, her absences in school increased.

She tried to keep up with the missing school work by relying on her best friend to bring class notes for Vicky to copy. Sometimes her teachers dropped off assignments and offered to provide tutorials at their homes if she needed any help to complete the missing assignments. After she missed three months of school, her goal to study education and

being a teacher seemed unattainable. She sat down with both her mother and grandmother to let them know of her decision to quit school. They both told her they could make do without her help so she could continue attending school, but she felt too responsible for their care to listen.

Her father was not aware of Vicky's struggles or absences from school. She was not close with her father during the last few years she lived in El Salvador. Her father called about once a month and sent money, but it appeared that her father was too busy with work and family responsibilities to have meaningful conversations with Vicky.

The journey. Vicky's description of her trip to the U.S. revealed that it was difficult and marred with concern for her younger brother. His young age and leaving his mother made it difficult for him to manage his feelings. Throughout the trip, Vicky cared for her brother and herself by thinking maturely and quickly to resolve problems. For example, she and her brother were stopped often by the authorities or gang members as they traveled in buses, cars, on the train, or by foot. During one occasion, when crossing between the El Salvador - Guatemala border, they were stopped by immigration. Vicky feared that her brother's pale appearance meant he would faint. Vicky's resolution was to bribe the police officer with \$200 to let them cross the border without written parental consent. With the bribe, the officer pointed them in the direction where they would not get caught by other immigration officers. In Guatemala, they stayed in a hotel for two days under the watchful eyes of the coyotes. Although Vicky was unable to drink soda due to health reasons, she and her brother were only able to eat potato chips and soda while they waited for permission from the coyote to continue traveling.

Once they arrived in Mexico, Vicky explained they took more precautions, "En

México... todo tiene que ser con más precaución porque hay muchas personas malas, muchos policías malos. [In Mexico...there needs to be more precautions because there are lots of bad people, lots of bad police.] Precautions included leaving some of their possessions behind and not speaking to the locals. To minimize suspicion from others, Vicky and her brother consolidated their belongings into one backpack and left their other things behind in a hotel room in Chiapas, Mexico. She lamented about some of the personal items she lost, “Yo traía una cadenita de la Virgen de Guadalupe que era de mi mamá y traía cartas que mis amigas me habían hecho. Mi mamá me había hecho una carta y cosas así y los tuvimos que dejar. [I brought a necklace with the Virgin of Guadalupe that belonged to my mother and I had letters that my friends had made me. My mother had written me a letter and other things like that, and we had to leave them].” After spending several hours on the bus, traveling through the capital of Mexico, and to Monterrey, Vicky came up with a plan to keep from being detected by their El Salvadorian accents when stopped by the police. She asked a Mexican boy that she met on route to pretend that he was her husband and to hold her hand and speak for her if stopped by the police. The plan worked and they continued their journey.

At one point in the trip, they had to ride on the roof of a train for an entire day and night. As the train went through mountains, the climate began to get cooler and it began to rain. Not only was the situation of hiding uncomfortable, but Vicky had to remain still as she lay flat, to prevent detection from officials in passing cars. Vicky described it as, “O sea, estábamos así acostados [con los brazos al lado] como si ya nos...ya estuviéramos muertos y estuviéramos en la caja, estábamos así acostados y toda el agua nos caía. [Well, we were lying down [on our backs with our arms to our sides] like if we were...as

if we were already dead and in a coffin, we were lying there and rain fell on us].” Vicky shared this was the worst part of the journey and the longest night she had ever experienced. When they were finally able to get off of the train, they walked until they came to an abandoned home. Members from the Mexican cartel were there. They accepted payment from the coyote to let Vicky and the others pass. One of the cartel members tried to get Vicky to stay with him, but she was able to thwart his advances.

After more walking, they were able to get to the U.S.-Mexico border at Laredo. Vicky and her brother had to wait there for a week until they were able to find a way to cross the river. They had to wait for the coyote’s accomplices to come with a car to drive Vicky and the others to the edge of the river. The people in the car eventually helped Vicky cross the bridge. Before she crossed the river, she was instructed to expect to meet another coyote who would take Vicky and her brother directly to their father, but no one was there. Vicky remembers, “Y empezamos a caminar bien felices. Yo me acuerdo que hasta quería llorar de felicidad que ya iba a ver a mi papá. [And we were very happy as we walked. I remember that I almost started to cry about seeing my father soon].” Suddenly they heard a truck in the trees and her scared brother yelled, “¡Corran que es la migra! [Run! It’s immigration!].” Vicky said she reacted quickly by pulling him by the ear and telling him they would not run. Vicky was warned by her mother that immigrants who run sometimes get shot, so Vicky kept her brother safe from harm. Border Patrol eventually stopped them and took them to the detainment facility. When Vicky was able to make a phone call, she called her mother to let her know they had crossed the river and they were fine. Vicky was altruistic as she spoke to her mother. She measured her words carefully to spare her mother from worrying more than was needed.

The detainment facility was not pleasant. Wet from the river, Vicky and her brother were inside the facility with the air conditioner strongly blowing. Most of Vicky's possessions were taken, such as her money and some jewelry. They were given cold sandwiches to eat. Vicky experienced stomachaches during their time in "jail," but she refused medical attention because she did not want to risk being separated from her brother and lengthening the time it took for her to meet her father. After a day, Vicky and her brother were sent from the detainment facility to Phoenix, Arizona, for twenty days to stay in a juvenile refugee shelter. After guardians were located for them, arrangements were made for Vicky and her brother to fly back to San Antonio with a chaperon to meet with her father.

Living Arrangements

Vicky described her family as supportive and loving towards her. Currently, Vicky lives with her father, her stepmother, her younger brother, two adult stepsisters and two of her stepsister's young children. When asked how she defined family, she shared:

Creo que 'familia' es un grupo de personas que están ahí para apoyarse en las buenas y en las malas. Que te enseñan valores. Te enseñan... te enseñan como respetarse, pero a la vez a jugar. Cómo respetarse y a jugar a la vez. Como, te dan cariños, te dan cariño mutuamente en la familia... Creo que familia es.... debe ser lo más importante que uno tiene en el mundo... Y tengo amigos y personas que no son de mi sangre que yo los considero familia. Pues porque son lo más bonito que Dios le ha puesto a mi vida. Creo que la familia se hace. [I think 'family' is a group of people that encourage each other during the good and the bad. They teach you values. They teach...they teach how to have respect for yourself and

also have humor. How to respect and at the same time play. They give you love, they reciprocate love in the family...I think family is...it should be the most important thing in the world...I know friends and persons that are not blood that I consider family. Well, because they are the best that God has put in my life. I think you make your family].

During each interview with Vicky, it was evident that her family meant everything to her. She spoke about them every opportunity possible. She credited her family for helping her to maintain her educational goals and for helping her to improve her outlook on life. Vicky's paternal grandfather and his family also live nearby. She enjoys the time she has with her uncles, aunts, and cousins.

For Vicky, her relationship with her brother is the most important. She credits him as the reason she found strength from deep within to persevere as a role model for him, even when things are tumultuous. She stated, "Entonces yo quiero salir adelante como para ser un ejemplo para él y creo que es lo que me ayuda, cuando tengo problemas creo que eso, pensar en eso, creo que es lo que me ayuda a resolverlos. [Then I want to succeed like an example for him and I think it is what helps me, when I have problems I think that is the reason, thinking of that is what I think helps me to find solutions]." For example, when her mother died, she understood she had to demonstrate strength for her brother. She told him that life must go on and she refused to cry in front of him. She explained, "Y es como que quiero ser fuerte para enseñarle que tiene que ser fuerte. Creo que él siempre me ayuda a mí, y yo lo ayudo a él. [And it is like I want to stay strong for him to show that you have to stay strong. I think he always helps me, and I help him]."

Her father and stepmother have high expectations for Vicky. She recognizes she

has to attend school every day, she has to do her best to get good grades, and she is not able to work at all. Her family encourages her to acclimate to her new surroundings by taking English classes and using English to talk to strangers. For example, upon first arriving to the U.S., Vicky was encouraged to watch television and order food for the family in English despite not being able to speak it at all. Her father does not want Vicky preoccupied with a job, for fear she would lose her zeal for school. Vicky explained she wanted a summer job to practice her English and have something to do in the summer, but her father did not allow it.

Perspectives on Education, Past and Present

Although her dream was always to study, it was nearly impossible for Vicky to accomplish this goal in her native country. Her care giving and household responsibilities required too much of her attention. She was conscientious about her duties even if it meant not attending school. The move to live with her father in the U.S. helped in many ways. For the first time, she was able to focus on herself and her goals, as an adolescent, instead of worrying about the wellbeing of her loved ones. For example, she explained she has a type of dyslexia, which makes learning math difficult. In her country, she had a great deal of difficulty learning math, but in the U.S. she has been able to learn the information easily. During one interview she reported she had a 92 average in Algebra. She recognizes the improved living conditions and sleeping better has improved her ability to learn. Due to her father and stepmother's high expectations, Vicky acknowledges she strives to do well in school. She explained:

Porque él y su esposa siempre han estado pendiente de cómo voy en la escuela, de que no falte, de que tenga buenos grados y cosas así. Y creo que si no fuera por

ellos, al principio, no hubiera seguido viniendo a la escuela, si hubiera vivido nada más yo sola o con alguien más así que no me pusiera como reglas, quizás no hubiera seguido viniendo a la escuela. [Because he and his wife are always aware of how I do in school, that I don't have absences, that I have good grades and things like that. And I think that if it were not for them from the beginning, I would not have continued with school, if I would have lived alone or with someone else that didn't give me rules, I probably would not have continued coming to school].

At school, Vicky felt supported by the educators. She said that she thought she had a good reputation with the teachers because she always did her work and was focused in class. She knew her teachers are all available to provide assistance. For example, last year she completed an application that required an essay. She asked two of the teachers to look it over and edit it for her. Vicky's goal is to one day be a teacher to immigrants who are learning English and motivate them to pursue their goals. She shared:

Yo quiero la oportunidad de estudiar. La oportunidad de salir adelante y ser alguien mejor. De poder ayudar a las personas que vienen como yo cuando yo llegué que no saben inglés, que... que quieren a lo mejor estudiar y no saben cómo porque piensan por no saber inglés no hay lugar para nosotros aquí y no es así. [I want to have the opportunity to study. The opportunity to succeed and be a better person. To help persons that come here like me when I arrived, that don't know English, that...that maybe want to study but don't know how because they think they can't because they don't know English and there's no place to help them, but that is not the case].

Motivation

In one interview, Vicky explained she decided to study education at age six. She chose to follow in the footsteps of her maternal aunt who was a teacher, a person that Vicky expressed she admired deeply. She shared:

Yo me acuerdo que el día que yo decidí que yo quería ser profesora yo tenía como unos seis años o siete años. Me acuerdo que mi abuela me preguntó que qué quería estudiar y yo le dije, 'Yo quiero ser profesora'...Y me acuerdo que me dijo mi abuela, 'Si tú te lo propones, lo vas a lograr...Aquí vamos a estar siempre,' mi abuela siempre me decía eso [I remember the day I decided I wanted to be teacher, I was like six years old or seven years old. I remember that my grandmother asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up and I told her, 'I want to be a teacher'...I remember that my grandmother said, 'If you put your mind to it you will achieve it...We will always be here for you,' my grandmother would always say that].

Things changed for Vicky when her mother became ill. She missed school often and her focus changed to caring for her relatives. Her struggles in El Salvador prevented Vicky from considering her future. She explained:

Yo lo único que pensaba era en mi abuela, en mi mamá y en mi hermano. Era lo único que me cabía en ese momento en la mente. Yo no pensaba en venir a [Los Estados Unidos a] estudiar. Yo no pensaba en las oportunidades que yo podía tener aquí. Nada de eso cabía en mi mente. [The only thing I thought about was my grandmother, my mother, and my brother. Those were the only things that fit

in my head during that time. I didn't think about coming to the U.S. to study. I did not think of opportunities that I could have. None of that fit in my head].

Vicky attributed her fortitude and perseverance to her faith in God. She recognized she had to face obstacles to appreciate her life. She explained that without the difficulties she had faced, she might have rebelled and missed opportunities:

...creo que si no hubiera pasado por todo eso creo que no supiera hacer nada. Yo creo que fuera una de esas niñas que no saben ni siquiera barrer, que no saben nada. Creo que fuera más como rebelde. Como desobligada, porque si no hubiera sido por cada experiencia que he pasado ni hubiera aprendido cómo tomar mis responsabilidades en serio. Creo que fuera bien desobligada [I think if it had not been for what I experienced, for all that, I think I would not know how to do anything. I think that I would be one of those girls who doesn't even know how to sweep, that doesn't know anything. I think I would be rebellious. Like defiant, because, had it not been for each experience I have been through I would not have taken my responsibilities seriously. I think I would have been really defiant.]

Vicky's aspirations of one day being a teacher propelled her focus in school. She was confident about her abilities and determined to excel in all her work. During the few times she was weary or doubtful, she relied on her supportive circle to get her back on track. Her support system begins with her family, but includes teachers and school staff, and friends that have similar interests to succeed academically.

Vicky explained her primary motivator was her brother. Immigrating was the first step she took to strive for a better life and serve as a role model for her brother. She explained:

Creo que él es el que me ha ayudado, creo que él es como, como el motivo, digo yo, que me hace como que querer salir adelante, como querer tener una carrera porque cuando yo me gradúe de la high school, primeramente Dios, si él me ayuda, [mi hermano] va a venir entrando apenas [a la high school] y si yo no me gradúo, ¿cómo le voy a decir yo: “Tienes que sacar buenas calificaciones, tienes que graduarte”? Porque si yo no estoy graduada yo no voy a tener derecho a decirle a él que tiene que [él se gradúe]. [I think that he helps me, he is what motivates me to want to succeed, like to have a career because when I graduate from high school, first of all with God’s help, [my brother] will start high school and if I don’t graduate, how can I tell him, ‘you have to get good grades, you have to graduate’? Because if I don’t graduate I won’t have the right to tell him that he has to [graduate]].

She liked to make her family proud through her accomplishments. She saw her achievements as a way to bring her family honor. Her successes were a way to express gratitude for the new life she was given. She shared:

En lo único que me preocupa es la escuela. Yo no me preocupo por nada más, nunca sé cuando llegan a la casa los recibos de la luz. Nunca sé cuando van a comprar comida. Cuando yo veo el refri, ya está lleno. Cuando yo veo el T.V., la luz ya está pagado. Cuando yo veo lo del teléfono, ya está pagado mi teléfono. Es como que no me ponen otra preocupación que no sea la escuela. [The only thing I have to worry about is school. I no longer worry about anything else, never do I worry about when the light bill comes. I never know when they go buy groceries. When I look, the refrigerator is full. When I watch T.V., the light bill is already

paid. When I look at my phone, it is already paid. It is like they don't give me anything to worry about except for school.]

Vicky was encouraged to open up with her family about her school activities. At the ROTC awards ceremony at the end of the school year, all her immediate family came to see her accept a new rank. After the ceremony, the family lingered to take pictures of the momentous event. In the picture, Vicky was in full uniform, proudly holding her certificate, standing between her brother and her father. She explained she also made her grandmother in El Salvador proud by joining ROTC. Her grandmother only had two daughters and neither was interested in joining the military. Vicky believes she was able to fulfill her grandmother's dream to have at least one of her grandchildren in the military.

In order to do well in school, Vicky often stays after school for tutorials to ask for additional help from teachers or to finish her assignments. The school counselor motivates Vicky with information about colleges she might like to attend and scholarships she can apply for regardless of her immigration status. Teachers commend her efforts and class participation. She relies on her family and on the internet to help her with questions on assignments at home. Her stepsister made her watch movies and television shows in English and her cousins primarily speak to her in English.

Connections

In learning about Vicky, it was evident that relationship-building came easily to her. Her easy way of expressing herself captivated listeners to pay attention and be drawn into whatever she was sharing. For example, in ROTC she was promoted in rank to lead peers. During each interview with the teachers, Vicky was described as a leader, focused,

and dependable to facilitate group instruction. Vicky was chosen by the ESL/LEP counselor to volunteer at a nearby elementary school to mentor students and teach them English. At school, she developed meaningful relationships with school personnel. She explained she was often motivated and “pushed” to try new things. She reported that educators often told her about opportunities. She explained:

Pues porque mi consejera habla mucho conmigo. Las “aides,” ellas hablan mucho conmigo. El maestro de lectura, que él ni siquiera habla español se ponía a explicarme y a decirme muchas cosas. Que si yo quiero lo puedo lograr, que nada más es de usar mi inteligencia para lo positivo, cosas así. [Well, my counselor talks to me a lot. The aides, they talk to me a lot. My reading teacher doesn’t even know how to speak Spanish and he used to explain and tell me many things. Like, if I want it, I can work for it, all I have to do is use my intelligence for positive things, things like that].

By tutoring students at the nearby elementary school, her counselor helped her connect to the community. Vicky spoke of the experience as a stepping-stone to learn skills to one day use to teach her own class.

In her pictures, there was one with her two best friends standing on either side of her. Her friends celebrated her at the ROTC ceremony with a poster board they created for the occasion. As Vicky talked about the picture, she shared their friendships were forged on their shared goals to graduate high school and attend college one day. She often met with her best friends after school to work on homework together. She explained that they each were strong in a certain subject matter so they were able to help each other. Their newest goal was to begin looking for scholarships in preparation for junior year.

She realized these people were integral to helping her see new perspectives. She was open to the information they shared by asking questions, by meeting with them after school, by making the effort to follow through with their recommendations. On her own, she stayed informed by watching the news, searching the internet, reading pamphlets for colleges, and by asking her stepsister questions about her experiences attending the local junior college.

At home, her family helped her manage emotional situations. For example, Vicky's mother died two weeks after Vicky and her brother arrived in the U.S. Her grandmother died a few months later. When her grandmother died, Vicky did not want to get out of bed or eat. Her stepmother encouraged her to get out of the house. Vicky recollected that her stepmother said, "Y en las tardes empezó a agarrar la idea así como que, 'vámonos a correr, a ti te gusta hacer ejercicio...y vamos a hacer ejercicio al parque [and in the afternoons she started with her idea of 'let's go run, you like to exercise. Let's go and do exercise in the park].'" Regarding her relationship with her father, Vicky viewed him as a role model. She explained that he worked hard, arriving home late in the evenings. She appreciated his role as the head of the household. He explained that her family never needed anything because of her father's hard work. She shared:

Él juega con nosotros y creo que eso es lo que yo quiero cuando esté grande.

Trabajar en lo que a mí me guste y llegar a mi casa y llegar y empezar a hacerle bromas a mis hijos y empezarlos a hacer que se rían, o llevarlos un sábado o un domingo al parque, jugar con ellos, no sé. Creo que mi papá es mi modelo a seguir. [He plays with us and I think that is who I want to be when I grow up. I want to work in what I want to do and come home and joke with my kids and

make them laugh, or take them to the park on Saturdays and Sundays to play with them. I think my dad is my role model].

Through her stories, it was evident that her relationships with others helped her to have the will to take on new challenges in an effort to be open to new opportunities and to examine the possibilities for her future life.

Religiosity and Spirituality

Vicky's accounts about her life included her Christian beliefs to accomplish tasks and manage difficult situations. She wore a charm of a saint on her necklace, had a picture of the necklace she lost during her trip to the U.S., and explained how God fit into her world during her time in El Salvador and her time in the U.S. She shared, "...por eso le digo que Diosito sabe cómo hacer las cosas y a qué ángeles nos manda para que nos cuiden [that is why I say that God knows what he is doing and which angels he sends to care for us]." Raised a Christian all of her life, Vicky prayed often for guidance. Her mother's family was Christian and her father's was Catholic.

She reported that if it were not for her faith, she would not have survived her journey from El Salvador. With the many concerns racing through her mind of the family she left behind, the brother she had in tow, and the family she would soon meet, she prayed often as they moved from place to place to get to the U.S. She shared:

Cuando yo venía en el camino sí, yo... es que yo creí que nos iban a regresar, yo creí que no íbamos a lograr llegar aquí entonces yo lo único que pedía a Dios era que me cuidara a mi familia de El Salvador y que me cuidara a mi hermano y a todos los que veníamos. Nada más decía en las noches: 'Gracias Diosito por otro día más y ya otro día estamos más cerca y gracias por cuidar a mi familia' y cosas

así. Creo que lo único que pienso... que pensaba en ese momento era en Dios cuidando a mi familia. No le pedía nada para mí, nada más para ellos. [When I was traveling, I...it's just that I thought they were going to send us back, I didn't think we would make it here so the only thing I would ask God is that he care for my family in El Salvador and that he care for my brother and for all of us that were coming. At night I would just say: 'Thank you God for another day and everyday we are closer and thank you for caring for my family' and things like that. I think the only thing I thought of during those times was for God to care for my family. I didn't ask for anything for me, only for them]."

Since arriving to the U.S. she only attends church when she visits her grandparents. She explained she would like to attend more often, but her father and his family do not attend church. Nonetheless, she explained she has God in mind, "pero siempre le doy las gracias a Dios en las noches y en la mañana [but I always give thanks to God at night and during the day]."

Prevalent Resiliency Factors in Student Participants

Personal protective factors of the UAC student participants included a strong sense of responsibility to self and others, along with a strong sense of self-awareness. Responsibility resonated when Diego shared that, as the oldest child, he had to find a way to support his mother and siblings in Guatemala. He said, "Yo soy el mayor. Y sí yo estudiaba [en Guatemala] pero igual trabajaba [I'm the oldest. And I went to school [in Guatemala] but I also worked]."

In another account, Diego had to find money to buy medicine for his sick mother. Similarly, George shared that he planned to provide for his parents one day. George shared that his teachers thought of him as dependable. He

explained, “Cuando ellos se van, dicen que cuando ellos no están, me dicen que haga los trabajos que ellos mandan a hacer... tienen confianza en mí porque yo también hago todos los trabajos. [When they leave, when they are not [in the classroom] they tell me to do the work they have asked us to complete...they have faith in me because I also do all the work]. During an interview with the ESL aides, one described Vicky as “very responsible.” The ESL aide explained, “I don’t have her for any of my classes but she comes for my help [after school]. She was crying the other day because something happened on the computer and it exited her out of her quiz and she got a 40 on it, so her grade dropped.” The ESL aide added that Vicky talked to the teacher about making up the test due to the computer malfunction and scored a grade of 90. In conversations and observations of the student participants, there were no indications that they were negatively influenced by friends, or tried to adapt to peer pressure. Diego and Vicky took pictures of classmates who worked closely with them through the school year on classroom and homework assignments. Vicky shared about the people she surrounds herself with, “Bueno, todos son bien positivos [*Well, everyone is really positive*].” George recognized he had lots of friends, but most of his peers were not as committed to academic endeavors. His opinion of his peers and his twin were that they were lazy with regard to academic matters. He shared, “Pues, sí tengo bastantes amigos, pero la mayoría, como que también, como que son flojos para la escuela... [Well, I have lots of friends but the majority, like also, like they are lazy about school...].” His opinion was that some of his peers would regret not concentrating on their education while in high school when he stated, “Les va a hacer falta mucho lo que un día ellos rechazaron, les va a hacer falta mucho [They will one day sorely miss what they rejected, they will miss it a lot].” Each

of the student participants had a spirit of independence mixed with maturity and responsibility. The student participants' accounts of their travels from their native countries were examples of their independence. The trips exemplified the desire for change in their lives, even with the risks involved. For example, Vicky's vigilance for her brother, guided him to not draw attention to himself. They consolidated their belongings to one backpack and they spoke little so their Salvadorian accents were not detected in Mexico.

The UAC in this study had fixed goals for their futures, which were slowly taking form as they learned about opportunities at school and considered ways to make plans. At the beginning of the study, Diego was just beginning to understand opportunities available to him at school. He was uninformed about who to turn to for help and about potential post-secondary programs. During the last interview, when Diego was more knowledgeable about school, he expressed his determination to finish school. He repeated several times, almost to himself, "Voy acabar la escuela. [I'm going to graduate from school]." Vicky understood that attainment of her goals might serve as a model for other family members. In detailing the reason she took pictures of both of her stepsisters' young children, Vicky reported they motivated her to set the bar high for herself. She said, "Me ayuda a poner los límites más altos, a creer que puedo llegar bastante alto y saber que si yo llego ahí ellos también van a poder llegar ahí...[They help me to set high expectations, and to believe that I can reach my lofty goals and to know that if I get there, they also can get there]."

Assistance from their families included emotional and financial support they did not have in their native countries. The student participants were encouraged to focus their

energy on school. Diego, for example, was not entirely comfortable relying on his uncles to support him financially, although he was appreciative of their help. He said, “Porque tal vez yo quiero algo y él no puede dármelo y por eso que si me afecta es en no tener dinero... me da dinero y sí él mis gastos y todo... Siempre él está al pendiente de mí [Because maybe I want something and he can’t get it for me and that’s why if it affects me it’s for not having money...he gives me money and, yes, it covers my expenses and everything...he is always looking out for me].” The participants spoke of doing their best in school and at home as a duty they owed to their family for supporting them. In observations of the student participants during instruction in their classes, they displayed attentive behavior towards their teachers and helpfulness towards their peers.

Diego, George, and Vicky realized their life experiences shaped them and made them stronger. During the interviews, they each expressed appreciation for the improved circumstances they encountered in their present lives. This mind-set was evident when they were each asked how they thought their lives would be different if they had been born in the U.S. All three student participants had similar answers. They expressed that they would probably not appreciate their present circumstances, they would not take learning seriously, and the opportunities available to them would be taken for granted and unused. If they had been born in the U.S. they would not be aware of how difficult life is for those living in foreign countries. Vicky explained:

“...porque no tienen que pasar por las dificultades que otras personas han pasado, ellos no pueden pensar de la misma manera que nosotros...Yo creo que [el sufrimiento] es la llave, esa es la llave que a uno lo hace como que abrir la mente, madurar, pensar diferente, pensar como, como, no como adulto a lo mejor, pero

como un adulto joven [...because they don't have to experience the difficulties that others have experienced, they can't think the same way we do...I think that suffering is the key, it is the key that makes you open your mind, mature, think differently, think like, like an adult maybe, but like a young adult].

The connection to family and school was held in high regard by the student participants. Camaraderie was very important to them. In school, they each understood that their success depended on the help they received from peers and from instructional staff. Asking questions and making the effort to get help was necessary to succeed. Making alliances with others made the transition easier. Relationship building took place at home also. None of the student participants had lived with their U.S. guardians for many years or ever. Adjusting to new roles and allowing new adults to care for them required trust and time. For example, Diego struggled with relying fully on his uncles, therefore he worried constantly about paying back his debt to them. On the contrary, Vicky understood she could depend on her father, even though she did not always agree with his rules. At school, all the students expressed they could depend on receiving help from their teachers, the aides, and the counselor. Vicky explained, "Porque por medio del maestro puedo conocer a personas que me pueden ayudar a hacer lo que quiero [Because with my teacher's help, I can meet other people that can help me do what I want to do]."

An analysis of the risk and protective factors ascertained from the biographies of the three previously UAC student participants in this study provides educators and schools with a framework for improving existing interventions and determining appropriate future research and policy design to support this subpopulation of immigrant student. The next section looks at ways that external protective factors also influence

resiliency in UAC.

School Institutional Structures

The following section describes the school institutional structures available to UAC students at the high school where the study took place. Elements of school structure include campus size, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and support services. Each of these can enhance or hinder the resilience-promoting factors for UAC. The participants' perspectives on the protective factors associated with these elements are included.

Participants' Perspectives of School

Despite the school's large size and student population, the UAC student participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to attend this school. The building's modern architecture, with spacious rooms, the technology available in most classrooms, the close proximity of the school to their homes, and the opportunity to receive an education free of charge was a contrast to their educational experiences in Central America. The student participants' most likely shared the same experience described by George's mother of his school in El Salvador. She explained:

[Las escuelas son] tan grandes [en Tejas]. Tienen muchas aulas para los niños.

[Las escuelas] están bien pues demasiadísimo grandes, la escuela de los niños que tienen acá. Allá [en mi país] ustedes saben muy bien que allá son pobres. Son escuelas mandadas a hacer pequeñitas de tres aulas y el gran montón de niños todos apretados en las bancas... en las escuelas hasta cuatro en cada pupitre. [[The schools] are so big [in Texas]. They have lots of classes for the students. [The schools] here are very large, the school that my children have here. There, [in my

country] you know very well [the schools] are poor. The schools are built small, with three classrooms, and there are many children squeezed together on benches...and 4 students to a desk.]

Students reported they received continuous help and were able to communicate with their teachers and instructional aides easily. Easy communication was possible due to the teachers' constant availability. Additionally, several of the teachers were bilingual in the students' native language, Spanish, eliminating perplexity from translation. Their teachers often reached out to students to offer assistance, providing supplementary instruction in tutorials and Saturday school when needed. All the students interviewed expressed they liked the support they received from the teachers and the ESL aides. When speaking about his pictures, George expressed gratitude for the relationship he had with his teachers and other instructional staff. His pictures depicted several of his teachers and the ESL aides. When describing the picture of his reading teacher, Mr. Matthews, George made a general observation of all the instructional staff. He said:

...todos los maestros que ya han pasado [en las fotos] que tratan de como de tener una mejor relación con los estudiantes para que se sientan cómodos. Porque [Mr. Matthews] fue uno que también, él trataba de hacer todo más fácil para a la vez que aprendamos, porque él nos ayudó mucho. Porque lo mucho que yo sé escribir [en inglés] fue por él. Porque él trató de todas las maneras posibles a enseñarnos. [...all the teachers that are seen [in the pictures] try to have a good relationship with the students so we can feel comfortable. [Mr. Matthews] was also one that tried to make things easier for us as we learn because he helps us a lot. What I

know of writing [English] is because of him. He tried every way possible [to teach us]].

From the interviews, it was evident that the student participants recognized that their learning was a product from the consorted effort of all their teachers to help them do well in school with the condition that the students communicate with teachers about their learning needs and make the effort to continue progressing with their studies.

Curriculum and Instruction

The high school for this study followed the curriculum guidelines adopted by the state of Texas for all public schools. The school day consisted of seven periods, and an additional intervention period embedded in the schedule to provide students with extra time for instruction. The academic school year has two semesters. Each semester is considered a separate grading period, allowing students to receive seven credits per year during the school day. Additional credit is available by credit by exams.

Since the primary language of most of the ESL students was Spanish, they were encouraged to take an exam to receive a full credit for the first year of Spanish I. The Texas State Board of Education policy §74.24 (<http://cee.utexas.edu/ce/k16/>) requires that all schools offer credit by exams to help students accelerate through school. To acquire credit, a score of 80 or higher on the exam was needed. Students who received credits by examination were able to utilize the time they would have spent in a Spanish class in another class of their choice while receiving required credits for eligibility for graduation. Other ways to obtain credit include attending night school, summer school, virtual school, and dual credit and technical courses at the local community college. Dual credit courses, another option available to students and offered in both core and elective

courses, permits students to earn both high school and college credit simultaneously through the local junior college. At the time of the study, student participants considered taking the credits by examination in place of Spanish coursework. The other options were not considered.

Newly arrived immigrants with limited English proficiency, such as most of the UAC, are placed in the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program. The ESL Program is designed to provide a safe, supportive environment for students in a small setting. Students receive individualized attention to address their education needs, to promote social interaction, and to encourage participation as they transition to learning in a U.S. school. The Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS), an assessment that monitors the progress and needs of English language learners (ELLs), or the ESL students, is administered yearly. The assistant principal responsible for the ESL Program explained that she set out to create an ESL Academy on campus after noticing that scores on TELPAS were not improving. She said:

I really got to delve into TELPAS scores and it bothered me that we don't do any differentiation for beginners... We can't meet their linguistics needs if we are not really targeting it, so that's our big move now. I was doing as much research as I can and they certainly had a lot of success with the ESL academies. We can't just go build a new comers center right now, but [I have to focus on] what can I do now. Well now, I can make a little mini one [here on campus].

All ESL students were evaluated for language proficiency using the TELPAS. For students in secondary school, listening, speaking, and writing skills are assessed. The four proficiency levels are beginner, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high. According to

the assistant principal, in an effort to support the ESL teachers and improve learning for students, the students are grouped according to TELPAS levels. She explained:

One of the ways we are supporting [the teachers] is by looking at a bit of ways of grouping, where we've got the beginner/intermediate [ESL students together] so a teacher knows [their needs]. [Teachers can consider], 'Okay, well, all of these kids are Beginner/Intermediate and then here are all the things I need to do to help move them to the next level.'

The assistant principal explained that she had to have the right ESL teachers on board who are passionate about teaching ELL students. She related her selection of appropriate teachers for the ESL classes, "And I was very, very fortunate enough to have an amazing teacher and he's a third year teacher, passionate about ELLs, he's a Spanish speaker, loves Biology, good teacher and was on board and then we found an Algebra 1 teacher and that's the key. The ESL teachers stated that they focus on the students' academic needs first, by setting high achievable goals and emphasizing the importance of learning English, as a way to motivate students to find their own way in a new environment. Teachers support students by relying on open communication between themselves and other school staff to address the students' social and emotional needs. The math teacher shared how the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) coordinator helps the ESL teachers with instruction for ELL students:

I think the SIOP coordinator,...she's the one that can help us as teachers, make sure that we are getting the support that we need, especially [by helping] teachers who don't know Spanish, [and] can't communicate with the students as well. Just having that support – we have a whole set of [ESL] aides, I think it's five of them,

five aides, [a] SIOP facilitator and we have the assistant principal in charge of ESL [who help us address the students' needs in learning].

The ESL Program at this school mirrored the bilingual instruction provided in elementary school for the district. The content of Spanish is higher to provide the student with support to comprehend the content more quickly. During class, the writing, the note taking, and the verbal correspondence is in English, but the teachers use Spanish support to encourage students to engage and participate. The goal of the program is for students to learn social and academic English within the context of all content area subjects. Initially, only the English and Reading classes provided sheltered English instruction, or classes consisting only of ESL students. Additional sections of sheltered classes for Algebra I and Biology were implemented when it was evident that students were struggling and not engaged in these classes during ninth grade. With little or no ability to speak English, students were embarrassed to participate in class and reluctant to ask teachers for help. As a result, they had difficulty learning the content matter in Algebra I and Biology. Furthermore, ESL aides had to cover more class sections, thus limiting their time to help students during the school day. One ESL aide described the students' attitude in general classes compared to ESL classes. She said, "They're shy and embarrassed [in general classes] of the [English] language and they can't speak it. When they're in a class where every single one of the students is in the same boat, oh my God, they're very vocal!"

During 2015-2106, it was decided that the high school in this study would pilot three sheltered instruction sections for both Algebra I and Biology. Students, teachers, and staff saw a marked improvement in student participation and understanding. The new

sheltered instruction classes in Algebra I and Biology were related to higher scores on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) L exam, compared to the previous year. The STAAR L is the Texas state mandated standardized exam with accommodations for the ELL student. One aide explained that ESL students are usually eager to do well. She said, “We have bilingual dictionaries for each one of them in the classroom and anything and everything that they need. They’re very vocal in asking for help.”

The courses included in the two-year ESL Program consisted of the four core classes: English, math, science, and history. A full credit is given for successfully passing both the fall and spring semesters for core classes. The other required classes for ESL students include Reading I and Language Acquisition for the ninth grade students, and Reading II and Technical Writing for the tenth grade students. After completing two years in the ESL program, students were mainstreamed into regular classes. Support was still available to them through tutorials, but ESL aides no longer assisted them during the school day. Students had room in their schedules for one elective. Diego and Vicky were enrolled in Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), and George participated in physical education, or P.E. Student participants understood their schedules were limited, with room for only one elective for the first couple of years of high school because they had to take ESL classes. George explained he chose to wait to play soccer during his second year of high school in order to learn English first. He explained, “No vas a tener una ayuda de maestros como en otras clases que te ayuden a qué es lo que te están diciendo [en inglés], y como, pues como no sabemos el [inglés], entonces como que me dio miedo [a empezar soccer este año]. [You will not have the help from the teachers like

in other classes where they help those who do not understand [English], and well since we don't know [English], then I was scared [to start soccer this year.]]

There are between 15 to 24 students in the ESL classes. Students in the ESL program are placed in cohorts corresponding to their grade level. Most of the ESL classes are located in one wing of the school for easy communication between ESL teachers, to improve the mobility of the ESL aides between classes, and to ease the transition to a new school for newcomer students by having classes at close proximity. The students interviewed spoke highly about the ESL Program. They reported they were engaged in the lessons. When a topic was confusing, students knew their teachers and the ESL aides were available to help them. During the focus group, one of the participants commented about the assistance provided by the school's educators, "Pues los maestros siempre están ahí diciéndonos qué hacer por aquí, por allá, y nos están apoyando. Todos los maestros [Well, the teachers are always there telling us what to do here and there, and they encourage us. All the teachers]." Students understood their teachers were strict with them so they may further their education. In the focus group, one student talked about his teacher being strict, "Pues ella también es bien, es cómo le digo, es estricta porque ella también se interesa en nosotros, quiere que aprendamos por cuando ya estamos en los otros grados más grandes. [Well, she also is, how do I say it, is strict because she is interested in us, and wants us to learn to prepare us for the advanced grades.]

It seemed that the goal of each of the student participants was to become fluent in English. The ESL program provided a protection for UAC students to acclimate to a new school system and learn how to navigate the system. The classes served as a transitional platform during the freshman and sophomore years of high school to prepare for the

challenging coursework to come during eleventh and twelfth grades. During the focus group, one student explained about learning English at home after being in the U.S. for three months. She shared about her sister teaching her English:

...Ella tenía sus libros de cuando se graduó de aquí. Tenía algunos libros que le habían dado aquí y en vacaciones, porque yo llegué en los últimos... Faltaban como tres semanas para que se acabara la escuela...y entonces, todo ese verano de ese año no fui a summer school. Y ella todas las tardes se ponía a repasar conmigo en inglés, a dictarme y cosas así. Creo que eso fue lo que me ayudó también a aprender inglés [...She had her books from when she graduated from here. She had some books they had given her from here and during the vacation, because I came during the last...only three weeks were left for school to end for the summer...and then, all that summer of that year I did not go to summer school. And she would help me go over English every afternoon, to dictate to me and things like that. I think that also helped me to learn English].

During the focus group and in the interviews, UAC mentioned that speaking English was an asset in their home countries. For example, Vicky shared about getting paid well in her country by speaking English, “Porque en el Salvador también se usa mucho el inglés y pagan mucho, a las personas que hablan inglés y español pagan mucho. [Because in El Salvador, English is also used often and they pay a lot, the persons that speak English and Spanish get paid a lot].” The student participants understood that learning English was their key to being successful in the U.S. and in their native countries, if they returned. They had positive attitudes and were ready to do whatever it took to accomplish their goals.

Staff awareness of ELL needs and professional development. The school personnel provided the necessary supports to assist students with their goals. The ESL teachers are trained using SIOP strategies. The framework for SIOP includes a variety of strategies that are useful for all students, but specifically for ELL students. Teaching practices include scaffolding, student engagement, differentiated instruction, content objectives, and high order thinking skills. Teachers receive SIOP training throughout the year. The ESL assistant principal shared that she wants all teachers to eventually receive SIOP training:

We send [the ESL teachers] to SIOP training to teach them how to use strategies to support language acquisition and content in their classrooms. We tried to get every single one of our teachers with that training. We are currently moving to promote ESL certification for most of our teachers. We have a large campus.

Classroom instruction in ESL classes encouraged collaborative learning in the classroom. By encouraging students to interact with each other, the teachers found learning was more effective when students worked with peers in small groups. Teachers walked around to monitor the small groups of students working together and check for participation. George took a picture of a group in one of his classes. He explained that he found small groups were helpful for learning. He said, “Lo que uno no sabía, el otro sí lo sabía, y nos ayudábamos...pues entre más ayuda tenemos mejor. Más, mejor aprendemos y pues como le digo, uno muchas cosas no sabíamos, lo que otro sabía y así nos ayudábamos [What one person doesn’t know the other will know and we help each other...well the more help we have the better. Moreover, better learning and, well, how do I say it, one may not know many things, but another [person] knows and that’s how

we help each other.]" The reading and English teachers shared similar perspectives when they talked about their instructional strategies for teaching English. The reading teacher said:

I have my classes divided into two groups and I have a kidney shaped table in my room. We do small group instructions so half of the class will be there with me and the other half will be on the computers doing ESL reading SMART, which is an online, academic-based program created especially for English learners. And the small group construction, that small group setting, lowers the affective filter so that the students feel more comfortable and they're more willing to speak out and everyone participates.

The English teacher shared that, along with using collaborative learning as a useful strategy for teaching English, she also occasionally spoke Spanish to students to improve their understanding:

Well, in my case, I devise my class around two different strategies, which is collaborative learning and cooperative learning. In both, I get involved, because, even though they're working in groups, they need their teacher reinforcement. Given the class, I provide the different technology available, dictionaries, everything that I have in order for them to develop vocabulary and the different skills... If I see that they're having trouble in terms of understanding whatever the skill or instructions are, I jump a little bit into Spanish and then I'll go back to English, to make the transition a little bit easier for them.

Other professional development included student engagement strategies, and identifying and understanding issues faced by students of lower socioeconomic status.

New district teachers receive training based on the book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, by Ruby Payne, to give educators a perspective of the lives of students of low socioeconomic status and how their living situations affect learning. Pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistant Act, campus administrators and guidance counselors received professional training to identify and aid unaccompanied youth, or students who are considered homeless because they do not have a regular residence. Although some immigrant students fall into the classification of “homeless,” the training does not include specific information regarding immigrant or UAC students. The district does not provide other training specific to the immigrant student.

ESL instructional aides. Each ESL class has an instructional aide. There are a total of five ESL aides that go into the core content classrooms. Some aides assist in more than one content area. For example, one of the aides only assisted in science classes, like biology and chemistry. In contrast, another aide helped in chemistry, English, and history classes. During class instruction, the aides walk around to provide one-on-one instruction to the students.

The students considered the ESL aides’ role in their learning just as important as the teachers. In the focus group, all of the participants agreed they were able to learn in part from the assistance they received from their ESL aides. One student said, “Las SIOPS, son las profesoras que nos ayudaban a traducir. Ellas son las que nos ayudan. Van a las clases que consideran más difíciles y van y nos ayudan si no sabemos. [The SIOPS, they are the teachers that help us to translate. They are the ones that help us. They go to the classes that are difficult and they go and they help us if we don’t understand.]

When George explained the reason he took a picture of an ESL aide, he said:

Porque pensé que ella, pues, es parte de nuestro aprendizaje, que estamos porque ella nos ayuda también. Muchas veces [ella] se quedaba en la escuela para platicar acerca de lo que estábamos...porque en la clase a veces no le quedaba mucho tiempo para platicar y luego nos dejaba de tutoría con ella. Cuando tenía tiempo para explicarnos mejor lo que no entiendo...Pues, en esa clase casi no le entendíamos nada y ella nos ayudaba a entender más y sacábamos el mejor promedio del grado. [Because I think that she is part of our instruction, where we are is because she also helps us. Many times she stayed after school to talk about what we did, because in class there is not enough time to talk and well we would stay for tutorials with her. When there was time to explain things I didn't understand better...Well, in class we hardly could understand anything and she would help us to understand more and we would get the best grades in the class.]

Vicky had a similar point of view when she spoke about the ESL aides. She said, "SIOP, ellas son las que nos ayudan. Van a las clases que consideran más difíciles y van y nos ayudan si no sabemos. [SIOP, they are the ones that help us. They go to the classes that seem like the hardest and they go and they help us if we don't know [or understand something]]."

Each student participant had positive stories to relay about their interactions with the aides. The student participants affectionately referred to the aides as "las maestras [the teachers]," or "las SIOPs [the SIOPS]." It appeared that students open up to the aides easily, possibly because they provided additional needed assistance to the newcomer students by way of translating and giving one-on-one help during classroom instruction, when teachers are unable to focus on helping individual students. The student participants

said they received much motivation and encouragement from the ESL aides. For example, Vicky shared that when she was in ninth grade, the aide in her reading class recognized Vicky's potential after Vicky wrote about her dream to be a teacher one day. The ESL aide encouraged Vicky to write every day to improve her English. She found a binder and filled it with handouts of vocabulary words and writing paper. At the end of Vicky's freshman year, the aide took up the binder and promised to return it to Vicky during her senior year to see how far she had progressed. Vicky shared that the reading aide was always kind and motivational, even when Vicky did not reciprocate. One day after taking six-weeks exams, Vicky had a headache and was not in the mood to write in her binder. Vicky shared how she was motivated by the reading ESL aide to continue striving to improve her English and writing skills:

Un día me enojé bastante, y le dije “Yo no voy a escribir” y le empujé el cuaderno así y lo dejé ahí. Y [ella] dijo, “Ok, no escribas” y lo cerró y se enojó y lo cerró y me dijo “Tú tienes potencial para hacer algo [con tu vida] y si no lo quieres hacer es porque tú no quieres, no porque no puedas” y me dijo “Y ahí te lo dejo [el cuaderno]. Si tú quieres escribir vas a escribir”. Y le escribí ya luego, nada más le dejé una notita y me fui para mi clase. Pero me enojaba mucho. [One day I was very angry and I told her “I am not going to write” and I pushed the binder away and I left it. And [she] said “Ok, don’t write” and she closed the binder and she became angry and she closed it and she told me “You have potential to do something [with your life] and if you don’t want to do it, it is because you choose not to, not because you are not able,” and she said, “And I’m leaving [the binder].

If you want to write you will write.” And I wrote, I left her a note and I left for my next class.]

It was evident by this exchange that Vicky and the ESL aide had an established, trusting relationship with each other. By encouraging Vicky to write every day, the ESL aide provided a daily reminder for Vicky to work towards fulfilling her personal goals. In a safe manner, the aide modeled perseverance and consistency to Vicky when she encouraged Vicky to focus on her potential and overcome obstacles.

The aides empathized with the students being in a new environment and facing some barriers to learning. They demonstrated a genuine desire to want to help the students do well in school. Several stayed after school, on their own time, to help students’ comprehension with assignments. One aide said about staying for tutorials, “It’s not mandatory. We don’t need to stay, but as soon as they ask, I mean, I don’t mind.” To concur with the first aide, another aide added, “If they’re asking for help, we’re willing to stay. And it’s usually the kids that care [about learning], so they need the familiar faces [of teachers and aides they know can help them].” About staying for tutorials with the aides, Vicky reported, “Ay Dios mío, me he quedado con ellas casi hasta las seis por [entender] la clase de Historia. [Oh my God! I have stayed with [the aides] until almost six because [I need to understand] History.]”

The SIOP aides communicate to teachers and the ESL/LEP counselor when students need additional help. For example, George shared that one of the ESL aides realized he was struggling in the general Algebra class. The aide talked to the ESL counselor about the problem and George was moved into an inclusive Algebra I class where he was able to receive more support, to understand the content, and ultimately pass

the class.

Goals for Students

The faculty and staff, administration, and district support staff all shared the common goal to support students towards earning a high school diploma and ensure students obtain the credits to graduate on time. The educator participants shared that, in addition to helping students graduate, they were also concerned that students feel comfort while being supported and successful. The ESL principal explained how the students' successes were exciting:

We've had an award ceremony but 36 out of 60 have a 3.0 average or above, which is also huge gains, and we believe that it has a lot to do and with them being enrolled in those bilingual support classes for algebra and biology. They're more comfortable with the bilingual support, so they're able to experience a lot more success. We're hoping long-term it's going to decrease the number of long-term English language learners that we have and overall, more importantly, that program, that it's going to help these kids be successful. We're excited about it!

When possible, teachers disclosed their own experiences to students to help students relate to them and motivate them to continue learning. Ms. Ruiz, an English teacher, stated:

Something that I think is crucial for them, especially for ESL kids, is the motivation part. 'You can do this! This is something that you can do,' and I always tell them, 'look we're all ESL students. My first language isn't English, it's Spanish. I grew up in a country where we're supposed to be a bilingual country, but that is not true. And I know how hard it is to pick up a second

language when no one is speaking that language, is not using that language. I know how hard that is, so I know how you feel. I know what is going through your mind, but believe me that this is something that you could do and I'm going to give you every possible help that I could. So if you work with me you will do it, but you have to work! It is not something that will come like in a minute.'

The educator participants provided several examples of setting clear expectations for students to understand that they would receive support as learners as long as they worked diligently. Mr. Matthews shared, "I always tell them from the first day, 'You can't work the same as the rest of the students. You have to learn the content and learn English, [so] you have to work harder.'" Another teacher, Ms. Banco, tried to motivate students with rewards. "I know this may sound funny, but [I give] prizes. They love doughnuts, they're very competitive. I provide that, I also provide, I write little notes to them." She sets expectation with students by talking to them regularly about their grades. She stated:

I also never pass out their grades in public. So I pass out their grades privately and at that time I'll say, 'You're doing good, but where you're doing very good let's continue' or 'you need to come and see me and so I have a tutoring ticket, if you get that ticket, you have to show up.' And they always have an opportunity.

She explained that students who did not show up for tutoring received detention. Student participants understood their teachers' intentions were to help them. Vicky shared that teachers reminded students to take advantage of what they were learning for a better tomorrow:

A veces uno está como que no quiere hacer las cosas y ellos dicen de que después eso nos va a hacer falta. Entonces como que nos ayuda a recordarnos de que lo que ahorita hagamos es lo que más adelante nos va a ayudar. [There are times that you don't want to do anything and they tell you that after [we leave here] we will miss them [because they help us]. It's like they help us to remember that what we do today will help us get ahead tomorrow.]

Ms. Ortega, the ESL/LEP counselor, shared that, in order for UAC students to graduate, they required emotional, physical, and mental health to better adapt to their roles as students. She shared her approach on helping students improve their GPAs to improve their chances of going to college:

The ESL students don't know about the [school] system and how to graduate successfully and get into a college. They don't need to have the lowest GPAs if they know what they are doing. Their families are not usually knowledgeable about our education system. I help them learn about the system. I talk to them a lot. I tell them to talk to their teachers all the time about their grades. They need to have a relationship with the teachers. They need high grades to get good GPAs. At first if they don't talk to their teachers, I will email the teachers and ask them to approach the students.

During observations of Ms. Ortega doing a classroom presentation, she was very honest with the students about the work required by them to meet their goals. She said:

Algunos dirán: 'pero yo quiero sobresalir', entonces, si quieren sobresalir pueden sobresalir. Pero detrás de [esas palabras] es bastante empeño, dedicación, compromiso, ¿verdad? Necesarios, son las llaves para cualquier cosa para que

lleguen a la cima del éxito. No es decir ‘sí quiero’ y no hacer nada, ¿verdad? Un trabajo mediocre resulta en algo mediocre, ¿verdad? [Some will say, ‘But I want to excel’ then if they want to excel they can excel. But behind [those words] there is a lot of effort, dedication, and commitment, right? The keys are necessary for anything that leads to the top of success. You can’t say, ‘yes, I want it’ and then do nothing, right? If you do mediocre work your results will be mediocre, right?]

In the same presentation Ms. Ortega encouraged the freshmen and sophomores to begin thinking of college and post-secondary plans for their future. She provided handouts for students that included useful tools for their planning. She reminded the students that she was available to help them.

It was evident that the teachers were committed to helping the students. Teachers routinely found ways to think outside the box to find new ways to help students. For example, the history teacher reported that she created a system to track students from her classes. Her objective was to communicate to students ways to improve academically by pinpointing their strengths and weaknesses, leading to methods to benefit students’ learning. She shared that her plan was to track all the ESL students in the next school year:

For next year, what I am working with the counselors, where I will actually track the ESL students and I will begin doing a point of contact the first three weeks, and then after every grading period, and every major test. I would have pulled them together and do reviews for their CBAs, what they got wrong so that way we’re catching all the gaps and fill in all the holes as the year goes along instead of at the very end, when they need to take their STAAR test and they feel

overwhelmed. So, I feel like being proactive and also gathering data early on. It helps them because, if they see [where they need help] then they are like, ‘Oh this is what I’m missing.’ Also, if it’s a community, if it’s not just you but it is a group. They don’t feel like dumb. They feel like, ‘well, a lot of us are struggling and there’s nothing wrong [with us].’

Student Support

Student support included factors that encouraged student attendance and motivation for their learning. In order to help students adapt to their U.S. school environment, interventions and programs for support, derived from the campus and the district, were in place that helped students meet academic demands by addressing the students needs such as free meals, educational support, and social services and psychological services.

Basic needs. The school provided basic needs assistance in several forms. The majority of the students received free breakfast and lunch at school. School supplies received from the district or from teachers were available upon request by students. Communities in Schools (CIS) is a campus-based dropout prevention program that offers students direct social services in the community. Free services offered include counseling, health, dental, and physical medical visits. A CIS liaison on campus was available to assist students. The nurse on campus assessed the students’ needs for eye glasses and provided them through community resources. All of the student participants reported they took advantage of the free meals at the time of the study.

Attendance. The district had expectations and consequences for the attendance policy that both the students and staff were aware of. The student participants reported

their enthusiasm to attend school was self-motivated and from daily encouragement from their families. Diego reported he had to be in school because the court mandated it and “it would help my case [to stay in the country] if the judge sees I attend school.” George’s mother expressed a similar sentiment. She said she was going to request a copy of his report card from the school to take to his next court date so that the judge could see how well he was progressing in school.

The state attendance law requires that students attend school for a minimum of ninety percent of the school year. New immigrant students, such as UAC, who arrive in the middle of the school semester, with no documentation of grades or attendance from previous schools, may have to audit classes, or receive no credit for their first semester. During auditing, students have time to acclimate to their new settings and gain a foundation for English acquisition in order to prepare for the next semester. Mr. Matthews described his strategy to help students that audit classes:

I have one student; he was out of school for two years because his mother said it wasn’t safe for him to go to school. Now, he’s here. He’s working very hard to learn. He’s struggling but he’s a good kid. He was here early enough that he could have gotten credit for this semester, but I talked to the ESL counselor and said, ‘let’s not [give him credit]. Let’s just have him audit this semester because what will happen is he could go to summer school and get the first semester and then next year he could be in ESOL 2 and Reading 2. He’s not ready for that, he’ll fail. So we’re just going to do it next year so he can start over from the beginning and get the foundation he needs so that he can be successful.

Mr. Matthews’ statement about helping his student was a clear example of the teachers’

objective to help students feel supported and succeed academically by taking into account how attendance is another factor that affects students' progress.

Tutorials. Interventions provided to UAC students included after-school tutorials. Some of the tutorials were offered by individual teachers and ESL aides when students were struggling academically. The history teacher, Ms. Banco, said she talked to students individually about their grades. She requested that students with low grades attend tutorials and gave them tutorial tickets, "When we talk about grades I'll tell students who need more help 'you need to come and see me [after school], and so I have a tutoring ticket, if you get that ticket, you have to show up.' And they always have an opportunity." She tried to make tutorials fun for students by buying pizza and snacks for them to eat in the afternoon as they worked.

Tutorials offered by the district, by the Special Programs Department, were meant for homeless and migrant students. These tutorials took place on Saturdays. Mr. Matthews, the reading teacher, and other teachers devised lessons that would be fun, but educational. Students were not obligated to attend Saturday tutorials, but the student participants attended as a means to enhance their learning and as the result of much encouragement from their parents. George's mother shared that she had to encourage him to attend Saturday tutorials a few times:

Fui como dos veces ya no quería ir [a la escuela en sábado], y le digo yo: "Mijo, si no tanto ibas a ir, ¿para qué te anotaste de que ibas a ir? Ahora ya sólo faltan dos sábados; echa para adelante. Ya estos dos sábados se van a acabar, ya sólo dos clases te quedan. Échele, pues, fuerzas: ¡levántese, mijo!" Hay veces de que yo me dormía y él ya estaba bien bañado y le decía: "Papi ¿me vas a llevar?" Y

pues gracias a Dios que sí fue los sábados. [There were like two times that he didn't want to go anymore [to Saturday school] and I told him, 'Son, if you were not intending to go, then, why did you sign up for it? Now there are only two Saturdays left, give it your all. Soon, these two Saturdays are going to finish and there are only two classes left. Give it your all. Get up, son!'] There were times that I slept in and he was already showered and ready and he would ask [his father], 'Dad, are you taking me?' And well, thank God, that he did go on Saturdays.]

During the interviews, students shared that although they often did not want to attend tutorials Saturday mornings, they thought the additional instruction helped them do better in school. During the focus group, a student shared that she tried to miss Saturday tutorials, but her father would encourage her to attend and she appreciated the additional instruction was helpful. She said:

Mi papá me oblige [ir]. O sea cuando yo le digo, 'Yo no quiero ir,' y me quedo, y me hago la tonta y me tapo con la colcha y le digo, 'No yo no voy a ir,' o 'Me siento mal' y el me dice, 'Pues si te sientes mal toma medicina y siempre vas.' Pero Saturday tutorials me ayuda con las tareas y es organizado. [My father makes me [go]. If I tell him, 'I don't want to go,' and I stay, and I act dumb and cover myself with the blanket and I tell him, 'I don't want to go,' or 'I don't feel well,' he tells me, 'If you don't feel well take some medicine and then you can go.' But Saturday tutorials help me with schoolwork and it is organized.]

Mentoring. The ESL Legacy Club was a type of mentoring program on campus to provide support to ESL students by former ESL students. During the 2015-2016 school

year, ESL Legacy Club was started by former ESL seniors at the high school. In ESL Legacy Club, juniors and seniors met with freshmen and sophomores to provide tutorials to any interested students. A student in the focus group described the club, “Nos ayudaban con las clases que estaban en inglés, nos ayudaban si no las entendíamos. Nos daban... o, si no entendíamos álgebra, ellos también nos enseñaban. Era un grupo de estudiantes de 11 y 12 que se ofrecieron en ayudar. [They helped us with the classes that were taught in English, they helped us with what we didn’t understand. They gave us...if we didn’t understand algebra, they also would teach us. It was a group of students in grades 11th and 12th that offered to help.”]

No other formal mentoring program on campus existed, although each of the student participants identified with one or more of the adults on campus with whom they developed a trusting relationship. Student participants described these relationships as supportive because the adults understood their struggles. The “mentors” talked to the students about personal experiences they overcame to give hope to student participants that they could do the same. George said about his history teacher:

Siempre nos ayuda. Ella tiene dos trabajos. Trabaja en otro sitio en las noches, pero nos ayuda en tutorías, porque ella quiere que estemos a nivel de los demás [estudiantes]. [She always helps us. She has two jobs. She works in another place at night, but she helps us in tutorials, because she wants us to be at the same level as the other [students]].”

Similarly, Vicky spoke highly about the influence Ms. García, one of the ESL aides, had on her. She explained Ms. García reinforced her decision to one day work as an educator:

Ms. García ha sido otra de las personas que yo considero que Diosito las pone en mi vida como que, para que me den como que más fuerzas, que me ayudan a lograr lo que quiero, a conseguir lo que de verdad me importa, porque yo considero que tengo los ojos puestos en lo que yo quiero, y es ser una [ESL] aide como ella. [Ms. Garcia is another person that I think God put in my life, to give me more strength, to help me achieve what I want, to aspire for what is really important to me, because I think I have my eyes on what I want, and its to be a [ESL] aide like her].

It was common for student participants to speak often about their relationships with the school staff and teachers that encouraged them during the interviews. It was inferred that student participants liked that several of their teachers understood their cultures and language. By relating to their teachers, UAC were able to speak openly to several of the adults around them. Student participants realized that teachers and the ESL aides were vigilant to provide help, to give constructive criticism, and to praise students' efforts.

Technology in the classroom. At the district level, the one-to-one laptop initiative distributed tablets to all high school freshmen and sophomores. The Windows 8 tablets had basic Internet browsing and text input, with touchscreen capabilities. The laptops enhanced UAC learning by putting technology at their fingertips, a tool that was not available to them in their native countries. The student participants did not have to carry textbooks. They had the freedom to take the tablets home to complete assignments and surf the web. George shared that his tablet really helped to improve his English learning in the comfort of his home, "...porque la tablet también fue muy importante para

aprender inglés porque también hacíamos Rosetta Stone y el Readings Smart aquí en la casa. [...because the tablet was also very important to learning English because we also did Rosetta Stone and the Reading Smart here at home.]”

In the classroom, ESL students used specific English-learning programs to supplement classroom instruction and quicken language acquisition. Rosetta Stone and Reading Smart were installed on the computers in the English and Reading classrooms. The reading teacher, Mr. Matthews, explained the benefits of using Rosetta Stone for new UAC students:

Now, the reason we use Rosetta Stone is it doesn't have academics. It is very basic in communication of English, but it has a speaking component and [the students] use headphones and microphones. And they're not afraid to speak into a computer. They're not talking to a person, so they're a lot more willing to talk into the computer than with you, so it gets them speaking sooner in the classroom by using [Rosetta Stone].

Two of the student participants, Diego and George, took pictures of the computer screens depicting Rosetta Stone and Reading Smart. They each credited these programs for helping them learn English quicker than only classroom instruction would allow. They shared that their vocabulary was expanded, they understood English when spoken, and were able to speak English with more ease after working on Rosetta Stone. Students were permitted to use the classroom computers after instruction was given, during the last part of the class. In Algebra, Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces, or ALEKS, a Web-based, artificially intelligent assessment and learning system, was used to teach concepts in Algebra and math vocabulary, either in English or Spanish, depending on the

user's preference. ALEKS assessed the student's knowledge throughout its use to determine if the students retained information.

During instruction, teachers used Promethean Boards, or interactive whiteboards, with touchscreen capabilities. Images from a laptop or computer were displayed on the Promethean Board, an essential tool for ESL students to visualize the lessons. For example, during an observation of an Algebra I class, the lesson required students to determine answers to math problems using graphing calculators. The teacher had an image of a graphing calculator on the Promethean Board. She pushed the respective buttons on the calculator, distinguishing each step by using a different color, modeling to students how to use the graphing calculator and how to think through the problem to find a solution. Eventually, she asked one of the students to work out a problem on the Promethean Board, before the students were allowed to work individually or with a classmate. As the student did the steps to find the answer, his peers helped him by calling out what steps he needed to take to work the problem correctly. The scene was an enthusiastic display of the students excitedly learning and interacting with each other about math.

Support from counselors. The school has eight guidance counselors that are assigned to students according to grade. Seven support staff assisted the counselors and helped students with college planning. One counselor manages only the ESL/LEP students. The teachers and support staff work closely with the ESL/LEP counselor to address concerns regarding the students. Ms. Ortega, the ESL/LEP counselor, is bilingual, and, much like the teachers, motivates students to focus on their academics. Mr. Matthews shared, “Well, anytime that we can get that counseling help that might

actually help [students], we do. Ms. Ortega is very good about calling in students and talking to them.”

The history teacher reported she works very closely with the counselors in order to help the students succeed academically. She said:

The reason I'm always in [the counselors' offices] is because I'm always either talking to the counselor, the regular student counselor, or the Spanish counselor, or the counselor over all of them. I'm always talking about, 'Hey, I have an attendance issue. I have a kid who's sick and I have a kid who's in the hospital. I have a kid who has a behavioral issue. Can you help me?'

The other teachers, ESL aides, and the students themselves, had the same viewpoint about the counselors, especially the ESL/LEP counselor, as being helpful in providing consistent guidance to the ESL students to succeed academically. During the focus group, one of the students said:

Ms. Ortega que siempre está pendiente de nosotros, que siempre está pendiente, siempre que hay como información de becas o cosas así, siempre nos hace saber. Y es bueno, porque he aprendido que hay mucho dinero que el gobierno da para que estudiemos y como no los aprovechamos lo invierten en otras cosas [Ms. Ortega is always available to us, always available, always telling us about scholarship information and she always tells us about things like that. And it is good, because I have learned that there is a lot of money given by the government for us to study and it is not used for studying, it is invested in other things]

With the counselors help, teachers had a sense that they were better equipped to help students in the classroom. Students felt supported when they talked to counselors

about difficulties they encountered in their personal lives or in the classroom.

Social expectations and support. Teachers were similar regarding behavior expectations and interventions. Teachers understood that new immigrant students were often quiet when they first started school, but that, after acclimating to the new environments, they opened up and became more vocal, with increased participation. It was expected by administrators for teachers to implement classroom interventions prior to referring students to the principal. One teacher explained the importance of teaching students appropriate social skills because, once students acclimated, they became too comfortable in class, disturbing instruction. Teachers also understood that students were facing many life difficulties and empathy was needed. One teacher shared:

I had a girl that fell asleep in class all the time, but she had straight As and then I found out she worked until 2:00 a.m. every night, so I just let her sleep and she was being successful and she was doing fine, so I just left her alone because I felt sorry for her.

Classroom observations and interviews indicated that teachers intervene quickly and appropriately by providing students with verbal warnings for infractions, such as disrupting the class with talking out loud, not following instructions, sleeping in class, or not working on class assignments. The instructional aides reinforced the teachers' warnings by walking around the classrooms and talking to students quietly about their behavior. Teachers and the assistant principal agreed that the right way to handle a student not behaving properly did not always require discipline first. Counseling was incorporated to find out the reason for the particular misconduct. The counselor was easily accessible by phone or email to see students. Persistent inappropriate behavior

eventually led to consequences. One teacher said she would sometimes send students to speak to the ESL counselor or the principal if a student needed extra attention. She said:

Well anytime that we can get that counseling help that might actually help them, we do. The counselor is very good about calling in students and talking to them. Sometimes it has to be a principal...if they're having behavioral problems. We have some students with behaviour issues.

Teachers emphasized it was important to help students to acculturate into productive members of society by modeling appropriate behavior and by guiding them to recognize their behaviors and to suggest alternative positive behaviors.

Extracurricular activities. The school offered a wide range of extracurricular activities for students, in sports, clubs, and groups. Sports included baseball, basketball, cross country and track, cheerleading, drill team, football, golf, soccer, softball, and volleyball. Clubs included chess club and robotics. Community service contributing to the school and the community was required by every club and organization on campus. Of the three student participants, only Vicky reported she participated in extracurricular activities. She shared she accompanied the ESL/LEP counselor to a nearby elementary school to tutor elementary students. She said:

Es que yo iba con Ms. Ortega. Ibamos a dar clases, ayudábamos a los niñitos a aprender a leer y todo eso, y me gusta mucho, es que yo quiero estudiar para eso [profesión]. Yo siento que es como, como mi vocación... Entonces, quiero ir ahora para ver si me puede inscribir, para estar yendo después de escuela cuando salgo de aquí, y me voy para ir ayudarles a los profesores y que me den horas de servicio. [It's that I used to go with Ms. Ortega. We would go to teach, to help

kids learn how to read and everything and I like it a lot, it's that I want to study for that [profession]. I feel like it's like, like my vocation...So I want to go there now to see if I can register, to go there after school when I get out of [school], and I'm going to help the teachers and they will give me community service hours].

Vicky also said she participated in the ROTC camp during the summers. She and her family attended an ROTC awards ceremony at the end of the school year, where she was promoted in rank and given a certificate. Diego and George reported they did not participate in extracurricular activities as freshmen because they were busy learning English. George shared that he was open to playing soccer when he was a sophomore.

Post high school planning. The UAC within the school's ESL Program were encouraged to pursue higher education after successfully completing high school. Discussions to inform students of opportunities to acquire vocational training were not as prevalent as encouraging them to attend a college or university. For example, the ESL/LEP counselor had a chart of the state's top universities in her office. When students talked to her about their academics, she often pointed to the chart to show schools' requirements for entry. The ESL/LEP counselor explained, "Many of our [ESL] students will be the first to graduate from high school in their homes. It is our job to show them how to get through high school and get to college. They can do it. They just need to learn to communicate to teachers and let others know what they need." The student participants were encouraged by the potential to attend a college someday and they looked forward to future college tours. During the home visit to talk to George about his pictures, his mother talked proudly of George's accomplishments as she showed the different certificates he received in school since arriving in the U.S. She expressed she was happy

about the help he received from school staff to prepare for getting into a college. George reported, “Este año que pasó me invitaron que fuera a [conocer] la universidad de Rice. Me gustó ver la escuela. [This past year they invited me to go see Rice University. I liked seeing the school].” His mother added, “O espero la ayuda de las maestras de ahí en la escuela que primero le ayuden a él. Yo no sé manejar, tal vez a él escoge una [escuela] donde está más cerca..., de la universidad, porque como, pues, yo no sé manejar y que a ver cómo hace él para ir todos los días. [Oh, I hope to get help from the teachers from the school to first help him. I don’t know how to drive, and maybe he will select [a school] that is closer..., a university because, well, since I don’t drive and to see how he can get there every day].” George’s mother was sure that he would continue receiving support and information from his teachers in order to find the right school for him.

The Special Programs Department in the district was responsible for services provided to students who are homeless or migrant. Some of the UAC students qualified for these services. Services include in-school and after-school tutorials, student monitoring, assistance with post-secondary preparation and completing financial aid, receiving free school supplies, and community referrals. Under the Special Programs Department, high school seniors received assistance with completing the federal aid applications, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TAFSA), which is for foreign students who may be ineligible to apply as Texas residents for tuition purposes. Students considering attending community college who did not meet the minimum college readiness standard on the SAT or the ACT are required to take the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Assessment to determine the appropriate level of college readiness and interventions. The Special Programs

Department provided TSI preparation and waived the fee for taking the assessment. Additionally, students had the opportunity to tour colleges throughout the year, attend career presentations, and learn how to write résumés through the Special Programs Department.

Vocational training available to students on the campus included Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), health science, architecture, business, Ready Set Teach, and Culinary Arts. Students participating in health science learn medical terminology and practices in preparation to shadow medical personnel at nearby hospitals. Ready Set Teach prepares future educators to learn how to create lesson plans, develop classroom management skills, and work with teachers in classrooms as assistants. Culinary Arts gives hands-on experience by letting students plan and prepare meals for meetings at the school and sell baked goods on campus throughout the year. These classes assist students to find out potential post-secondary options with hands-on opportunities, while developing useful life-skills. Since some of the vocational courses are two to three consecutive class periods, the student participants' limited school schedule did not provide them all with the opportunity to participate in most vocational training at the time of the study.

On the high school campus, the ESL/LEP counselor worked closely with teachers to find ways to help students make post-secondary preparations. In the spring of 2016, she enlisted the help of teachers and recent graduates to help students learn how to search for scholarships and write essays. In one presentation to a freshman class, the counselor brought in a list of scholarships. She explained to students that they could begin working on scholarships as early as freshmen year in order to gain practice in writing essays by

senior year. She explained to students how to find and use scholarships. Students were encouraged to work together to determine goals for completing at least one scholarship per month.

Family support. In order to support students further, the school involves parents and guardians in school events. All mail-outs and most website information are written in both English and Spanish. The ESL/LEP counselor works closely with another counselor, who is responsible for parent engagement. The parent engagement counselor started the Charlas Program during the 2015-2016 school year to promote parent participation on campus. The Charlas Program, which means “chat” in Spanish, is a grassroots effort by the district to engage parents in their childrens’ education. The ESL assistant principal explained that the Charlas Program began to help parents understand the U.S. educational system:

C-H-A-R-L-A-S. It means like ‘small talk’...But we really want to target parents. Most of our newcomer parents, our newcomers have parents who are newcomers as well, and they don't know anything about our education system and what we find overwhelmingly is that, if you were to ask the parents, 'Oh, what would you like them to do?', they're gonna be like, 'Oh, we want them to go to college,' but they have no idea about how high school even works or how to get scholarships, so we really are trying to provide a lot of support to keep them informed about what it takes to get your student to go to college.

The ESL assistant principal talks about the goal behind the Charlas Program that was developed to help parents and guardians guide students in education:

We've offered up, it's not new to the district, but it's kinda new to the high school level. It's the Charlas Program from the district. Basically, it's a program for parents and the parents take courses and each course is designed to start to prepare them for how to deal with their high school student, or how to deal with their students in terms of education success, like, how do you get your kid to college? ... So, we really are trying to provide a lot of support to keep them informed about what it takes to get the student to go to college.

Although parents are not always willing to participate in programs at the school, the assistant principal recognized the school has to continue efforts to reach out to them. She said about the Charlas Program, "We had good attendance the first night and then, of course, it, like, tapers off, and so, we're re-evaluating how we want to do it, however, that's really what we're moving towards, is offering that additional support to parents."

Parents are invited to awards ceremonies for their students on campus, as an opportunity to meet teachers and other parents, and to see their children's academic successes. George's mother said she enjoyed the ESL/LEP awards ceremony at the end of the year after George received three certificates of achievement. She shared, "Para mí, fue un gran orgullo y un gozo cuando me llamaron a mi hijo...Sí hubiera visto, yo hasta lloré [I was very proud and happy when they called my son...If you had seen, I even cried.]"

Due to parents' legal status or work schedule, they are not always able to attend school events. The reading teacher empathized with parents when he shared:

When we have open house and the parents that come, I know that their [children are] gonna be my best students, and they always are, because the parent is there

and they're supporting them. But a lot of our parents, sometimes, and a lot of our students, aren't here legally and they're afraid. They're afraid to be public and get involved. I can understand. It's not their fault, but they're hesitant. But sometimes they work two jobs and they can't be here [because they don't have the time].

The school administrators and counselors continued to consider new ways to get parents involved in their children's education. The parent engagement counselor acknowledged that convincing parents to come to the school would take some time and regular contact from the school.

School Culture and Climate

The school's culture and climate are as important to consider as instruction and curriculum. It appeared that the school where the study took place was safe and welcoming to UAC. The student participants felt the educators cared about them and their success. There was an appreciation for the educators' efforts by the student participants and the administrators interviewed. In an interview with the ESL Program assistant principal, she explained her thoughts about the culture that was developing at the school:

Our major goal is to create a better awareness with the staff members so that way they have a better understanding of what it is, that the ESL Program is for [helping ours] kids and so it's not just like, 'oh, it's just the kids that don't speak English [and] they go over there.' We are trying to create that awareness, it's slow and painful.

An analysis of the data related to school culture and climate focused on an environment of encouragement and trust, student and educator attitudes about the school

experience, and caring relationships and support. Information for each area is reported below. The following section will discuss how a culture of encouragement and trust was fostered on this campus.

An Environment of Encouragement and Trust

The student participants reported that they felt encouraged by their teachers and support staff. Each of the student participants reported that teachers recognized them as good students. Diego said, “Dicen, ‘Él es bien inteligente.’ [They say, ‘He is really smart].” George said, “Ellos confían en mí [They have faith in me]. Vicky said, “Yo pienso que ellos tienen una buena opinión de mí. [I think they have a good opinion of me].” There were two main reasons that attributed to the feeling of encouragement on campus: the ESL Program and the dedication of the staff. Since the ESL Program was compartmentalized to one area of campus, the school seemed manageable to students. Students learned quickly who the ESL teachers and aides were, classmates from their cohorts were in many of their same classes, bilingual teachers and ESL aides made learning English less daunting, and student participants knew who to talk to if there was a problem or a complaint. Regarding teachers, anytime the student participants were asked about their impression of the assistance they received, they all responded positively. Diego said about help from teachers, “Teníamos bastante apoyo [We had a lot of support].” A student from the focus group talked about his teachers advising him to do well in school:

Siempre nos decían que siempre hiciéramos el estudio, que nos portáramos bien, y siempre, si teníamos un problema o necesitábamos algo, le preguntara a Ms. Ortega. Ella...nos llevaba directamente con Ms. Ortega a hablar sobre los

cambios que queríamos hacer o [hablar] de la clase, qué era mejor para nosotros [They would always tell us to do our schoolwork, to behave well, and always, if we had a problem or a need, ask Ms. Ortega. She would take us directly to Ms. Ortega to talk about any changes that we wanted to make or [talk] about the class, what was best for us].”

George shared about a teacher helping him understand the lessons, “Pues, ella nos, en esa clase, casi no le entendíamos nada y ella nos ayudaba a entender más y sacábamos el mejor promedio del grado [Well, she would, in that class, we hardly understood anything and she would help us to understand more and we would get the best grades in the class].” Student participants shared they were motivated to come to school most days. In the focus group one student said, “Lo que quiero es aprender. [What I want is to learn].” Vicky said it was difficult for her to come to school when she first came to the U.S. After acclimating to her environment after the first few months, she reported she often awoke before her father. She said, “Yo me levanto antes que él en la mañana y yo voy y lo despierto. [I am awake before he is in the mornings and I wake him up].”

About their peers, students mentioned they all supported each other. In the focus group, the students expressed that all the ESL students help each other learn the ropes of the new school. One student said, “En mi clase, nos ayudamos todos. Lo que uno no sabe se ayuda al otro a enseñarle... [In my class, we all help each other. What one does not know, the other person will teach...].” Students understood they were all experiencing similar situations if they were in the ESL Program. In the focus group, a student explained, “Todos tuvimos un momento de llegar nuevo [en la escuela] y entonces tratamos de que se sienta cómodo [los nuevos estudiantes]. [We all had a moment to be

new [in the school] and so we try to make new students feel comfortable].” Most students empathized with the process of acculturation, which led to students caring for each other in school. The students were encouraged by their teachers and the ESL aides to do their best. In combination with the support they received from educators and the non-judgemental, caring attitudes of the students, the student participants let down their guard to focus on learning.

Student and Educator Attitudes about the School Experience

All the students and educators had a positive outlook of the environment at the high school in the study. All students and the parents interviewed were optimistic about the school and the staff. Students reported the teachers and staff had high academic expectations for them, but acknowledged they were supported by educators to accomplish academic success. The ESL staff was positive about their work with the students as well. A math teacher reported about the support she received from her administration to educate the students:

The principals on campus support me. People from the district have observed me and they said I use too much Spanish in my instruction. I do not think I do and administration on campus thinks I’m doing a great job, so I’m going to keep doing what I do. I think just having [LEP students] in ESL classes [helps them].

Just having them with their friends and not thrown in a regular [mainstream] class with all English speakers, that helps [them succeed in their learning]. Having an [ESL] aide there with them [in class] helps [their learning]. They used to have tutorials from ESL Legacy, [previous ESL] students helping [present ESL] students. Especially the ESL, the newcomers [found this very helpful].

The lead counselor, Ms. Klous, offered her viewpoint of how the ESL/LEP counselor supported the ESL students to stay enthusiastic about school:

The ESL/LEP counselor is always looking for new ways to talk and motivate the ESL students to stay in school, to graduate from high school, and to imagine more for their lives. She is tireless, and that helps. The staff working closely together, and all the programs and services offered to immigrant students lets them know that they are supported and we want to help them to be successful.

Moreover, the high expectations of the ESL teachers for the students created a culture of confidence that every student has the ability to learn. In presentations by the ESL/LEP counselor and interviews with teachers, it was clearly stated to students that there are no limits to the goals they set for themselves. They were encouraged to reach for their dreams by hearing the success stories from the adults around them. At an ESL awards ceremony at the end of the year, a guest speaker was a person who previously taught on campus and was currently working as a tutor at the school, specifically working with immigrant and homeless students. He spoke of his experience upon arriving in the U.S. when he was a child. He did not know how to speak English when he arrived, but received a bachelor's degree from Texas A&M and a master's degree from Rice University. He said:

Cuando yo me mudé aquí de San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, no sabía ni siquiera una palabra en inglés, y fue difícil al inicio porque no solamente tenía que aprenderme lo que estábamos haciendo en clase, sino que también tuve que lograr el idioma. Yo creo que es, querer entender la frustración que se siente cuando los maestros a veces piensan que tú no eres la persona inteligente

suficiente para estar en el salón. Creo que cada uno de ustedes, de verdad crea eso, cualquier meta que se pueden... que ustedes tengan, ustedes la pueden lograr. Ustedes pueden algún día estudiar en Harvard, cualquier universidad que ustedes quieran entrar, ustedes pueden hacerlo. Si quieren estudiar licenciatura, medicina, negocios; cualquier cosa, ustedes lo pueden hacer. [When I moved here from San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, I didn't know one word of English, and it was very difficult in the beginning because, not only did I have to learn what we were doing in class, but I also had to learn English. I think, to understand the frustration that you feel when teachers sometimes think you are not a smart enough person to be in their classroom. I think each one of you, I really believe this, any goal set...any goal you have, you can accomplish it. You can one day study at Harvard, at any university where you want to attend, you can attend it. If you want to study law, medicine, business, anything, you can do it].

The ESL instructional staff was mindful that they served as models for their students. All the teachers interviewed empathized with the situations students faced in their personal lives, but, in their classrooms, they set clear expectations and focused on instruction so students would understand the importance of an education and the purpose for attending school. They facilitated relationship building as part of their instructional practices to motivate students. Mr. Matthews stated his view of helping students in the classroom:

A lot of our kids have a lot of baggage. A lot of our kids have a lot of baggage! A lot! And the more we can know, the better to help us, but we don't always know everything that's going on at home. So, the only thing that we can do is we can

control what happens in our classrooms. We can't control what happens at home, but we can control what happens in our classroom. So that's why you want them to feel as comfortable and as unstressed as you possibly can.

The English teacher included how she related to students to encourage learning:

Something that I think is crucial for them, especially for ESL kids, is the motivation part. 'You can do this. This is something that you can do,' and I always tell them, 'Look, we're all ESL students. My first language isn't English, it's Spanish... 'I know how hard it is [to not speak English] so I know how you feel. I know what is going through your mind, but believe me, this is something that you could do and I'm going to give you every possible help that I could, so if you work with me you will do it. But you have to work. It is not something that will come like in a minute.'

In order to help students have a sense of empowerment, the educators understood that each student's academic needs were unique. For example, some students benefited from additional tutorials or from a one-on-one conversation with the counselor. Other students needed little guidance. Teachers and support staff talked to each other and to the ESL/LEP counselor, Ms. Ortega, regularly about the students' progress to determine needed interventions. Mr. Matthews explained a decision to promote some students to move out of the ESL program quicker than others:

We have some students that were beginners this year. They're not going to go to ESOL 2 and Reading 2 next year. They're going to go to SIOP classes because they've been very successful. They've learned enough English that they're going to be ok,...but that's kind of up to us. Ms. Ortega counsels the teachers for

feedback from what the ESL kids can do and what they're capable of doing. You have to be careful [about promoting appropriately].

The teachers recognized that the UAC and other ESL students required more patience than the native-born students due to the language barriers and to acclimating to a new school setting. One teacher explained his perspective:

I never fail a student that's working hard unless I think it would be harmful to promote them the next year, and that would do more harm than good. A lot of our kids struggle, struggle, struggle and they're going along, and then all of a sudden it's like a light goes off. Then all of a sudden they get like Esmeralda this year. All of a sudden she's understanding everything and her grades zoomed up and she's doing great. That's just what happens sometimes and then all of a sudden everything clicks, and they're understanding it. And that's so fun to watch. It's great to see that when it happens.

The staff recognized students were motivated by receiving recognition for their successes. During Saturday tutorials, learning was mixed with fun games and activities. On the last day of Saturday tutorials, a party took place to reward the students who attended. An ESL Awards Ceremony took place at the end of May 2016 to honor the students' efforts. At the ceremony, the principal said, "We are very proud of the students who are receiving awards and we are happy to celebrate those successes with all those who have contributed to our academic achievements." In the classroom, teachers commended students' efforts with verbal praise or by making them leaders in the class. One teacher explained:

I rearranged everything...and the way that I arrange my tables is into groups, is that I have a leader. The leader will be my best student... so I have this kid which is the leader. This [other] kid will not be the best, but he or she could do quite good work, and then I have the students that are in between. So everybody will support each other, and not all the group will depend on one [person], so, they are going to support each other.

The interviews uncovered several examples of positive attitudes by staff and students to promote strong, supportive relationships between adults and students. Similar to promoting encouragement and trust and supportive attitudes, resiliency was derived in UAC by forming caring relationships.

Caring Relationships and Support

A key theme that surfaced from the data was the strong support system available for the student participants. Student participants provided several examples of relationships with caring adults and peers, and favorable results as outcomes. For example, Vicky shared about how one of her teachers encouraged her to do her work one day when she was unmotivated:

Yo sé que hay profesores buenos también con los que los estudiantes se enojan, pero ellos les exigen [que trabajen] como Ms. Herrera. Yo me enojaba con ella, pero ella me decía 'No, pero no te vas a mover de ahí hasta que termines.' Hasta me decía, 'Le voy a hablar a tu papá porque tú no eres así, tú te portas bien, pero no sé qué te está pasando. El teléfono, le voy a decir que te quite el teléfono,' me decía. Y le decía 'No, Ms. Herrera'... Hay dos tipos de personas en el mundo, personas que hacen su trabajo porque es lo que tienen que hacer, porque quieren

que les paguen, y hay personas que hacen su trabajo porque es su trabajo y porque les gusta en lo que trabajan. [I know that there are also good teachers who frustrate students, but they require them [to work] like Ms. Herrera. I used to get angry with her, but she would tell me, ‘No, you will not move from there until you finish. She even would say, ‘I’m going to talk to your father because you are acting like that. You behave well, but I don’t know what is happening to you. The telephone – I’m going to tell him to take away your telephone,’ she would say. I would say to her, ‘No, Ms. Herrera’... There are two types of people in the world, people who do their jobs because they have to do it, because they want a paycheck, and there are people that do their jobs because it is their job and because they like what they do for a living].

Vicky expressed that Ms. Herrera’s stern, no-nonsense behavior prompted her to reconsider her actions to dismiss her class assignment. Similar to Vicky’s experience, the other student participants understood that teachers wanted the best for them, even when the student participants were uninterested, or when teachers came across as too firm or strict. From conversations with teachers and aides, their focus was academic in nature, with relationship building as a byproduct of the time spent with students in class, a side-effect that helped students’ engagement in learning.

Teachers did not directly discuss their rapport with students during the interviews, although they did acknowledge they were familiar with the students’ weaknesses, strengths, and academic concerns. The math teacher talked about Diego’s strengths compared to other students, “Diego just came this semester, but he’s able to catch up pretty quickly. I just have to show him a few examples and he gets it, but others are little

more behind, and just having that partner, or an aide, or just me on top of them [helps their learning].” Teachers confronted learning difficulties by providing various instructional strategies, regularly checking in with students to determine their needs, and by being open with students about their academic abilities. Teachers build rapport with students by opening up about their own personal lives as it pertained to education. The history teacher explained to students that she led an untraditional lifestyle so she could focus on education:

As a female, as Hispanic, many times, the students will say, 'Well, how many kids do you have?' and I say, 'Do you see rings on it?' and they would say, 'No', and then that means that I have chosen to do things another way. I've chosen to first, focus on my education and then I'll focus on that...and I don't regret it. So, I say, you are my children, you are what I wake up for in the morning, you are who I pray for and I will do whatever it takes to make you succeed, whether that means being strict or whether that means being fun. Whatever it takes, we will do it.

The English teacher encouraged students to hold on to their culture and learn of other cultures by assigning them to present international current events to the class. She explained, “We need to give them time to remember their cultures. They are comfortable with being here if they can talk about themselves and that includes their cultures.”

Teachers and ESL aides were available to students when they asked for help, resulting in students gaining the perspective that they had support from the school. Although most of the relationships were between the students and teachers and the ESL aides, students reported about receiving support from other staff members as well. Students sought guidance from the ESL/LEP counselor, Ms. Ortega, quite often. While

interviewing Ms. Ortega, students dropped in often to ask for her assistance with sending letters to college recruiters, to play soccer, to find out about upcoming camps and seminars, and to talk to her about academic goals or concerns. Vicky shared what she learned from Ms. Ortega regarding pursuing an education:

La oportunidad de estudiar hasta donde tú puedas, hasta donde uno quiera... como dijo Ms. Ortega ‘las puertas están ahí no más esperando que uno las abra... hay algunos que a lo mejor tienen llave, pero uno se crea esa llave con inteligencia. Con las ganas de uno de salir adelante uno se abre las puertas.’ Y con la ayuda de Dios. [There is no limit to the opportunities to study, it’s up to where you want to go...like Ms. Ortega says, ‘the doors are there waiting for you to open them...there are some that may have a key, but you create the key with intelligence. With the desire to get ahead, you can open the doors.’ And with God’s help.]

Interviews indicated that student participants also relied on peers for support and encouragement. In the focus group, all the students reported they helped each other “feel comfortable” when they first arrived because they understood the awkwardness of coming to a new school, in a new country, and being afraid to interact with others who may not speak Spanish. Teachers encouraged students to build relationships with each other by promoting collaborative learning and letting students work in groups in the classroom. The pictures taken for the study by the student participants depicted examples of peer relationships inside and outside of the classroom. Vicky attributed her friendship with two classmates to helping her see life from a different, positive perspective. She shared:

Que son comprensivas, pero tienen una manera de ver la vida diferente. Y creo que eso, la manera en la que las personas ven la vida, creo que lo hacen cambiar a uno también en la manera en que uno ve la vida. Nos hemos propuesto las tres que este año vamos a empezar a llenar para las becas. [They are comprehensive, but they have a way of seeing life differently. I think that that, the way a person sees life, I think it makes you change your way of seeing life too. The three of us have decided that this year we will start completing applications for scholarships.]

Pictures taken by Diego and George included peers they worked with in class.

Diego reported that a girl in one of his pictures was a friend of his and they helped each other navigate through school. He said, “Bueno, esta foto yo la tomé porque estábamos en la escuela y ella es mi compañera. Siempre nos ayudamos con ella cuando estaba en la escuela, y de eso se trata, de que nos ayudamos. [Well, I took this picture because we were in school and she is my friend. We always helped each other when we were in school, and that is what it’s about, that we helped each other.]”

George did not indicate specific peers that helped him, instead he said several times in his interviews that he liked working with groups of peers on assignments in class. In one picture he took of a group in his class, he said, “Me ayudaron los grupos porque lo que uno no sabía el otro sí lo sabía y nos ayudábamos. Pues la ayuda de entre más ayuda tenemos mejor, más, mejor aprendemos. [The groups helped me because what one person didn’t know, the other did know, and we helped each other. Well, with help from more was better, more, better learning.]”

With help from educators, and staff on campus, and peers, the student participants were exposed to new information about opportunities available to them. They developed

new outlooks for their academic goals which reinforced their ideas of finishing high school and going to college.

Summary

This chapter included the life experiences of student participants and an analysis of school structures and climates contributing to their academic success. The narrative structure of the life experiences of three UAC student participants were derived from open discussions in relation to the interview questions. The narratives identified common personal protective factors among the student participants, including high internal locus of control, personal competence, religiosity and spirituality, and family involvement. Although the study is not generalizable to other immigrant groups, the results are informative to educators about UAC students.

The data collected from the high school where the study took place revealed that the small, focused environment of the ESL Program offered many benefits for instruction to UAC high school students. The “academy” setting of the program on a large high school campus promoted resiliency in this group of students academically, socially, and emotionally, as was asserted by the educators and the student participants. As part of a large campus, UAC students had opportunities to partake in social services, extracurricular activities, and post-secondary planning and career development. The culture at this high school was vigorous, supportive, and caring. The student participants and educators created a cohesive environment. Students felt supported and cared for by their teachers, who set high expectations and determined means to help students achieve academically. Social support was available to the parents and guardians to support students’ educational progress.

The student participants' histories indicated that they needed a safe school with dependable, encouraging educators. According to student participants' accounts, caring and supportive relationships were forged on campus from a network of adults and peers. Chapter Five discusses findings, implications, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The increase in the number of UAC arriving in the United States in recent years from Central America without parents or guardians has greatly impacted schools (Lee, 2014; Prah, 2013). Challenges in providing an adequate education for these students involves much more than just preparing them to adjust to a new educational system and the everchanging workforce. Unlike other immigrant students who arrive with family, an inherent support system for adolescents, UAC are more vulnerable to stressors stemming from isolation, lack of money, ineligibility to work, and concerns of deportation (Perez, et al., 2009). In school, their limitations are primarily in English proficiency, a lack of an established support system, unfamiliarity with the U.S. culture, difficulties with enrolling in school, and disqualification for certain educational opportunities (Carlson et al., 2012; Hill & Hawes, 2011; McLeod, 2016). While some studies have identified resilience-promoting qualities of immigrants, few studies have considered the protective factors employed by UAC in high school, their experiences, and the impact school structures and school culture have on their academic progress.

To overcome barriers, UAC rely on resiliency derived from personal and environmental protective factors to manage academic challenges and successfully navigate through school (Cortina, Raphael, & Elie, 2013). The UAC's individual character traits and social interactions serve as personal protective factors, while the

interface with school structures that promote learning are considered environmental protective factors. This study identified personal, environmental, and socio-cultural factors that contributed to the academic resiliency of three UAC students from Central America attending a high school in Texas. These real experiences, as described by the student participants, may provide educators and policy makers with insights regarding ways to better serve UAC in academic pursuits.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to understand what experiences and resources aided three UAC from Central America to successfully meet the academic demands in high school. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What life experiences and personal traits of unaccompanied immigrant students support and motivate resiliency in school in Texas?
2. What resources support resiliency in unaccompanied immigrant high school students in Texas?

The methodology for this qualitative study included interviews from a focus group, three student participants, two parents, and several educators and administrative staff. Multiple observations of the student participants took place at different times and in various settings. Interviews with student participants to discuss pictures depicting resiliency, as seen from their eyes at school and at home were included. Data from the interviews, pictures, and observations were triangulated to determine patterns in relationships with adults and peers, coursework, interventions, and student participation. The open-ended questions used in the interviews were derived from the literature regarding protective factors in personal character traits and school structures. The data

gathered from the interviews and observations were organized and analyzed using NVivo software to code and establish key themes. Chapter Five provides a discussion of major themes found in the study, findings as they relate to recommendations for practice and future research, and limitations of the study.

Summary of the Findings

This study's theoretical framework is based on research by Henderson and Milstein (2003), which found schools promote resiliency by offering caring relationships, having high academic and social expectations, and fostering meaningful participation and interactions. The school in this study promoted resiliency by implementing these practices in their English as a Second Language (ESL) Program, by providing student support, curriculum and instruction, and staff involvement and development.

Additionally, the personal protective factors encouraging academic success among this study's student participants resembled those found in Benard's (1991) research on resilient children, including: high internal locus of control, personal competence, religiosity and spirituality, and caring relationships with family and others.

This study examined academic resiliency in two parts: internal and external protection factors. The internal factors were derived from the character traits identified in student participants' accounts to positively manage their surroundings and deal with challenges they encountered (Reed-Victor, 2008). The external factors in the study examined structures implemented by the school to engage and support UAC academically. These factors are separated into (a) institutional structures, and (b) school culture and climate, as seen in Figure 3.

Research questions	Factors contributing to resiliency
Personal life factors that encourage resiliency	Protective factors High internal locus of control Personal competence Religiosity and spirituality Family involvement
Academic resources that support resiliency in high school	Institutional structures Curriculum and instruction A cohesive team of educators Post-secondary preparedness and extracurricular activities School culture and climate Setting high expectations Trusting and caring relationships

Figure 3. Internal and External Protective Factors

Research Question One

Research question one (What life experiences and personal traits of unaccompanied immigrant students support and motivate resiliency in school in Texas?) examined the predominant personal factors attributed for resiliency in the student participants. To gain a clear perspective of their experiences, interviews using open-ended questions, observations, and photographs taken by the student participants were used to lead them into reflective descriptions of their lives and their identities, and to assess the factors that led to obtaining academic success. The responses during interviews and the discussions of the images captured in their photographs were revealing. The information revealed their capacity to optimize personal traits in order to transfer skills learned from managing obstacles in one area of life to productively mitigating challenges in other areas (Reed-Victor, 2008). Although a number of personal traits emerged during

the analysis, the themes most strongly identified regarding individual resiliency were:

- High internal locus of control
- Personal Competence
- Religiosity and Spirituality
- Family involvement

These themes represented an integrative portrait of each student participants' experiences and beliefs that guided their success in school. Previous studies suggest that these protective factors decreased negative effects brought about by risk factors (Carlson et al., 2012; Perkins & Jones, 2004). An analysis of these most prevalent personal protective factors is presented.

High Internal Locus of Control

Throughout the interview process, student participants' reported about their behaviors to meet the demands of getting good grades, exceeding educators' expectations, and rising as classroom leaders. Reports from teachers and ESL aides confirmed their efforts. Analysis of their actions and decision-making indicates that these students possessed a high internal locus of control. Research by Kang, Chang, Chen, & Greenberger (2013) determined individuals with high internal locus of control are mature, have positive social interactions, are independent, and have academic success. Werner and Smith (1982) found that difficult life circumstances were better managed by individuals with a high internal locus of control. Much like the student participants in this study, the subjects in Werner and Smith's (1982) study with high internal locus of control believed they had the ability to control the path their lives took, instead of being manipulated by environmental factors.

The student participants in this study were not hindered by their pasts. Diego, Vicky, and George did not consider the hardships they faced in Central America as setbacks. They spoke about their time in their native countries frankly and without self-pity. They interpreted their responsibilities to assist family in Guatemala or El Salvador, and attempts to attend school, despite long distances or dangerous gangs, as choices they controlled. The manner in which they managed their responsibilities underscored their maturity and internal locus of control. When circumstances altered and they were no longer able to stay in Central America, they determined new paths for their lives and communicated with family members in the U.S. for support to make changes.

Their journeys to the U.S. capitalized on their resiliency to persevere despite the uncertainty of their situations. Diego's resolve about immigrating was revealed when he shared, "[El viaje] es riesgoso, trata de vida o muerte uno tiene que estar decidido. [The journey] is dangerous, it's life or death [so] you have to be determined]." Along with resonations of fear and isolation in their migration stories, student participants described their attentiveness to the goal of getting to the U.S. Similar to traits seen in Benard's (1991) research for promoting resiliency, the student participants in this study conveyed a strong sense of self-awareness during interviews. At 12 years old, Vicky's self-awareness led her to adjust behaviorally for safety. She pretended to be married, she paid off gang members, and she talked her brother into walking slowly when they were fearful of getting shot by authorities at the Mexican border.

Once they were stable in their new homes, the attributes of maturity, self-awareness, and high internal locus of control shifted from survival to academic pursuits. Academically, student participants recognized their intelligence, were poised when

discussing their aptitude to achieve academically, and each expressed a can-do-attitude about their learning. They maintained grade point averages of over 3.7 and gained the respect of educators. Resiliency was evident by their communicating with educators about their learning needs, asking for extra help from ESL aides, attending tutorials, monitoring their grades, and fostering practices outside of school to do well academically, such as reading and completing homework. In this study, high internal locus of control empowered UAC to acknowledge their strengths and make choices to accomplish their goals.

In conjunction with high locus of control, student participants were goal-oriented. Benard's (1991) research indicated that goal-directedness precedes positive outcomes because it provides a sense of purpose for the future, simulating "success orientation, achievement motivation, educational aspirations, persistence, hopefulness, hardiness, belief in a bright future, a sense of anticipation, a sense of a compelling future, and a sense of coherence" (p. 5). In this study, the three student participants were selected because they met the criteria of doing well in school. Analysis of data revealed the three student participants attributed their academic success to two identical goals: (a) to earn a high school diploma and (b) to help their families.

Education was perceived as a means to a life filled with opportunities, which contributed to their hopefulness for brighter futures. Diego shared his perspective about education, "La educación es lo principal, porque uno sin educación no puede hacer nada, ¿verdad? De por medio de la educación también uno puede conseguir un buen trabajo. [Education is important because without it, you can't do anything, right? Through education you can also get a good job]." Similarly, George's thoughts about education

were, “Pues yo digo que...pues sin la educación no podemos hacer casi nada, y eso es algo que como que nos da la imagen...porque si estudias bastante pues tienes bastantes oportunidades [Well, I think...well, without education you can hardly do anything, and that is something that, that allows us to dream...because if you study hard then you have lots of opportunities [open to you].” Vicky’s view on education was similar to Diego’s and George’s, but encompassed a deeper desire to overcome cultural gender biases. She said:

Creo que [la educación] es lo más importante porque eso es lo único con lo que uno se puede defender...De cerrarle la boca a las personas que dicen que las mujeres no pueden... Que si estudias estás perdiendo el tiempo, porque en lugar de estar estudiando pues estás trabajando y estás ganando dinero, pero no saben de que usted está gastando ese tiempo ahorita [bien], pero después vas a ganar mucho más de lo que ellos ganan y se va a sacrificar menos. [I think [that education] is the most important thing because it is the only way to defend yourself...To quiet the people who say that women can’t do it...That you are wasting your time with education because you can work and make money instead of going to school, but they don’t know that you are spending the time [well], but later you will make more than they do and with less sacrifice].

Student participants reported they were academically successful all their lives and they enjoyed school. Aligned with the data yielded by this study, research by Borrero, Lee, and Padilla (2013) found that successful experiences and student effort led to academic achievement. Evidence included passing state-mandated exams in English, keeping high grade point averages, and recognition with certificates from educators at an

awards ceremony for outperforming peers. Student participants accomplished goals by possessing strong problem-solving skills, as described by Arastaman and Balci (2013) and Henderson and Milstein (2003). As Benard (1991) found, problem-solving skills improved social competence and were detected in early childhood. In Central America, contextual factors with family and circumstances encouraged survival in student participants by thinking critically how to find work and care for sick relatives, but they also found ways to continue their studies.

Ungar (2008) determined resilient individuals are influenced by their environment to find opportunities and to use their talents. Similarly, the student participants were resourceful in figuring out how to leave Central America. To travel to the U.S., Diego forged a plan with his uncles for approximately three months before he revealed his departure strategy to his mother. He understood a carefully laid out plan would convince her of his safety. George also consulted with his parents for several months about traveling before telling his grandmother he would leave. Vicky was initially reluctant to leave her sick relatives, but eventually decided it was the best decision for her life and her younger brother. Through critical thinking, they formulated plans of action and followed through to meet their goals by relying on unification with family in the U.S.

Once in the U.S., their goals shifted to focus on scholastic processes to eventually graduate from high school. Even if they had to attend tedious tutorials and forgo extracurricular activities, they kept their eyes on the bigger picture of doing well academically. As a result, the challenges they encountered in Central America and the decisions they took to come to the U.S. improved their academic resiliency through affirmative interactions at school. Evidence from pictures and interviews confirmed

student participants maintained positive attitudes, developed relationships with like-minded peers, sought assistance from educators to improve grades, and talked about their career goals with the ESL counselor and ESL aides. In accordance with Ungar's (2008) research, the student participants determined the best ways to cope with their environment depending on their circumstances.

The research findings indicated a prevalence of altruism in student participants towards their families. Altruism is defined as selfless prosocial behavior in order to care for other's needs (Miller, Kahle, & Hastings, 2015). Attaining an education was a way for the student participants to benefit their families, not just themselves. The student participants spoke about contributing to their families' well-being by providing resources, caring for relatives, and getting an education. Diego said often that he wanted to find a job so that he could send money to his mother in Guatemala. Vicky shared she wanted to get ahead in life so she could model the behavior for her brother. When she showed a picture of him, she said, "Yo quiero salir adelante, como para ser un ejemplo para [mi hermano], y creo que es lo que me ayuda. Cuando tengo problemas, creo que [él] es lo que me ayuda a resolverlos. [I want to be successful, so I can be an example for [my brother], and I think it helps me. When I have problems, I think that [he] is what helps me find resolutions]." Similarly, George shared he wanted to provide financially for his parents when they retire. He said, "Me nace del corazón, porque ya cuando estén viejitos y todo lo que se esmeraron por ayudarnos. Ya que nosotros no los ayudemos se me hace feo. Y yo quiero ayudarlos bastante. [It's from my heart, because when they are old, they have worked hard to help us. It would seem ugly to me if we didn't help them. And I want to help them a lot]." Research by Miller, Kahle, and Hastings (2015) suggests

altruism is more commonly seen in populations with low socioeconomic status (SES) in order to promote social engagement in environments with fewer resources. Altruism also reduces anxiety by shifting focus from the individual to sympathizing with another's needs to overcome challenges (Miller, Kahle, & Hastings, 2015). Other studies suggest familismo, a cultural value prominent in the Hispanic culture that emphasizes family loyalty, encourages altruism in UAC (LaRoche & Shriberg, 2004). Altruism was an unexpected outcome to this study. There is insufficient research to conclude whether altruism was a protective factor or a byproduct of socialization in a new family in Diego and George, although data demonstrated that Vicky was altruistic with her family in Central America. Further research in this area may include studying UAC living in several types of living conditions, without family, to determine if altruism develops.

Personal Competence

Similar to research from Carlson et al. (2012), individual and community protective factors permitted for productive management of losses and risk factors in UAC. The life experiences and memories of the student participants served as catalysts for self-development to manage risk factors. For example, their experiences of helping family and living under difficult circumstance in Central America seemed to increase the student participants' self-efficacy to adapt to the school and promote academic achievement.

Self-efficacy is defined as the personal belief to accomplish a task according to one's personal perception of external factors (Bandura, 2006). By comparing their lives in Central America to their lives in the U.S., past experiences were beacons for promoting individual resiliency in the three student participants. The data appeared to

suggest that surviving the circumstances in their countries of origin instilled mental preparedness and self-discipline in student participants. Vicky shared that her past taught her responsibility. She said, “Si no hubiera sido por cada experiencia que he pasado, ni hubiera aprendido cómo tomar mis responsabilidades en serio. Creo que fuera bien desobligada. [If it weren’t for my past, I don’t think I would have learned how to take responsibility seriously. I think I would be irresponsible].” George’s viewpoint of his life was compared to his perspectives of his U.S. born peers. He said:

Como no saben lo que está pasando en [el mundo]. Y nosotros [UAC] venimos con esa mente de que estamos bien, como bien bendecidos por lo que tenemos. Digamos que si me hubiera criado [en los Estados Unidos] pues no supiera lo que tuviera, no supiera aprovechar [las oportunidades]. [Like they don’t know what is happening [in the world]. And we [UAC] have in mind that we are well, we are blessed for what we have. Let’s say I was raised in the U.S. well I wouldn’t know what I have or how to take advantage of [the opportunities].

Diego shared that he appreciated his uncles’ financial support because his family in Guatemala had very little income. Although they were not asking him to repay the \$6000 used to pay the coyote during his immigration, he shared that he had a strong sense of responsibility to repay the debt. He said:

[Mi mamá quería que yo fuera a la escuela] y casi no quería que yo trabajara, pero también nos hacía falta [el dinero]. Mis tíos me pagan todo ahora y me apoyan ir a la escuela. Todo el dinero que gasté [en el viaje] es sólo prestado. Yo quiero pagar de poco a poco...y ahora les debo a ellos, a mis tíos. [My mother wanted me to go to school] and didn’t want me to work, but we really did not have [money]. My

uncles pay for everything now and they encourage me to stay in school. All the money I spent [on the trip] is a loan. I want to repay it little by little...now I am indebted to my uncles.]

Contrary to Decapua and Marshall's (2011) findings that immigrants who were proficient in capitalizing difficult situations in their lives were not as capable in school due to a limited understanding and unfamiliarity with the U.S. academic system, the student participants in this study successfully utilized self-efficacy to ascertain insights from past experiences to benefit them in the classroom. While in Central America, their skills were focused on day-to-day tasks that aided them and their families' well-being. Most of Vicky's time was spent in the care for her mother and grandmother, by taking them to doctors' appointments and managing household responsibilities. Diego earned money by finding agricultural jobs. George stayed focused on attending school despite threats from gangs for him to abandon his studies. Self-efficacy was integral to their well-being because they were determined to accomplish their goals regardless of any deterrence. Bandura (2006) reported that adolescents with self-efficacy are committed to goals to provide purpose and a sense of accomplishment. To meet objectives, the student participants organized their lives in ways to keep motivated to accomplish the end results, despite enduring troubles along the way. When each decided they were leaving Central America, they followed through and were not dissuaded by their personal feelings of fear or sadness. Once they started school in the U.S., they revealed their persistence once again by developing study routines and recognizing their accomplishments, and finding encouragement from family members. They honed in on problem-solving skills, formulated socialization skills and maintained positive attitudes to manage school

responsibilities.

The available evidence indicates the student participants maintained high self-esteem. High self-esteem, combined with biculturalism, enabled student participants to overcome risk factors commonly associated with immigrant students during the acculturation process, such as limited language proficiency, depression, or drug and alcohol use. These findings are inconsistent with research from Smokowski, Rose, and Bacallao (2009) indicating that first-generation foreign-born adolescents do not fair well psychologically compared to later generations. Gonzalez, Stein, and Huq (2012) found resources and completing tasks towards entering college transformed immigrant students from merely being hopeful about doing well in school to being academically successful by utilizing self-efficacy and strategies, thereby increasing self-esteem. Biculturalism was evident when the English teacher spoke about encouraging students to talk about their cultures in class assignments. She said, “They are comfortable with being here if they can talk about themselves and that includes their cultures.” During classroom observations, guidance lessons by the ESL counselor included the distinctions between the U.S. culture compared to the Hispanic culture. She said,

Gente de la cultura anglosajona mandan a sus padres a asilos porque así se acostumbraron ellos. En la cultura hispana ellos traen a los padres que van a cuidar [para vivir con ellos]. Pero, cómo uno se trae a los padres si uno está en el mismo hogar de ellos? Sí, en su casa, no salieron de su casa. Aparte de no salir de la casa, tienen a su pareja y tienen a sus hijos viviendo ahí también. Entonces, no están ayudando, los están perjudicando a ellos. Ustedes mismos tienen que hacer el esfuerzo para mejorar [People from the U.S. culture send their parents to

nursing homes because that is the custom. In the Hispanic culture, they bring the parents [to their home] to care for them. But, how can you bring your parents home if you are living with them? Yes, in their home. You did not leave their home. On top of not leaving their home, you have your spouse and your children living there, too. Then, you are not helping. You are hurting them. You have to make the effort to improve].

The ESL counselor and teachers imparted information about the process of entering college and resources available on campus to help them graduate and continue post-secondary studies. Self-esteem, an individual's confidence in their own abilities, resonated when student participants talked about graduating from high school. Evidence of George's high self-esteem was illustrated when he talked about going to college, despite the difficulty he faced with getting an education in El Salvador. He said:

Porque cuando vamos a la escuela... siempre lo amenazan a uno después de escuela, les dicen que les dan dinero...y si no le dan [dinero] pues lo matan. Siempre los maestros nos decían 'te veo... que quieres tener una carrera y...sé que vas a poder.' Me dijeron que, a donde quiera que vaya, siempre tenga en mente que vas a ir a la universidad. Y pues, les quiero agarrar el consejo. [Because when you go to school...they always threaten you after school, they tell you to give them money...and if you don't give them [money] then they kill you. The teachers always would say, 'I see you and I know you will get it...that you want a career and I know you will get it. They told me that wherever I go, to always keep in mind that I will go to the university. And well, I want to take their advice].

The data from this study support research by Mohr, Wilhelm, and Robles-

Goodwin (2009) that suggests parental and a supportive school environment promoted high self-esteem. Parents or guardians helped maintain strong attachments to their culture of origin and encouraged them to focus on scholarly pursuits. The last interviews with Vicky and George took place in their homes, providing evidence of cultural retention. Both their mothers were at home, preparing Salvadorian foods and expressing their beliefs of the importance of an education. The school in this study fostered biculturalism, increasing self-esteem by facilitating acculturation and reducing difficulties in acclimating to a new educational system. These data corroborated with research indicating that immigrant adolescents that were involved in the new U.S. culture adjusted better than foreign-born students who rejected the new culture (Raghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2009). The well-structured ESL Program was organized, supported language acquisition, and promoted collectivism during instruction. Moreover, the demographic of the school and its surrounding community was predominantly Hispanic, facilitating interactions and further promoting acculturation and high self-esteem. Contextual factors affecting levels of self-esteem in immigrant adolescents include biculturalism, parental involvement, social support, and acculturation (Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2009).

Optimism was another factor that helped student participants utilize their life experiences to cope with adverse circumstances they faced when acclimating in the U.S. Mohr, Wilhelm, and Robles-Goodwin (2009) found that students who were optimistic generally persevere, this in turn leads to academic achievement. Similar findings from Tetzner and Becker (2015) indicated that optimism helped promote resiliency in students facing life stressors and maintained academic success by using coping skills. The data

yielded from student participants indicated their optimism was a protective factor to negotiate with external stressors. Similar to the student participants of this study, Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010) found that optimism enabled UAC “made meaning out of their current difficulties by placing them in the context of past problems and future opportunities” (p. 230). George shared that he did not mind staying for tutorials because he was happy that he and his family had everything they needed. He said, “Hay muchas familias pobres que no tienen ni dónde vivir y...nosotros sí [tenemos dónde vivir y lo que se necesita] y que lo tenemos que aprovechar [para estudiar]. [There are many poor families that don’t even have a place to live and...we do have [a place to live and basic needs met] so we have to take advantage of [going to school]. Vicky recognized she learned optimism when she began to live with her father because, in her country, she was easily discouraged. She shared:

Si lo intenté una vez y no se pudo, pues, ya no se pudo y voy a intentar de otra forma...En cambio ahora es como que, si de esa forma no se pudo, voy a intentar de otra forma, pero que me llegue al mismo, como, cambiar la estrategia, pero no la meta. [If I tried something and I was unsuccessful, I decided I couldn’t do it and I would try another way...And now it’s like if I was not successful doing things one way, I’ll try doing things a different way, but I will accomplish the same, like, change the strategy, not the goal].

Diego was optimistic that ROTC would benefit him in his immigration hearing. He reported, “Bueno, por lo que me dijeron, [ROTC] me va a ayudar bastante en mi corte con el juez. [Well, from what they told me, [ROTC] will help me a lot in court with the judge].

High self-esteem, self-efficacy, and optimism were protective traits highlighted as personal competencies in order to emphasize how they contributed to their lives in the U.S.

Religiosity and Spirituality

Initially, the topic of religiosity and spirituality was not initially included in the interview questions as a protective factor for this population. From the interviews and the photo-elicitation, this theme emerged spontaneously as student participants spoke often about their beliefs in God and his assistance in guiding their lives. Although the student participants had strong religious practices in their countries of origin, in the U.S. they demonstrated their spirituality by praying often and relying on God's assistance. Diego said about praying, "La verdad, yo siempre agradezco a Dios cada amanecer, cada anoecer. [The truth, I always thank God, every morning and every night]." Research by Raghallaigh (2011) found religion is often used by immigrants as a way to cope with different types of stressors and challenges. The belief in a higher power, or God, gave student participants a sense of control to deal with the challenges they faced. They reported their faith protected them, eased their fears, permitted safe journeys to the U.S., and increased their confidence in their abilities to endure. Vicky summarized her spirituality when she said, "Confio en Dios. Y yo siempre le cuento, en mis oraciones, ¿verdad? Yo siempre le pido a Dios por cada cosa que quiero o si me pasa algo siempre. [I believe in God. I always talk to him, in my prayers, right? I always ask God for everything I want or always [pray to him] if something happens to me]."

Religion provided an element of continuity from their past life to the present life, which facilitated adapting to their new lives by accepting change (Raghallaigh &

Gilligan, 2010). Unlike the subjects in Raghallaigh and Gilligan's (2010) study, who used independence as a coping skill, only relying on their belief in God for support, the student participants in this study accepted their dependence on their families and educators as an extension of the help they received from God. Vicky shared she prayed for help when she was immigrating. She said:

Cuando yo venía en el camino, sí, yo... es que yo creí que nos iban a regresar, yo creí que no íbamos a lograr llegar aquí, entonces, yo lo único que pedía a Dios era que me cuidara a mi familia del Salvador y que me cuidara a mi hermano y a todos los que veníamos [a los Estados Unidos]. [When I was on the road, right, I...it's that I thought they were going to return us, I thought we would not be able to come here, so, the only thing I would ask of God was him to care for me and my family from El Salvador and for him to care for my brother and all of us that were coming [to the U.S.]].

The literature indicates religiosity and spirituality are linked to empathy and social competence by being cognitively responsive to others' needs (Markstrom, et al., 2010). Increased religiosity has been found to encourage socialization of prosocial values, which, in turn, motivates prosocial behaviors, and reduces negative behaviors (Hardy & Carlo, 2005). Prosocial behaviors are multi-dimensional constructs that vary from person to person to include caring for another, as is instilled through religious doctrines. In the discussion with the focus group, the students all agreed they were responsive to new students needs by helping them navigate through the school and inviting them to their table at lunch. One person reported:

Cuando viene alguien nuevo a nuestro salón, es como que le decimos, 'te vamos a

ayudar' porque todos tuvimos un momento como...digamos él ahorita, acaba de llegar entonces tratamos de que ayudar... si, por ejemplo, a él le tocó el día que él llegó conmigo en Lunch y le dimos un lugar en nuestra mesa, porque tengo una mesa donde nos sentamos todos, centroamericanos y mexicanos, y él se sienta ahí con nosotros. [When someone new comes to our classroom, it's like we tell them 'we are going to help you' because everyone of us had a moment like...let's say him now, he just arrived then we try to help...if, for example, on the day that he arrived he was with me at lunch and we made space for him at our table, because I have a table where we all sit, Central Americans and Mexicans, and he sits there with us.]

Since religiosity and spirituality are personal factors reliant on contextual factors, findings from this study cannot imply that religiosity and spirituality are present in all UAC. Religiosity and spirituality were an accessible constructs to student participants because they were integrated into their daily lives by their families of origin (Raghallaigh, 2011). Future studies could examine the impact of religiosity and spirituality on academic performance of immigrant students compared to UAC, and examining UAC with strong religious beliefs that live with unsupportive family or in a minimal supervised facility.

Family Involvement

Each of the student participants attributed their academic successes to their families' involvement in their education. Research from Arastaman and Balci (2013) found that support from family is a strong external resiliency factor for students. In addition to higher parental involvement, research determined families with two parents

predicted positive academic outcomes (Larouche & Shriberg, 2004). Not only did the UAC in this study boast support from two-parent households, siblings and extended family also encouraged their progress. Any trauma or setback that they encountered in their country of origin did not create psychological trauma or negate the student participants' motivation for school due to their families' support (Porche, et al., 2011). Student participants were not required to help support their households. Financial and emotional support was available with the condition that they focus on academics. Vicky described her home life. She said:

En lo único que me tengo que preocupar es la escuela. Yo no me preocupo por nada más. Nunca sé cuándo llegan a la casa los recibos de la luz, nunca sé cuándo van a comprar comida. Cuando yo veo el refri, ya está lleno, la luz ya está pagada. Cuando yo veo lo del teléfono, ya está pagado mi teléfono. Es como que no me ponen otra preocupación que no sea la escuela. [The only concern I have is school. I don't worry about anything else. I never know when the electric bill arrives or when they do grocery shopping. When I notice, the refrigerator is full, the electricity is paid; when I look at the phone, my phone is already paid. It is like I don't have a worry other than school].

Her experience in her father's home was in stark contrast to her life in El Salvador. She explained:

Tenía que estar pendiente de estarle poniendo la medicina a mi abuela... pendiente de mi hermano... que hiciera sus tareas. O sea, parecía yo la mamá y no la hija, porque mi mamá estaba ya enferma. Los sábados yo ni salía porque... yo lavaba la ropa de mi mamá, de mi hermano, la mía y la de mi abuela, y no hay lavadora

sino a mano. [I had to give my grandmother her medicine...watch my brother...make sure he did his homework. I mean, I seemed like the mother and not the daughter, because my mom was sick. On Saturdays I didn't go out because...I washed my mom's, my brother's, my grandmother's, and my laundry, and by hand because there was not a washing machine].

Of the three, Diego was the only one that did not live with a parent. Although Diego lived with his uncles, and his mother was in another country, the encouragement he received from his family was evident in Diego's decision to attend school daily. He shared his relationship with his uncle. He said:

Es un gran apoyo para mí. Él aquí se hizo cargo de mí, de cualquier cosa que me pase, necesite, él me lo va a dar, porque el día que llegué con él se hizo cargo de mí. O, desde que me sacó del centro donde estuve, se hicieron cargo de mí con mi tía. Un hijo, soy un hijo para ellos. [He encourages me. He is responsible for me [in the U.S.], for anything that happens to me, for my needs, he will take care of things, because the day I came to him, he took responsibility of me. Or, since he picked me up from the detention center he and my aunt are responsible for me. A son, I'm a son for them].

Diego's account indicated his feelings of security. For Vicky and George, their parents' support involved regularly advocating for education. George took a picture of his parents helping him complete a school project. Vicky's stepmother registered her for English as a Second Language classes and her stepsister insisted she watched television and DVDs in English for quicker language acquisition. The families reminded student participants that they had opportunities in the U.S. that were not available in Central

America and urged them to take advantage of everything offered to them. The families' support and behaviors conveyed that attaining an education meant aspiring for a better life. The student participants were able to progress in their educational pursuits by knowing they were supported by their families. By providing stable homes and setting clear expectations that education was first, risk factors were limited. Academic resiliency was fostered in these caring family environments (Carlson et al., 2012; Riden, 2011).

In sum, the UAC involved in this study had positive attitudes towards school and were confident in their abilities to have academic success. A combination of internal and external protective factors increased their resiliency. Specific personal traits, such as a high internal locus of control, goal-directedness, and altruism, developed in them a resourcefulness to convert life experiences into useful skills transferrable to the school setting. Their home lives were conduits to further strengthen and develop resiliency in these students. Although student participants determined objectives for their lives in the U.S. prior to migrating, the positive environmental factors played a significant role to further motivate these students to continue reaching for opportunities to meet educational goals.

Research Question Two

Henderson and Milstein (2003) stated schools promote resiliency by fostering an environment where students develop close relationships with adults, learn how to problem-solve, and are encouraged to achieve appropriate, attainable goals. Results from this study reveal a resiliency-promoting school setting in which institutional structures and school culture and climate supported student learning. Research question two (What resources support resiliency in unaccompanied immigrant high school students in Texas?)

examined several scholastic structures that provided protective factors to UAC students at the high school in this study. The following sections assessed these academic resources in the two categories identified above: 1) institutional structures and 2) school culture and climate. The components considered for institutional structures and school culture and climate are discussed in the next sections.

Institutional Structures

As categorized by Henderson and Milstein (2003), institutional structures encompass: 1) curriculum and instruction, 2) a cohesive team of educators and administrators, and 3) post-secondary preparedness and extracurricular activities. As older students and recent immigrants to the U.S., the UAC in this study primarily accessed these institutional structures through the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program. Short (2002) detailed student eligibility was needed to enroll in the ESL program, such as entering as an older student with limited English proficiency, like Diego. Although English learning was their primary focus in the ESL program, student participants shared they were appropriately challenged by educators across content areas. In this study, the implementation of the ESL Program was found to be a positive structure benefiting UAC's education.

Curriculum and Instruction. The ESL Program played a significant role in assisting UAC students to familiarize themselves with new curriculum and instruction. The ESL classes in the core curricula were safe environments for student participants to experiment with English without fear of ridicule from native-born peers for speaking with accents. Lutz's (2007) research found that the lack of language proficiency does not negatively impact the likelihood of graduating from high school. In fact, a strong

foundation in the language of origin is vital for the acquisition of the new language, English, and an aptitude in both languages increases the likelihood for graduation (Lutz, 2007). Similar to a traditional new arrival center, the school in the study implemented “an academy setting” by placing all the ESL classes in one wing of the school (Short, 2002). The close proximity of classrooms prevented new ESL students from getting lost in the large school. Proximity also facilitated communication among educators to discuss lesson planning or concerns about students. Likewise, ESL aides had the ease of moving quickly between classrooms to provide instructional support.

Staff development through yearly Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training for ESL teachers promoted teaching practices that incorporated an assortment of instructional strategies, which they used to engage ESL students in deeper levels of learning. For example, collaborative learning was highly regarded by the teachers in this study. Students and teachers reported that UAC seemed to learn faster when they worked with peers in small groups. Some classrooms were organized with desks grouped together to facilitate cooperative learning. According to Decapua and Marshall (2011), collaborative learning embraces the collectivism culture of UAC by encouraging students to discuss how they learned in an open and tolerant environment. Research regarding collaborative and group learning is sometimes misconstrued by U.S. teachers who are unaware of cultural differences in Hispanic students, to perceive UAC as unmotivated or incapable of doing work alone (Larouche & Shriberg, 2004). Data from classroom observations and interviews with educators revealed the UAC in this study benefited from working in small groups. George shared his perspective. He said, “Uno muchas cosas no sabíamos, lo que otro [en el grupo] sabía y así nos ayudábamos el

uno al otro. [There was a lot we didn't know, but another [person in the group] would know, and that's how we helped each other].”

In addition to collaborative learning, another beneficial instructional strategy observed during this study was the pilot implementation of sheltered instruction classes. The sheltered instruction classes for math and science promoted language acquisition by teaching difficult concepts in a setting with peers that shared similar struggles with English. As a result, educators reported increased confidence and faster learning by ELL students who participated in the sheltered instruction classes, along with test scores improving from 45% passing to 75% passing in just one year. Decapua and Marshall's (2011) found that students from collectivism cultures, such as Hispanics, benefit from collaborative learning, because they are culturally accustomed to foster and sustain group relations.

The teachers and ESL aides were available to guide students with additional instruction and encouragement when they needed additional explanations to understand the content. Tutorials offered after school and on Saturdays helped develop school connections by providing a social network. Students were reminded that they were not alone. Student participations reported improved self-esteem and confidence as they realized English language proficiency and academic success benefits from their extra efforts.

A Cohesive Team of Educators. Critical to resiliency-building were the relationships among educators and administrators and the educator-student relationships. The data indicated administrators and teachers trusted each other. In her interview, the ESL assistant principal reported she selected “the right teachers, passionate” to work with

the ELL students. She explained about the ESL teachers' use of Spanish to support the ELL language acquisition: "the teachers use lots and lots of Spanish support...in the writing, all the note taking, [but] all the verbal correspondence regarding engagement about content is in English." She recognized teachers who offered extra help to students in tutorials and Saturday school when she said, "It's not mandatory, and they've worked really hard to make it an atmosphere where kids want to come, so we're hoping that we'll see a lot of growth there." She recognized she accepted input from her teachers regarding ways to improve learning for ELL students. She shared her discussion with the biology teacher about changing the structure of the ESL biology classes. She said:

[ELL students] have very different needs and he was trying to meet all of their needs, and the regular kids in his class, and it was too much and that's when we definitely said, 'Okay, no, we're going to split [ELL students from English-speaking students] and I asked him, 'Do you think it would be easier?' and he said, 'I would love if I could have all the newcomers in one class. That's easier.' And they're all in one class so we've got 20-30 newcomers, all Spanish speakers in four sections of Biology this year.

Similarly, the history teacher, Ms. Banco, shared she routinely talked to the curriculum specialist, the administrators, and counselors about ways to help the ESL students. She reported going to the ESL assistant principal about determining new ways to track the ESL students. She said, "I have a whole vision outlined for [ESL students] for next year. I am working with the counselors and assistant principal to...actually track the ESL students." She also added:

I'm very close with my Curriculum Specialist, who works with ESL kids. I have tried to maintain a very strong relationship with the counselors that work with each kid and that has meant that I have to be proactive...I know they're really busy but if I want to be a good teacher, then you have to do it.

The ESL assistant principal said positive relationships between teachers and administrators cultivated a supportive climate for students. Harvey (2007) found administrators model the positive behavior they want teachers to exhibit in interactions with students by supporting them. The algebra teacher reported about the support teachers have to engage ESL students in learning:

I think SIOP coordinators, the facilitator, she's the one that can help us, as teachers, make sure that we are getting the support that we need, especially teachers who don't know Spanish [and] can't communicate with the students as well. Just having that support, [also] we have a whole set of aides, I think it's five of them, five aides, a SIOP facilitator and we have the assistant principal in charge of ESL.

The ESL principal selected teachers who could encourage UAC with educational pursuits. In turn, teachers found new ways to help UAC to prosper by fostering open communication and increase self-confidence by helping students track their academic development.

Post-Secondary Preparedness and Extracurricular Activity. Research supports that participation in extracurricular activities reduces risk factors by encouraging socialization, bonding, and increasing support (Perez et al., 2013; Ungar, 2005). Although the school in the study had several vocational classes, clubs, and prepared

students for college through advocacy, parent learning, and college and career planning, the student participants did not fully take advantage of these classes or services. Students in the ESL program only had one free class period in which they could take an elective. George and Diego were in ninth grade at the time of the study. They had considered information regarding college. The student participants reported the ESL counselor often talked to them about the process of going to college and the importance of having a high GPA. Research indicates that participation in extracurricular activities in high school is a strong predictor for motivating students to graduate (Randolph, Fraser, & Orthner, 2004). Further research would consider how to promote information about extracurricular activities to students during the early stages of the ESL program to encourage participation. For example, shadowing students and creating a mentor program for upper classmen to help lower classmen learn about school programs would prove beneficial.

School Culture and Climate

The educational needs of UAC involve much more than academics. This vulnerable population requires nurturing environments that cultivate a sense of belonging, security and confidence. Academic success was fostered by creating an environment in the ESL program that included open communication amongst students and educators. The cultural needs of immigrant students were addressed by integrating UAC's Hispanic culture into instruction. Recognition of the Hispanic culture aided students' acculturation to U.S. culture, reducing the likelihood of risk factors, by helping students adjust to their school environments, easing acculturative stress, and reducing potential issues with identity development (Porche, et al., 2011). According to the ESL assistant principal, teachers were carefully selected that were passionate about working

with the ESL student population. Selection was meticulous because suitable teachers had to relate to the students' background. The ESL educators understood traditional U.S. instruction was not congruent with Hispanic cultural values and practices. The English teacher shared about motivating ESL students, "Something that I think is crucial for them, especially for ESL kids, is the motivation part. 'You can do this! This is something that you can do,' and I always tell them, 'look, we're all ESL students. My first language isn't English, it's Spanish.' Although she spoke about learning a new language, it was inferred in the discussion that she understood it was difficult for students to acculturate into a new culture in which the lack of language proficiency was a definite barrier. Group and social instructional practices encouraged learning aligned to practices seen in Hispanic homes, where group cohesiveness is highly valued (Larouche & Shriberg, 2004). Addressing the students' culture formulated a shared perspective on learning between educators and students; hard work was required by students to succeed academically. Through the teachers' honesty about hard work, a message was conveyed that support was available to anyone that wanted to do well. Caring relationships were formed between students and educators. Students and parents agreed that the school had a warm and helpful environment. Teachers modeled supportive interactions for students by encouraging students to help learn from each other in group activities. As a result, students remained authentic to their cultural values of collectivism and encouraged peers towards learning, as evident by data gathered from observations and the formation of the Legacy Club, a peer tutorial group founded by eleventh and twelfth grade students.

Setting High Expectations. The data provided evidence that teachers promoted resiliency by setting high and attainable expectations. The math teacher reported she

talked to students about their progress, respectfully addressing individual strengths and gaps in learning. Tutorials were mandatory for students who were struggling. Henderson and Milstein (2003) determined that setting attainable goals for students promoted resiliency by elevating their participation to meaningful learning. Student participants reported feeling supported by teachers and peers. Students understood learning was their responsibility, but they knew of a number of ways to seek help. For example, tutoring and Saturday school were activities available to UAC.

Caring Relationships and Support. Outside of the family, peers and school personnel served as social supports for UAC. The social network of peers and educators provided academic guidance when their families lacked the ability to provide it. Data from pictures and interviews revealed peers, ESL aides, and teachers provided the UAC with motivation and academic resources.

All of the student participants identified more than one person to approach for academic or emotional support. As a result, the ESL/LEP counselor, a number of the ESL aides, and several of the teachers were identified by the student participants at the beginning of the study to include for interviews. The student participants detailed examples of caring, authentic relationships they had developed with several of the educators. From student participants' accounts, it was evident that they felt educators related to them on a personal level. Research by Perez, et al. (2009) found environmental factors promoting academic resilience among UAC include developing "relationships with supportive adults and peers" (p. 174). The peers and educators motivated the student participants to navigate successfully in high school. The findings of this study regarding social networks correlated with research by Arastaman and Balci (2013), where external

protective factors that developed resiliency in students included their relationships with teachers and peers. The social network increased resiliency by managing challenges faced in school, to improve interpersonal skills, and developing skills to utilize in post secondary settings.

In sum, the environmental and socio-cultural protective factors seen in the participants' school presented UAC with many opportunities to achieve academic success. The school environment enhanced learning by including students' cultural context in lessons, utilizing a variety of instructional practices, and encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning.

Implications for Professional Practice

The analyses for research regarding personal, environmental, and socio-cultural factors were important in the development of academic resiliency for the student participants. The individual protective factors of being independent, altruistic, goal-oriented, with excellent problem-solving skills, a strong faith in God, and access to a supportive family were strengths for them. School structures available in the high school in this study provided a supportive and caring environment for students to excel academically. The following implications for professional practice are based on the findings.

Practices to best help UAC include creating a supportive culture in which students are encouraged to gain knowledge by setting goals and aspiring towards attainment of their objectives. School structures and school culture were important in improving self-esteem and confidence in student participants as they benefited from teaching practices that encouraged active learning through socialization and friendly competition.

Additional interventions, such as tutorials, were implemented for those who needed additional instruction. Student participants grew in their connection to the school through the support provided by social networks comprised of educators and peers. Informal mentoring from peers and educators encouraged students to motivate each other. The interviews revealed that student participants valued the support they received from mentors. A recommendation to implement a formal mentoring program where participation is voluntary to assist struggling students who seek assistance with social emotional support or basic needs would prove invaluable with this student population.

Professional development for teachers should go beyond instruction to include cultural sensitivity and linguistic diversity in addition to the SIOP training currently administered to the ESL teachers. Providing training to all the teachers on campus would signify a culture of instruction, despite linguistic challenges or cultural differences of students. Instruction would not only connect different learning styles, but should also emphasize the importance of including the students' experiences and perspectives in teaching and fostering relationship building, instead of a focus on students' weaknesses. Students should learn to recognize their cultural identity and that of others, as well as develop social processes to better support campus diversification. Information about risk factors and protective factors should be part of the discussion and trainings with educators and administrators. Since teachers are often the first point of contact for students, it is important for them to receive training to easily identify UAC and be aware if they lack support at home, are living in inadequate conditions, or do not have the monetary means to participate in extracurricular activities. By recognizing these limitations, educators can develop a system that supports students with difficulties that

might negatively impact academic performance.

Setting academic expectations through regular conversations and trainings to implement activities to promote resiliency-building on campus is imperative for administration and instructional staff. During campus meetings, staff can brainstorm new ways to build competency, encourage problem-solving, and inspire a sense of belonging in students. Faculty and staff can determine concrete interventions and assessments to determine measures for results. Parent involvement in these discussions is a multifaceted approach to reach the needs of students.

Supportive teachers of UAC students empathize with students' backgrounds and cultures by occasionally speaking the students' native language to improve understanding, and giving consistent instruction throughout the school year. Informing students honestly of the hard work required to match peers' mastery of English is imperative in order to support their learning. Strategies such as collaborative learning and healthy competition encourage participation and socialization in the classroom.

Sheltered instruction classrooms for core content would further promote active learning. In this study, students were able to relax and engage fully in the sheltered instruction classrooms for English, history, biology and algebra. They were able to answer questions more readily and interact with their peers during class because they understood the concepts. Peers or the teacher used Spanish to explain new, unfamiliar concepts. Students were not embarrassed to interact with peers who might ridicule their mispronunciation of words. For other schools to foster resiliency building, sheltered instruction classes in core content is imperative to stimulating acculturation and encouraging learning.

Educators can promote more socialization by involving students in community service events. These events will motivate students to make connections with peers outside their current social circle and others who are off campus. By advocating community service, the school would foster students' leadership and vocational skills, and further promote acclimation for their new communities. Community service can encourage students to pursue post-secondary education by working with neighboring colleges and businesses to sponsor career days or on-the-job shadowing of professionals. The campus can work with the district to take students to college visits and encourage participation at local college events.

Lastly, the assistant principal responsible for the ESL Program selected teachers that were "the right match" to work with UAC. ESL teachers were constantly finding new ways to motivate their students. The administrative team should give ESL teachers extra time to plan with each other to discuss teaching strategies that encompass resiliency building. By building strong relationships between administrators and teachers, teachers reciprocate the interactions to students. For example, teachers are encouraged to determine new ways to measure student progress in order to improve student learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research on the unaccompanied immigrant high school student remains limited (Lee, 2014; Perez, et al., 2009). Most studies have considered the topic of resiliency in immigrants in general, disregarding data that the majority of UAC arriving are high school-aged adolescents (Prah, 2013). Findings from this study recommend that future research examine other schools' processes for building resiliency in UAC to include larger sample groups of administrators, teachers and student participants. In addition to

examining data gathered from a wider selection of ESL programs, data collected would include interviews from administrators and educators across content areas to gain perspectives of educators' understanding of resiliency building. Research indicates six components for building resiliency in schools (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). Beneficial future research would focus on how schools could nurture internal resiliency factors in UAC, through mental health programs and mentoring. Other future studies would consider ways to incorporate extracurricular activities into the daily routines of unaccompanied immigrant high school students to further the development of their resiliency and self-efficacy.

For future research in personal resiliency, longitudinal studies of UAC high school students would follow individuals academically from secondary to post secondary. These studies would determine if protective and risk factors change as students advance in grade level, leave the ESL program, and prepare for graduation. Information collected would also include the processes taken by students to prepare for post secondary education. Similar to Hodes et al.'s (2008) research, the student participants of this study coped well with their new environments, partly due to their strong support systems. Future research would look at UAC who live in different settings such as shelters, group homes, foster care, or independently, to determine what resiliency factors they use to manage academics productively.

Limitations of Study

This case study was an in-depth analysis of the experiences of three UAC in high school to determine how resiliency helped them achieve academically. The student participants shared many similar experiences, which included: (1) they were all 16 years

old, (2) all were native to Central American countries, (3) they had migrated to the U.S. without parents or guardians, (4) they who lived with family members after they settled in the U.S., albeit their relationships with family members were strained or not close, (5) they enjoyed school and learning, (6) their families provided financial support and encouraged academic attainment, and (7) they went to the same high school and shared many of the same teachers, (8) all were the first in their families to pursue a high school diploma, and (9) they each had educators who encouraged them to follow their educational goals. In addition, two of the student participants [George and Vicky] were from El Salvador and had lived in the U.S. for approximately two years. Two of the student participants [Diego and Vicky] were the first born of their families.

There were several limitations to this study. Details gathered from the small sample of student participants were limited in scope and context. The unique experiences of the student participants and information from the school where the study took place cannot be generalized to the overall population. A lack of representation of students with other traits posed limitations, such as UAC from countries other than Central America, UAC that did not live with family members, and students that have neither supportive homes nor school environments. The families of the student participants had the financial means that did not require they work while attending school, which is not always the case for many UAC. An examination of resiliency factors in students from other geographical areas or cultures may have different results. The sample considered students that were achieving academic success, a narrow academic range that may not represent all UAC. Future research would compare the academic progress of students who have completed the ESL program and are upper classmen in high school to determine the protective

factors utilized. Regardless of limitations, this study adds to the small amount of information available regarding academic resilience of UAC at the secondary level.

Conclusion

This investigative study analyzed the influence that personal and environmental resiliency factors had on the academic achievement of three UAC from Central America attending a high school in Texas. The study was conducted using interviews, participant observations, and photo-elicitation to gather personal experiences from student participants in order to determine what led them to succeed in an academic environment, where other UAC commonly experience difficulty.

The study examined the individual attributes shared by three student participants, to determine similarities and differences, and establish how they met academic pursuits. Characteristics of the structures and the climate of their school were considered to determine if they promoted or hindered resiliency in learning. Findings determined that all three student participants struggled to attain an education in their country of origin due to life or environmental circumstances, but upon arriving to the U.S. they aspired to learn English and persevere with academic goals. Support from a well structured ESL program, educators, and family motivated them to work hard to maintain high grade point averages and receive recognition from teachers as leaders of their peers.

Although several personal resiliency traits were identified in the data for student participants, the traits that contributed most to academic resiliency were discussed. Having a high locus of control to manage difficult situations, confidence of personal competence, strong spiritual and religious beliefs, as well as receiving family support, were the most salient individual protective factors demonstrated by the student

participants. By relying strongly on their faith in God, displaying self-efficacy to overcome obstacles that arose, and being altruistic to the needs of those around them, especially family, the student participants were able to endure challenges they faced academically. They entrusted themselves in God, recognized their personal strengths, and were determined to work hard to achieve their personal and academic objectives.

Parents and families were very important to their success in school. Although their families had limited education attainment, they were the main source of motivation for student participants' to attend school, work hard, and remain persistent by doing their very best. Their support assisted to mitigate painful pasts faced by student participants, by providing emotional support and a trusting homelife. Student participants were encouraged to focus solely on their education instead of household responsibilities, resulting in increased perseverance for academic resiliency.

An integral part in the academic success of these student participants was the role the educators and the school structures had on their educational experiences. Teachers, counselors, ESL aides, and administrators, encouraged students to work hard to meet their educational goals. ESL aides and teachers patiently provided additional instruction to students during and after school and on Saturdays. Parents and students were informed of opportunities and advice for students after high school by the counselor. Administrators routinely monitored the students' progress to determine effective changes and improvements. Educators were empathetic and understanding of the UAC student participants' life experiences. Supportive interactions were modeled by utilizing instructional practices that incorporated group activities and student culture of origin, which cultivated a culture of warmth and trust to encourage student participants in

academic pursuits. The ESL Program provided instruction and English language acquisition in a small and safe environment for UAC and other ELL students, further building resiliency and confidence to learn in a new country. The information gained from this study is needed to help policy makers and school administrators develop policy and programs that effectly serve the needs of unaccompanied alien children.

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APPENDIX A STUDENT INVITATION FOR STUDY

APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN QUALITATIVE STUDY

Dear High School Student,

I am a student in the doctoral program at University of Houston – Clear Lake (UHCL). The purpose of the study is to explore the study skills and resources used by immigrants from Central America to be academically successful. You are being contacted because you were identified by an educator within your school.

Through this research, I am hoping to identify elements of school and school staff that enabled them to foster resilience in youth (make students more successful). I believe this study has the potential to positively affect educational practices to improve outcomes for students emigrating from Central American countries and transitioning to schools in the U.S.

To participate in the study, you must be

- Between 16-18 years old
- A citizen of Honduras, El Salvador, or Guatemala
- A resident in the U.S. for six years or less

If you choose to participate in this study, you will participate in a small group that will last approximately one hour. If you decide to continue in the study, you will be interviewed individually four more times. The interviews will have a conversational style and will last approximately one hour each. During the group meeting and the interviews, you will be asked to describe your experiences in school. These experiences include schoolwork, school/after-school activities, and relationships with educators. With your permission, the interviews will be recorded onto audio tapes and transcribed. Also with your permission, information from your academic records will be reviewed to determine your success in school, but the information will not be included in the study.

Your confidentiality will be respected throughout this process. Pseudonyms (fake names) for schools, districts, students, and educators will be used to minimize the risk of identification. Your responses will not be linked to your name or address.

I hope you will agree to participate in this research project. You will be compensated for your time with two theatre movie tickets. If you would like to participate, please reply to me by (date). Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Clara Peña

Doctoral Student

School of University of Houston – Clear Lake

SIGNATURES:

You are making a decision about participating in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to

participate in the study. You are free to withdraw consent for your participation in this study at any time by contacting Clara Peña. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Please allow the researcher to review my academic plan. I _____ agree _____ do not agree

Signature of Subject

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)

APPENDIX B STUDENT PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are being asked to participate in the research project described below. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the study or should you withdraw your consent and stop participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be otherwise entitled. You are being asked to read the information below carefully, and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

Title: Examining Factors Contributing to the Resiliency of Unaccompanied Immigrant Students in High School

Principal Investigator: Clara Peña, M.S.
School of University of Houston – Clear Lake

Faculty Sponsor: Felix Simieou, Ph.D. and Judith Marquez, Ph.D.
School of University of Houston – Clear Lake

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to determine what study skills and resources were used by participants to be academically successful and promote resiliency.

PROCEDURES

The research procedures are as follows: Four interviews with individual student participants will take place at least once a week during non-instructional school hours or after school. Interviews will be tape-recorded and used as part of the project. Observation of participants will occur once a week for four weeks, either during class or during other non-instructional times. Participants will photograph persons or things in their lives that promote resiliency and academic success. With your permission, information from your academic records will be reviewed to determine your scholastic success only, as the information will not be included in the study.

EXPECTED DURATION

The total anticipated time commitment will be approximately until June 3, 2016.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this project.

BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT

There is no direct benefit received from your participation in this study, but your participation will help the investigator(s) determine study skills and resources that help students to be academically successful.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

Every effort will be made to maintain your confidentiality in this study. The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes, however, participants will not be identified by name. Pseudonyms (fake names) for schools, districts, students, and educators will be used to minimize the risk of identification. For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by Clara Peña for a minimum of five years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

You will be given two movie tickets for participating in this study.

INVESTIGATOR'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPANT

The investigator has the right to withdraw you from this study at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

The investigator has offered to answer all your questions. If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Clara Peña, or you may contact the Faculty Sponsor Felix Simieou, Ph.D. and Judith Marquez, Ph.D. at University of Houston – Clear Lake.

SIGNATURES:

You are making a decision about participating in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate in the study. You are free to withdraw consent for your participation in this study at any time by contacting Clara Peña. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

The district can provide the researcher information from my academic record (example: academic plan, course grades, report cards, transcripts, and STAAR scores).

I _____ agree _____ do not agree

Print Name and Signature of Subject

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

**THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY
REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.
(FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)**

APPENDIX C PARENTAL CONSENT

APPENDIX C

PARENT INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Your child is being asked to participate in the research project described below. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to let your child participate, or you may decide to stop your child's participation at any time. Should you refuse to let your child participate in the study or withdraw your consent and stop your child's participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which your child may be otherwise entitled. Please read the information below carefully, and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to let your child participate.

Title: Examining Factors Contributing to the Resiliency of Unaccompanied Immigrant Students in High School

Principal Investigator: Clara Peña, M.S.
School of University of Houston – Clear Lake

Faculty Sponsor: Felix Simieou, Ph.D. and Judith Marquez, Ph.D.
School of University of Houston – Clear Lake

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to determine what study skills and resources were used by participants to be academically successful and promote resiliency.

PROCEDURES

The research procedures are as follows: Four interviews with individual student participants will take place at least once a week during school hours or after school. Interviews will be tape-recorded and used as part of the project. Observation of participants will occur once a week for four weeks, either during class or during other non-instructional times. Participants will photograph persons or things in their lives that promote resiliency and academic success. With parental consent, information from your child's academic records will be reviewed to determine his/her scholastic success only, as the information will not be included in the study.

EXPECTED DURATION

The total anticipated time commitment will be approximately until June 3, 2016.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this project.

BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT

There is no direct benefit received from your child's participation in this study, but participation will help the investigator(s) determine study skills and resources that help students to be academically successful.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

Every effort will be made to maintain your child's confidentiality in this study. The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes, however, participants will not be identified by name. Pseudonyms (fake names) for schools, districts, students, and educators will be used to minimize the risk of identification. For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by Clara Peña for a minimum of five years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

Your child will be given two movie tickets for participating in this study.

INVESTIGATOR'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPANT

The investigator has the right to withdraw your child from this study at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

The investigator has offered to answer all your questions. If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Clara Peña, or you may contact the Faculty Sponsors Felix Simieou, Ph.D. and Judith Marquez, Ph.D. at University of Houston – Clear Lake.

SIGNATURES:

You are making a decision about permitting your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate in the study. A signature of assent is also required by your child to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw consent for your child's participation in this study at any time by contacting Clara Peña. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

The district is permitted to provide the researcher information from your child's academic record (example: academic plan, course grades, report cards, transcripts, and STAAR scores).

I _____ agree _____ do not agree.

Print Name of Child

Print Name and Signature of Parent

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)

APPENDIX D EDUCATOR INFORMED CONSENT

APPENDIX D

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATOR

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are being asked to participate in the research project described below. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the study or should you withdraw your consent and stop participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be otherwise entitled. You are being asked to read the information below carefully, and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

Title: Examining Factors Contributing to the Resiliency of Unaccompanied Immigrant Students in High School

Principal Investigator: Clara Peña, M.S.
School of University of Houston – Clear Lake

Faculty Sponsor: Felix Simieou, Ph.D. and Judith Marquez, Ph.D.
School of University of Houston – Clear Lake

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to determine what study skills and resources were used by student participants to be academically successful and promote resiliency.

PROCEDURES

The research procedures are as follows: You will be interviewed by the investigator one-two times. Interviews will last between twenty minutes to one hour.

EXPECTED DURATION

The total anticipated time commitment will be approximately until June 3, 2016.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this project.

BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT

There is no direct benefit received from your participation in this study, but your participation will help the investigator(s) better understand study skills and resources that help students to be academically successful.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes, however, you will not be identified by name. For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by Clara Peña for a minimum of five years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

There is no financial compensation to be offered for participation in the study.

INVESTIGATOR'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPANT

The investigator has the right to withdraw you from this study at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

The investigator has offered to answer all your questions. If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Clara Peña, M.S.

If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Faculty Sponsor Judith Marquez, Ph.D. or Felix Simieou, Ph.D.

SIGNATURES:

You are making a decision about participating in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate in the study. You are free to withdraw consent for your participation in this study at any time by contacting Clara Peña. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Signature of Subject

Date

APPENDIX E INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

APPENDIX E INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions for Student Participants

FIRST INTERVIEW:

1. Describe your living situation.
2. How do you define family?
3. What opportunities are available to you here? How do you know about them?

Instructions for Picture Taking

Explain how to use the camera to student participants: Take pictures of the people and the things that have helped you get to where you are now (for example, family members, favorite places, important possession—it's up to you!).

- This camera belongs to you!
- I will pick up the camera when you are done taking the pictures. I think a week should be enough time but let me know if you need more time.
- After the photos are developed, I will bring you the photos.
- We will take some time to talk about the photos you took.
- Call me with any questions: [my phone number]

SECOND INTERVIEW:

4. Describe a difficulty you have fixed? How did you solve it? Did you have any support or did you do it on your own?
5. What value do you place on education?
6. What/who has provided support to you as you pursue these goals?

THIRD INTERVIEW:

7. Are there family members who have supported you?
8. How have they offered support? Academics? Emotional? Role model?
9. Can you talk about any adults you have strong relationships with? Why? How do they support you?
10. How did you initially connect with this person?

FOURTH INTERVIEW:

11. Are there any groups you belong to?
 - Sports team
 - Church
 - Community associations
 - School groups/clubs
12. Why did you choose this/these groups?
13. What support/benefit does it offer you?
14. What are your hopes for the future?

FIFTH INTERVIEW:

15. Do you have a religious affiliation?
16. Do you go to church now?
17. What are your thoughts about God?

SIXTH INTERVIEW:

For each photograph, the interviewer will ask the following questions:

Now, tell me a little bit about your pictures. (Ask questions below for each of the pictures that child and you selected) In this picture:

1. Who (what) are the subjects of each picture?
2. What are the subjects doing?
3. Why did you take this picture?
4. What do you like or not like about this (person, object, or event names)?
5. How has this person/object helped you be successful? Supported you?
6. What title would you give this picture?

LIKE THE MOST AND LIKE THE LEAST

After completion of above questions for all the chosen pictures:

1. Now, from these pictures that you took, would you select one picture you like the best for me? (Note the picture numbers)
2. What's in the picture? Why do you like this picture the best?
3. Then what is the one that you like the least?
4. What's in the picture? Why do you not like this picture?
5. Now we are almost done with talking about your pictures. After I talk to other students in the study, I will give you prints of all the photos you took.

Questions for Teachers/School Staff

1. How have you provided support to assist this student to be academically successful?
2. What school structures are available to help this student be successful in school?
3. What words would you use to describe the personal characteristics this student uses/possesses to be successful in school?

RÉSUMÉ

CLARA I. PEÑA, M.S.

EDUCATION

2011-Present	EdD	Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership University of Houston–Clear Lake, Houston, Texas
2005	MS	Master of Science in Counseling University of Houston–Clear Lake, Houston, Texas
1996	BA	Bachelor of Arts in Psychology Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas

CERTIFICATIONS/LICENSES

Administration

Principal Certification (Pre-K to 12th)
Instructional Leadership Development (ILD)
Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS)
Dispute Resolution Certified

Counseling

School Counselor, (EC-12 Highly Qualified Teacher)
Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor
Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor

Teacher

Secondary Spanish, (6-12 Highly Qualified Teacher)
Bilingual Generalist, (EC-4 Highly Qualified Teacher)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2015	Program Evaluator Houston Community College, Houston, Texas
2012-Present	Mental Health Therapist Gulf Coast Center MHMR
2008-2012	Academic Counselor, 9 th – 12 th Grade Goose Creek Consolidated Independent School District
2005-2010	Adjunct Instructor, Psychology Houston Community College