

# The Emotional Health Needs of Undocumented Students

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# The Undocumented Student Experience

## The Psychological Impacts of Immigration Status

- Constant fear of deportation (whether their own deportation or deportation of loved ones)
- Secrecy and trust
- Higher levels of stress due to financial barriers
- Anxiety about the future
- Unprecedentedly high occurrences of depression, anxiety, substance use/abuse, and suicidal ideation



Photo courtesy of United We DREAM

# Mental Health Practice with Undocumented Students

## Undocumented Families

- 1/10 families in the united states is considered to be a “mixed status family”
- More than 6.2 million U.S. citizens are children of undocumented immigrants
- The impact of DACA and DAPA
- “it takes a village”... to send an undocumented student to college

# Mental Health Practice with Undocumented Students

## Outside Influences to Emotional Health

- Mental Health Stigma
- Immigration enforcement inconsistent
- Community Resources
- Barriers and blockages of health and mental health access for these individuals and their families
- Intersectionalities and multiple minority stress

# Celebrating Resilience



Photo courtesy of United We DREAM

Resiliency: “the capacity to flourish despite the challenges that take place throughout the lifespan” (Bonanno, 2004)

- Familismo (a core value is the centrality of family in life)
- Family support
- Overcoming adversity
- Celebrating achievements

# Building Emotional Resilience

- Group Involvement
  - Peer Support
  - Formal Groups (self-help and support groups)
  - Activism and Civic Engagement
  - Community
- Education & Training
  - KYR, Stress Management, etc.
- Mentorship
- Empowerment

Photo courtesy of United We DREAM



# Mental Health Practice with Undocumented Students

## Best Practices

- 1) Be cognizant of the undocumented experience and how that impacts perceptions and experiences
  - Societal messages
  - Pressure
  - The impact of policy, restrictions
  - Fear and Secrecy

# Mental Health Practice with Undocumented Students

## 2) The impact of immigration status on family dynamics

- Role changes and acculturative differences

## 3) Direct Practice

- Prolonged psychological stress as a risk factor
- Be aware of secrecy & hesitance
- Importance of the story
- No such thing as competence
- Acknowledge judgmental thoughts, questions, prejudices
- Self-education of the practitioner
- Celebrate Resiliency



# MY STUDY

- Critical, Ethnographic
- 20 participants, 18 yrs.+,  
Latina/o
- In college, college grads, grad  
students
- Ongoing



# FINDINGS

\*Know me. Educate others on the topic.

\*Be proactive. Don't give in to fear.

\*Understand that my future is terribly uncertain.

\*Acknowledge that I may feel hopeless, even desperate at times.

\*Help me when I experience loss of motivation.

\*Hold me to high expectations.

\*Practice an ethic of care, allow me to reflect.

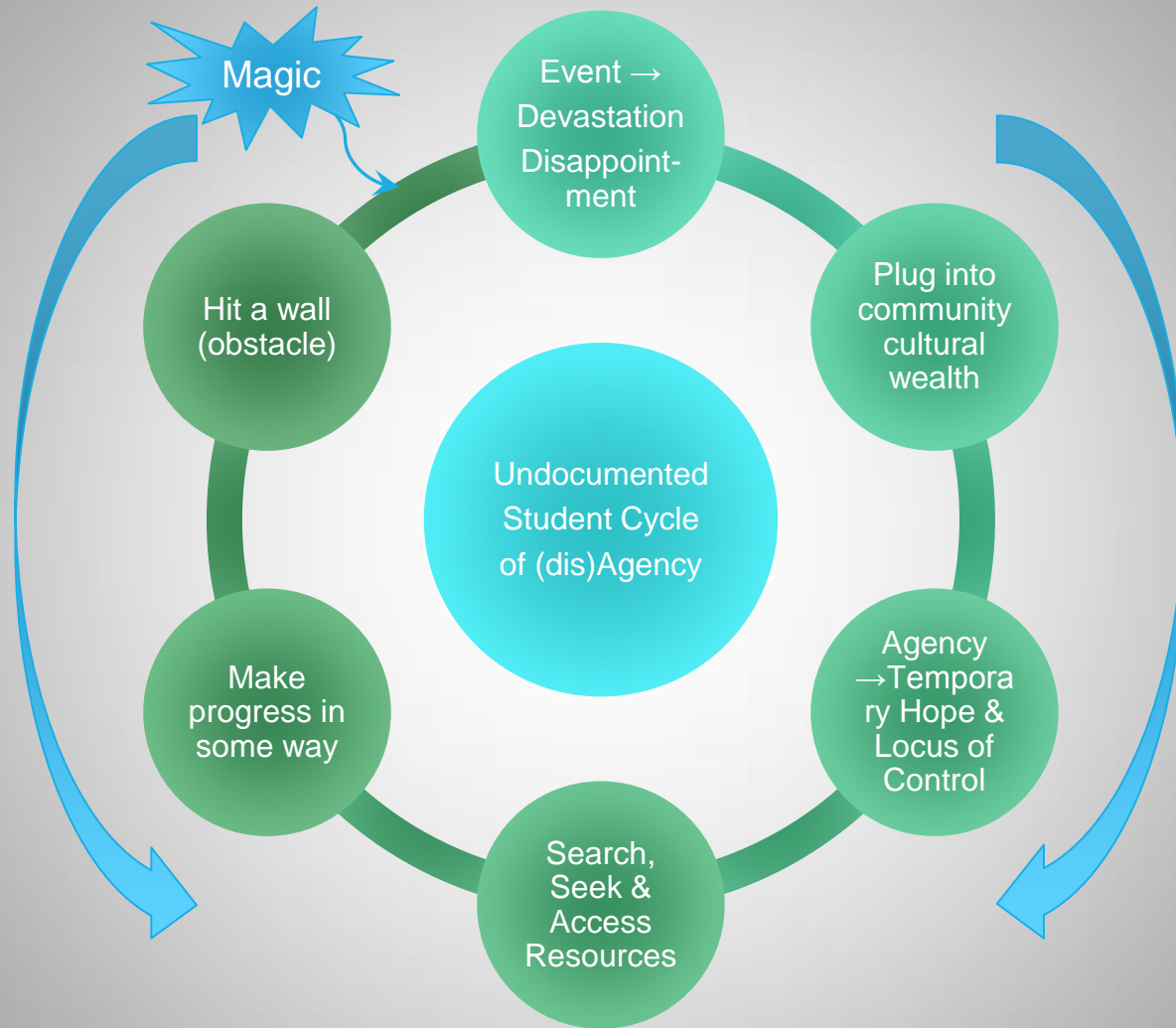
\*Rethink curricula.

# COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH



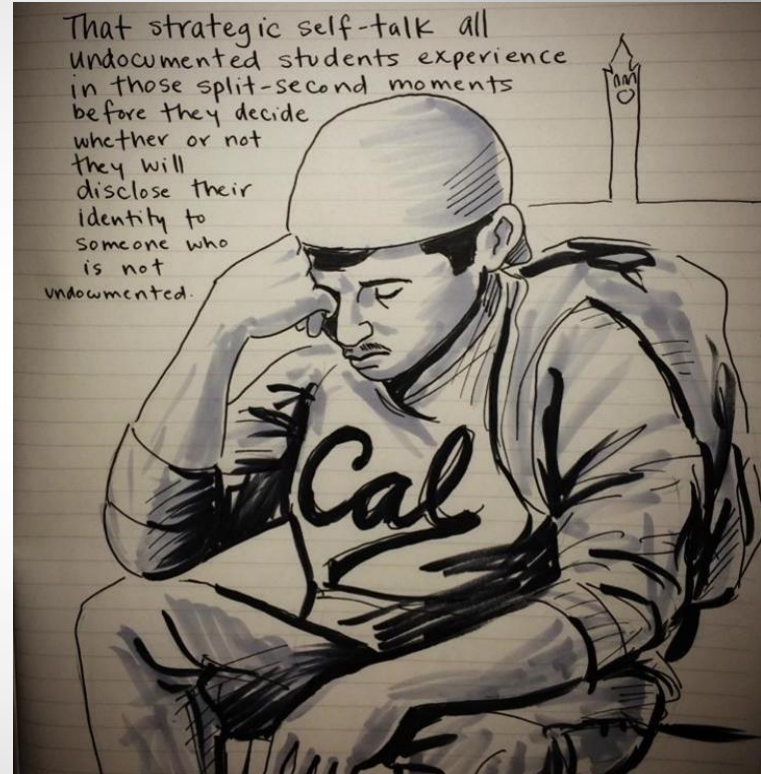
- Familial Capital
- Linguistic Capital
- Resistant Capital
- Cultural Capital
- Social Capital
- Navigational Capital
- Aspirational Capital

\*Yosso, 2005



# NEEDS

- Compassion
- Support
- Recognition
- Lightness
- Financial assistance
- Safe spaces
- Empowerment
- Opportunities
- Respect



# For Questions or More Information Contact...

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