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Undocumented Students’ Voice, MTSS, and School Counselors’ Mental Health advocacy: a Transformative Mixed Methods Study

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ABSTRACT

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS’ VOICE, MTSS, AND SCHOOL COUNSELORS’ MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY: A TRANSFORMATIVE MIXED METHODS STUDY

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Northern Illinois University, 2023
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Many young undocumented students are experiencing mental health issues in K-12 schools. Researchers have found a myriad of psychological stressors that add to the complexity of being an undocumented student in the United States. Educators have noted an increased concern in undocumented students expressing concerns of fears at school, acculturation stress, migratory stress, heightened reports of depression, increased anxiety, and a proclivity towards emotional and behavioral problems. There is limited research that reviews mental health supports in schools for undocumented students that includes the voices of school counselors and undocumented students in a transformative paradigm.

This study seeks to inform school counselors, counselor educators, school administrators, undocumented students, and their families about mental health supports that have been utilized during a national pandemic. The study predicted that the perceived school counselor's multicultural competency when working with undocumented students aligns with Multitiered Systems of Support’s development factors. It further outlines the themes of culturally sensitive MTSS practices; educator tools and advocacy; academic resiliency and intersectional identity; along with school adjustment barriers that undocumented students encounter.
UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS’ VOICE, MTSS, AND SCHOOL COUNSELORS’ MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY: A TRANSFORMATIVE MIXED METHODS STUDY

BY

OLIVER CAMACHO
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Doctoral Director:
Melissa Fickling
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DEDICATION

To the Creator, to my ancestors and grandparents, and to my parents who made the long journey from Mexico and planted the seeds of transformative action research
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The roles of school counselors are often stagnated or have failed in shifting their responsibilities in alignment with national standards leading to confusion among stakeholders regarding the role of the school counselor and their counseling priorities (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Lambie et al., 2019; Levy & Lemberger-Truelove, 2021). In a study exploring the effectiveness of school-based mental health services, Sanchez et al. (2018) found that school counselors and mental health workers provided only 2% of the evaluated mental health services in schools and many of the services were provided by untrained or undertrained teachers.

Recently, Betters-Bubon and colleagues (2021) investigated school counselor educator’s (SCE) lived experiences examining changes in the school counseling profession four themes were revealed: (a) range of reactions to changes in the field; (b) school counseling is less valued in the counseling profession; (c) inconsistent school counselor educator identity; (d) ardent advocacy. In the area of identity confusion, multiple participants reported confusion change as one participant shared, “we're kind of stuck… we're not mental health experts...and we're not educators. What are we then? We're in this weird middle ground” (p. 2). In a multilevel lens, this identity confusion has recently been noted by school counselors and school counselors educators (Betters-Bubon et al., 2021; Levy & Lemberger-Truelove, 2021).

To add clarity governing boards like the American School Counselor Association (ASCA; 2021b) and have created a list of Appropriate and Inappropriate Activities for School
Counselors, but in my recent experience as a school counselor school districts and administrators still assign the coordination of 504 plans and school counselors are assigned supervision of classrooms, substitute teaching, or supervising the playgrounds. Therefore, to avoid role confusion it is crucial to understand the role of a school counselor in a historical context.

In 1979, the Governing Board of the ASCA approved Standards for Guidance and Counseling Programs outlining the administrative structure, program resources and facilities, the program review process, and planning and evaluation guidelines for guidance and counseling programs (Gysbers, 2010). In 1997, the ASCA Governing Board adopted a new definition of school counseling:

Counseling is a process of helping people by assisting them in making decisions and changing behavior. School counselors work with all students, school staff, families, and members of the community as an integral part of the education program. School counseling programs promote school success through a focus on academic achievement, prevention and intervention activities, advocacy, and social/emotional and career development. (Campbell & Dahir, 1997)

As time has progressed, a proactive stance toward student success has helped to foster a national program. Through utilizing an interdisciplinary approach ASCA continues to develop the comprehensive school counseling program to systemically define the role of the school counselor. A comprehensive school counseling program is developmental and systematic in nature, sequential, clearly defined, and accountable; moreover, it is jointly founded upon developmental psychology, educational philosophy, and counseling methodology (Gysbers, 2010). Furthermore, ASCA and the Education Trust (Martin, 2002) have developed and continue to update and amend the ASCA National Model.

Specific guidance is given in the ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2019a), which establishes a structure for effective school
counseling programs; however, school counseling programs, credentials, school counselor roles, and educational initiatives can be different from state to state. The objectives of school counseling programs are to promote and enhance student learning through the three interrelated areas of student development which include academic, career, and personal/social development (ASCA, 2019a). Primary delivery methods in an effective school counseling program include individual counseling, group counseling, consultation, collaboration, coordination, case management, guidance curriculum, and program evaluation. Other determining themes mentioned include leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change to help students overcome barriers to learning (ASCA, 2019a). Currently, as mental health needs rise in schools there should also be an increase in mental health-based interventions focused within the School Counselor’s scope of practice (ASCA, 2015a).

Specifically, mental disorders are common among children and adolescents as one in every five students has enough symptoms and impairment to qualify for one or more childhood psychiatric illnesses (Merikangas et al., 2010). Before the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, anxiety disorders were the most often identified psychiatric disorders, followed by oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder ([ADHD], Danielson et al., 2020). Moreover, such disorders among children often go untreated, with estimates of unmet need for treatment ranging from 60% to 75% (Kase et al., 2017; Merikangas et al., 2010). Nevertheless, as an increasing body of literature stresses the importance of evidence-based practices to address mental health concerns in schools, little progress has been made toward discussing the role of school counselors in supporting mental health in K-12 schools (Mellin et al., 2010; Messina et al., 2015; Splett & Maras, 2011).
Evidence-based practices are central to understanding this study as some schools employ mental health interventions through multtiered systems of support (MTSS). MTSS is an evidence-based framework implemented in K–12 schools using data-based problem-solving to integrate academic and behavioral instruction and intervention at tiered intensities to improve the learning and social/emotional functioning of all students (Sink, 2016). Social/emotional learning (SEL) is a key component to address behavioral, social, and emotional development. School counselors are stakeholders in the development and implementation of MTSS and align their work with MTSS through the application of a comprehensive school counseling program ([CSCP], ASCA, 2020; Goodman-Scott et al., 2015, 2019; Sink, 2016). As the role of school counselors and school systems is being empirically directed to expand beyond the area of social-emotional learning during this pandemic to include more mental health interventions (Liang et al., 2022; Marraccini et al., 2022; Steen et al., 2022), I examine the mental health supports of MTSS in a transformative lens to illuminate those interventions that school counselors are currently employing to enhance mental wellness in undocumented students.

To view this study through a transformative lens, it is critical to shift the focus to an underrepresented group, this study highlights two literature gaps, the mental health of undocumented students and the school counselor’s role in addressing mental health in MTSS schools. Notably, some studies have been done addressing the mental health needs of adult undocumented immigrants (American Psychological Association, 2012; Chung et al., 2008; Smart & Smart, 1995), but little is known about how schools address mental health for this specific population. What has been written about serving undocumented students in schools is mainly conceptual (Chen et al., 2010; Morrison et al., 2016; Storlie & Jach, 2012). Furthermore, a substantial theory-practice gap exists linking the relationship between school counselors
providing mental health support to undocumented students in schools. To address these inadequacies, this study is informed by two frameworks: a theoretical framework, CSSC, and a conceptual one, MTSS.

Purpose Statement

This mixed methods study explores culturally sensitive mental health practices in the MTSS that address the needs of undocumented students. It seeks to understand how school counselors and undocumented students reciprocally experience the delivery of these mental health supports. A transformative mixed methods study is used, highlighting CSSC as my theoretical guide to animate systemic change. I illustrate a transformative mixed methods study, with an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, which includes a quantitative survey of school counselors in phase one and qualitative in-depth interviews of school counselors and undocumented students in phase two. School counselors have been invited to opt-in to be interviewed through their initial survey response. Undocumented students are interviewed to enhance students’ voices and propagate change within systems. The reason for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data is to complement the strengths of both forms of research and to enable multilevel data collection, where both the voices of school counselors and undocumented students empower the research findings.
Research Questions

Quantitative:

1. What is the relationship between school counselors' perceived multicultural competency and MTSS development among school counselors when providing mental health supports to undocumented students?

2. What other factors attenuate multicultural competency for school counselors working within MTSS and this population?

Qualitative

3. How are school counselors experiencing the delivery of mental health supports for undocumented students within MTSS?

4. How are undocumented students experiencing mental health supports from their school counselor?

Mixed methods

5. How do the follow-up qualitative results based on personal experiences illuminate the statistical results in the study?

Rationale

There is a need for empirical research focused on school counselors’ ability to serve and advocate for the mental health of undocumented students. To capture this I use a transformative mixed methods design which is based on the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a study that has a goal of social change at levels ranging from the personal to the political (Mertens, 2009; Mertens & Wilson, 2019). It is influenced by the philosophy of feminist, disability, and critical theory. Transformative mixed methods design recognizes the sociopolitical inequities that historically marginalized populations experience (Mertens, 2009, 2020). Using a transformative mixed methods research design allows me to examine the
inequities that undocumented students routinely encounter when trying to address personal mental health concerns in schools.

Mertens (2003) emphasized that researchers often include additional theoretical frameworks within transformative mixed methods studies to strengthen the theoretically based objectives of the study. It is pertinent to incorporate additional theoretical frameworks (culturally sensitive school counseling, multicultural mental health models, and the MTSS) to help conceptualize and develop this transformative mixed methods study.

I have incorporated the mixed methods integration of three core constructs — philosophical, methodological, and methods (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2017) — to increase the pragmatic utility of transformative mixed methods research, in an attempt to address cultural complexity and resilience throughout the research process (Mertens, 2007). I utilize a transformative mixed methods design in an emancipatory context. The rationale for this study is to complement the mixed methods data as well as create inclusionary community voices to define an entry point for transformative dissemination and cause for social action (Mertens, 2003).

Significance of Study

Understanding my lens and privilege as a Mexican American, cis-male is critical to enable me to learn about being culturally sensitive and culturally proficient when working with and supporting undocumented students. Key experiences in my formation as a school counselor and mental health counselor enlightened my practice, similarly, I am curious how other school counselors’ experiences help to shape the MTSS. Are there practices, beliefs, or mindsets that will help in supporting marginalized communities such as undocumented students? What
evidence-based practices are being utilized? Questions such as these drive me to understand my topic better.

Multicultural competency development is a topic addressed in many school counseling programs, but the school counselors largely lack the experiential training in social justice and advocacy needed to develop these theoretical frameworks (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Greene, 2019; Holcomb McCoy, 2005b). As a counselor grows in their training they should strive to work with undocumented students and utilize theories such as CRT (culturally responsive teaching) which helps promote the academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness of students from immigrant origins (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Moreover, little is known about how multicultural competence influences school counselors’ service, but more investigation is needed in this area (Greene, 2019; Holcomb McCoy, 2005a). This underlines the significance of understanding how culturally sensitive mental health supports are implemented in frameworks like MTSS and consequently, this study can enhance a school counselor’s ability to reach undocumented students and other marginalized populations.

As schools vary in the delivery of mental health supports all over the nation, it would be essential to understand what practices help existing frameworks such as MTSS to deliver mental health support. Moreover, ASCA (2020) outlines that

Professional school counselors are stakeholders in the development and implementation of multltiered systems of support MTSS) [and] school counselors align their work with MTSS through the implementation of a school counseling program designed to affect student development in the academic domain (achievement), the career domain (career exploration and development), and the social/emotional domain (behavior). (p. 47)

Additionally, as the current pandemic is raising the national level of concern for students’ mental health in schools (Cloutier & Marshaall, 2020; Pincus et al., 2020), there is an increased level of urgency to understand culturally sensitive mental health practices that school counselors are
employing for undocumented students, this finding will help in serving other marginalized groups.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I will be giving a historical overview of undocumented students in schools in the United States and illustrating relevant examples of mental health studies related to undocumented and immigrant populations. Moreover, I will be reviewing CSSC as a theoretical lens that is influenced by multicultural and social justice counseling to analyze power differentials in complex school systems. Additionally, I will provide an overview of the conceptual framework I have incorporated in this study, an evidence-based mental health practice MTSS.

Overview of the Undocumented Population

There are a variety of families with undocumented status; that is, foreign persons who entered the United States with fraudulent or no documents or who entered legally as nonimmigrants but violated the terms of their visa status and remained in the United States without authorization (Budiman et al., 2020). School counselors should know that not all children and immigrant families are in the US legally, as there are approximately 2.9 million undocumented immigrant children in the United States (Bolter et al., 2021). Furthermore, in 2017 an estimated 10.5 million undocumented immigrants lived in the US, although these numbers have declined since their peak in 2007 (Budiman et al., 2020).

In a demographic overview as one looks at what countries the undocumented come from the main regions are Mexico, Central America (Northern Triangle), Asia, and South America,
Mexico being where the highest number migrate from, and South America the lowest (Passel & D’vera Cohn, 2019). Additionally, in the United States, undocumented immigrants migrate to Los Angeles County, CA; Harris County, TX; and Cook County, IL which are the most populated areas with undocumented immigrants (Gelatt & Zong, 2018). This demographic information is very relative to our study as I hope to recruit from areas where undocumented students are densely located.

Moreover, undocumented immigrants in the United States can receive free public education through high school. Undocumented children’s access to PK–12 public education is constitutionally protected by the 1982 Plyler v. Doe Supreme Court decision (Olivas, 2012). Nonetheless, they may experience obstacles in obtaining higher education, for reasons such as not being applicable for financial aid (FASFA) at the federal level (Diaz-Strong, 2021). These marginalizing provisions were enacted in 1996 and prevented states from granting undocumented students certain postsecondary educational benefits based on state residence (Bruno, 2011).

**Undocumented Students’ Mental Health**

There are innumerable barriers that undocumented students face which may result in issues of depression, anxiety, fear, depression, and marginalization (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Ee & Gándara, 2020; Pérez et al., 2010; Torres-Olave et al., 2021). Undocumented students experience acute psychological distress as a result of their ‘triple minority status’: ethnic origin, lack of documentation, and economic disadvantages (Pérez et al., 2010). Likewise, undocumented students and their families have limitations with a lack of access to the current mental health care system and have additional barriers, such as being low-income (Su et al.,
2014; Wallace et al., 2013). Specifically, less than 50% of undocumented immigrants have any kind of health insurance and more than 57% of undocumented immigrants live below the Federal poverty line (Wallace et al., 2013). Although some state programs may allow undocumented children and the elderly to obtain health care (Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, 2022), there is an increasing need for specialized services for undocumented people.

Specifically, a study surveyed over 3,600 educators from 24 districts and two educator networks in more than 760 schools in 13 states across the nation found that almost 85% of educators reported observing students’ overt expressions of fear of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) intervention in their lives. This study further illustrated that 75% of educators reported an increase in behavioral and/or emotional problems being reported by immigrant students (Ee & Gándara, 2020). The school system is the most pivotal institution in the lives of undocumented immigrant children, where students’ experiences can either mimic the negative social inequalities faced outside of school or balance the inequities (Bruno, 2011; Morrison & Bryan, 2014). For these reasons, it is pressing to enhance the cultural responsiveness of school counselors, they must continually examine their role in promoting mental health services for undocumented students and understanding the scope of serving this population.

Before 2016, undocumented students were on the periphery of student service models, there was a lack of school counseling literature addressing undocumented students, and now they have become a population of increased attention and national concern. In 2018, the ASCA released a statement condemning the separation of children from their families at the United States borders. The role of the school counselor in serving undocumented students is further outlined by ASCA’s position statement that reemphasized the notion that school counselors seek
to provide a safe environment for all individuals regardless of citizenship status, including undocumented students and their families (ASCA, 2019b),

Although research has been done addressing the mental health needs of undocumented immigrants (American Psychological Association, 2012; Chung et al., 2008; Smart & Smart, 1995), little is known about how schools address the mental health needs of this specific population. Only a few scholars have accentuated psychological interventions for undocumented students in schools from a conceptual stance, Aganza and colleagues (2019) introduced a developmental framework and provided interventions for students of undocumented families in a tiered system of support. DeLuca-Acconi & colleagues (2022) emphasize an anti-oppressive ecological framework within a multitiered system of support when supporting undocumented students through a pandemic and provide recommendations for mental health professionals in schools.

What has been written about serving undocumented students and their relationship with school counselors addresses several themes such as group counseling in schools, career counseling, and the holistic school counseling role. Recently, a qualitative study by Bernal-Arevalo et al. (2021) used a phenomenological approach, where data was gathered from school counselors (N=14) across 10 school districts. The findings revealed Latino/a undocumented students are faced with a multitude of challenges in the themes of socio-emotional barriers, academically, and in the career realm as they prepare to transition from high school to college.

Poignantly, school counselors must be prepared to address the barriers undocumented students go through by being aware of their experiences and the factors that hinder their education aspirations (ASCA, 2018; Chen et al., 2010; Murillo, 2017). To expand on the literature available to assist undocumented students through mental health supports, this study
seeks to explore culturally competent practices school counselors may use. Additionally, it will seek to operationalize culturally sensitive theories through empirical research to strengthen and create a better understanding of the access to mental health support for undocumented students.

Theoretical Framework

A key aspect of this study is that it utilizes a transformative mixed methods design (Mertens, 2010). Therein, it is salient to adopt a lens that is critical of any systems that are already in place. Transformative research approaches activate and amplify the voices and experiences of marginalized identity groups to advance the social justice (Mertens, 2010). Often, they employ critical, feminist, queer, and disability theory to do a power differential analysis of institutionalized power dynamics, and social environments to recognize unequal conditions that need to be transformed. In this study, the term theoretical framework is defined as a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory, that is constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships (Eisenhart, 1991). Mertens (2009) acknowledged that the theoretical framework “has implications for every decision made in the research process” (p. 7). Thus, the theoretical framework consists of the “selected theory (or theories) that undergirds your thinking with regards to how you understand and plan to research your topic, as well as the concepts and definitions from that theory that are relevant to your topic” (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 13).

Culturally Sensitive School Counseling

Threading theoretical frameworks is what makes them resilient, Anzaldúa (1990) describes this phenomenon as mestizaje, or trying to formulate theories that are outside and
partially inside the Western frame, which overlap into many worlds. As Anzaldúa (1990) asserts, “In our mestizaje theories we create new categories for those of us left out of or pushed out of existing ones” (p. 26). It is a process that taps into the epistemologies of resistance and anti-oppressive frameworks that are needed to be transformed into a vehicle of healing for undocumented students in schools.

Respectively, I have chosen to utilize CSSC as a theoretical framework, which weaves various principles including social justice and multicultural counseling, culturally sustaining practices, culturally responsive school counseling, etc. Outlining these practices aligns with the transformative paradigm as a framework for researchers which places a priority on social justice and the furtherance of human rights (Mertens, 2007, 2010). As these theories are reemerging in the school counseling field, I wish to introduce CSSC theories as they emphasize the mental health practices and educational approaches that school counselors may employ when working with undocumented students in a systems approach within MTSS. For this study, CSSC will be focused on and examine mental health supports for undocumented students and is composed of seven major strands: (a) multicultural education; (b) multicultural and social justice-focused counseling; (c) culturally responsive pedagogy (d) culturally responsive strength-based counseling; (e) culturally sustaining advocacy; (f) critical practice in an UndocuCrit lens and (g) antiracism within an MTSS framework. As these theories are introduced, I illustrate their foundations in education and weave interrelated mental health theories to analyze power structures and enhance the critical theories that support my study.

Since 1988, the American School Counselor Association has held a position statement that “school counselors be more globally responsive and culturally competent in the current educational and social environment” (ASCA, 2020, p. 24). By outlining that “School counselors
demonstrate cultural responsiveness by collaborating with stakeholders to create a school and community climate that embraces cultural diversity and helps to promote the academic, career, and social/emotional success for all students” (ASCA, 2015b, p. 1). In an ethical stance ASCA (2016) highlights that school counselors should, “[m]onitor and expand personal multicultural and social-justice advocacy awareness, knowledge and skills to be an effective culturally competent school counselor” (p. 7). As I explore CSSC from a mental health perspective, my goal is also to expand on its foundations as it is seen in educational settings, throughout this literature exploration I will be weaving between education and mental health theories that are at the center of CSSC’s transformative healing practices.

**Multicultural Education**

To understand the constructs of CSSC we must take a closer look at the education inequities in the United States and understand the achievement gap that was created. Prominently, James A. Banks is considered the father of multicultural education in the U.S. and known throughout the world as one of the field’s most pivotal founders, theorists, and researchers. Banks (2006) elaborates it began as desegregation in the early colonial and early national periods, education became segregated during the early 1800s, saw a push for desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s, and is now predominantly segregated once again (Banks, 2006). When trauma occurs in these segregated communities the ambiance is often tense (Adkins-Jackson & Weuve, 2021; Gherardi et al., 2020), and when episodes of student violence occur, White children are told to avoid schools because of their White parents’ bias against people of color (Kozol, 2012). Likewise, this has led to the underfunding of schools for students of color and led to a persistent achievement gap for culturally and linguistically diverse students.
Moreover, segregation grants advantaged groups the chance to hoard educational opportunities and instructional capital for school resources (Hanselman & Fiel, 2016). As Ladson-Billings (2006) points out the achievement gap is one of the most talked-about issues in U.S. education and the term refers to the disparities in standardized test scores between Black and White, Latina/o and White, and recent immigrants and White students. To aggrandize the complexity of the achievement gap, a decrease in the mental health of students has been noted to lower academic achievement and substantiate an increase in the achievement gap, especially among marginalized populations (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Sznitman et al., 2011). It should be emphasized that the shortcoming is not in the student’s ability to achieve, but it is the gap in opportunities presented to the student that creates a quandary for achievement. For that reason, it is exigent to understand models that address mental health and academic achievement from a multicultural perspective especially as it pertains to school counseling.

**Multicultural Counseling and Social Justice**

As multicultural education was shaped by Banks (2006), in the realm of mental health counseling several noteworthy authors have influenced multicultural counseling as it has been extensively examined for some time (Ponterotto et al., 2001; Sue & Sue, 2016). The multicultural counseling theories outlined by Derald Wing Sue and David Sue (2016) are extensively cited and their textbooks are widely used in counseling programs as a standard for education. Overall, Sue and Sue (2016) incorporate four relevant themes into their model: the influence of social justice and its relationship to counseling, developing culturally competent counseling skills, racial & cultural identity development, and cultural self-awareness and reflective growth. These four elements compose what is referred to as “multicultural
competency.” Some studies have assessed the multicultural competency of school counselors and demonstrated their competency on a national level (Greene, 2019; Holcomb McCoy, 2005a; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). Equally relevant in building multicultural competence is an ever-growing body of literature that explores the importance of social justice for school counselors that work with special populations, such as undocumented students. (Chen et al., 2010; Ratts & Greenleaf, 2017; Storlie & Jach, 2012; Talleyrand & Vojtech, 2018). To contextualize this in the area of mental health and counseling as the diverse scope of services, the American Counseling Association (2014) defines social justice as “the promotion of equity for all people and groups for the purpose of ending oppression and injustice affecting clients, students, counselors, families, communities, schools, workplaces, governments, and other social and institutional systems.” This concept is further outlined in the development of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC), which highlights exploring dimensions of counselor action to societal injustice related to clients’ world (Ratts et al., 2016). The MSJCC also include six ecological layers of counseling advocacy which include intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, public policy, and international/global, where [school] counselors can use their efforts to reduce systemic inequities within schools (Ratts et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2020). All of these terms share similar inclusionary actions and ideas that are pivotal to working with undocumented students, as is the case within a small body of literature on cultural responsiveness in school counseling (Foxx et al., 2020; Lee, 2001).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

In education, a culturally responsive framework is defined by (Ladson-Billings, 2006) as teaching “to and through [students’] personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual
capabilities, and their prior accomplishments” (p. 26). Culturally responsive pedagogy is understood as “close interactions among ethnic identity, cultural background, and student achievement” (Gay, 2010, p. 27). Gay (2010) notes further that, “students of color come to school having already mastered many cultural skills and ways of knowing. To the extent that teaching builds on these capabilities, academic success will result” (p. 213). Specifically, cultural responsiveness is identified by Ladson-Billings (1994), who identified three fundamental pillars: to ensure that students were engaged in academically rigorous learning, students were fully affirmed in their identities, and students were equipped to dismantle systemic and structural inequalities, all to transform society for the better. Ladson- Billings (1994) introduced culturally responsive teaching which can be a tool for all school counselors and educators. As culturally relevant theory has evolved throughout the years, the continuum of practices has been created by key scholars and they include culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994), culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000), culturally responsiveness (Hollie, 2012), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012). Only a few articles discuss the theoretical importance of culturally responsive for school counselors, as seen in the works of Foxx et al., (2020), Lee (2001), and Mayes & Byrd (2022), they highlight the role of the school counselor as a student advocate that helps facilitate and breakdown barriers through consciousness-raising, empowerment, and systemic change.

To conclude this section, other fundamental terms that have looked to strengthen asset pedagogies for students of color include and are not limited to culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994), culturally responsive practices (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2006), culturally congruent pedagogy (Au & Kawakami, 1994), culturally compatible pedagogies (Jacob & Jordan, 1987), engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994) and critical care praxis (Rolón-Dow, 2005).
Thus far the literature emphasizes all these as culturally relevant pedagogies which is an encompassing term in the realm of teacher education and research.

**Culturally Responsive Strengths-Based Counseling**

In clinical mental health counseling, culturally responsive may be defined as therapy that understands the interaction of a client’s presenting problem and the counselor’s awareness of the significance of both their and the client’s cultural stories, has specific knowledge of the client’s culture, and uses culturally appropriate clinical skills in working with the client (Jones-Smith, 2019). Culturally responsive therapy can be conducted in a variety of theoretical approaches such as rational emotive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, or cognitive-behavioral approaches (Jones-Smith, 2019). A similar theme of cultural responsiveness occurs in education, as teachers focus on students’ personal and cultural strengths and prior accomplishments (Ladson-Billings, 2006), in parallel it is found in the counseling literature and is called culturally responsive strength-based therapy.

Culturally responsive strengths-based therapy (CR-SBT) uses a human strengths framework to create change for the client. It posits that a person’s strengths provide a positive source of motivation to deal with their life issues and a central theme that is present in creating a strengths-building environment for clients (Jones-Smith, 2019). Focusing on a client’s strengths as opposed to deficits is proven to increase resilience, improve human functioning, undo negative emotions, and prevent mental illness (Harbin et al., 2014; Scales et al., 2000; Lenzenweger, 2004; Seligman et al., 1999; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Culturally responsive strengths-based therapy is based on the premise that we focus on emphasizing a person’s strengths provides a positive source of motivation (Jones-Smith, 2019), but to
understand these strengths when working with undocumented students we must dive deep into the characteristic strength of immigrants.

By prioritizing a cultural group’s understanding of the nature of being (ontology), values (axiology), and knowledge (epistemology), we come to appreciate their worldview. Many immigrants come from collectivist cultures (Jones-Smith, 2019). In the collectivist worldview communalism, interconnectedness, spirituality, and interrelationships are key values (Diop, 1955/1974). A central reflection of this collectivism is seen in the increased value placed on family systems. Immigrants and undocumented students have individually built a strong level of cohesion within their families, the term “familismo” is a major theme found when working with undocumented immigrants of Latino descent, used to describe an individual with strong family bonds (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Jones-Smith, 2019).

Another key construct that enhances one’s adaptability is acculturation, a process where the migrant’s culture interacts with the majority culture of the new homeland, and in a reciprocal process produces changes in the broader cultural group, enhancing the ability of people of the dominant American culture to better appreciate and understand aspects of the immigrant’s culture (American Psychological Association, 2012). As immigrants lose their culture and go through the grief of losing their homeland, language, and family connection they integrate developing a sense of belonging in a new land (Jones-Smith, 2019). As one grows with a greater sense of belonging, immigrants develop many talents through being resilient.

As Luthar and colleagues (2000) share resilience is the maintenance of positive adaptation and development in the face of significant adverse experiences. Resilience helps provide strength and move forward after or when experiencing a great struggle (Howe et al., 2012; Kaminsky et al., 2007; Luthar, 2006; Prilleltensky, 2005). Specifically, when speaking
about undocumented immigrants, a qualitative phenomenological analysis of undocumented immigrant women in Chicago revealed meaningful findings in the area of resilience (Solis-Cortes, 2018). Resilience was of central importance in developing their strengths. The participants used both external and internal processes in developing resilience and coping strategies. External processes included family, social support, and community participation and the internal processes included coping strategies and belief systems/faith to move past difficulties as new immigrants (Solis-Cortes, 2018). These findings align with what Diop (1974) describes as strengths in collectivist cultures and highlights the importance of communalism, interconnectedness, spirituality, and interrelationships as key values. Furthermore, CR-SBT focuses on clients’ resilience, their strengths, and their ability to go forward into a country (Jones-Smith, 2019) and can be used when helping undocumented students navigate a school system.

**Culturally Sustaining Advocacy**

To further understand these theories a term that is reemerging in the school counseling literature and tied to the culturally responsive strength’s base approach is the practice of culturally sustaining school counseling. T. J. P. Grothaus et al. (2020) explain that “culturally sustaining invites us to change our view and action regarding culture by engaging the whole community and embracing and enriching existing strengths rather than addressing what culturally is considered cultural deficits associated with minorities cultures” (p. 11) and marginalized populations such as undocumented students.

Furthermore, culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive transformation and expands to focus on
sustaining pluralism through education to challenges of social justice and change in ways that previous iterations of asset pedagogies did not (Paris & Alim, 2017). As culturally sustaining pedagogies emphasize social justice (Hollie & Allen, 2018), it responds to the way schools continue to function as part of the colonial project as it seeks to disrupt the pervasive anti-Black, anti-Brown, anti-indigenous, and anti-Islamophobic sentiments in Eurocentric schooling models (Paris & Alim, 2017). Social justice adopts a critical lens of predominately White systems and reaches to build equity. Furthermore, to understand that our lens is strength-based, “We start with the knowledge that our languages, literacies, histories, and cultural ways of being as people and communities of color are not pathological” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2). Furthermore, culturally sustaining practices work with students to develop critical consciousness and as students practice critical reflexivity through a critique of regressive practices such as homophobia and misogyny (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Consequently, T. J. P. Grothaus et al. (2020) share that culturally sustaining school counseling programs should incorporate a program advisory council that includes diverse perspectives and demonstrates representation reflecting the school’s cultural census. A program advisory council can include parents, community members, administrators, and school counselors to help shape the school counseling departmental goals and initiatives. Advisory councils can support the school counseling program in the development of goals, culturally relevant curriculum, pedagogy, and strategic planning, as well as community bridging, awareness, and advocacy.

In summary, outlining culturally sustaining practices highlights how for many years educational institutions have taught that dominant American English and other White middle-class normed practices are alone the key to power. Alim & Smitherman (2012) expand on this
through the concept of “linguistic supremacy”, for the undocumented immigrant their native language may enhance their silence, and it accentuates that youth of color suffer from, “a language gap” (Avineri et al., 2015). “English-only laws must be seen as part and parcel of the political project of whiteness” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 7). Therefore, in culturally sustaining practices developing native cultures, practices, languages, works of literature, and histories are pivotal in developing a critical framework against White linguistic supremacy (Baker-Bell et al., 2017; Paris & Alim, 2017).

**Critical Practice in an UndocuCrit Lens**

The development of critical consciousness is central to the development of culturally sensitive and responsive practices (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Mayes & Byrd, 2022; Paris & Alim, 2017). As T. J. P Grothaus et al. (2020) share, critical consciousness is “The capacity of individuals to consciously reevaluate and reinterpret their relationships with their culture, their socio-political world, and their historical age…[also it] includes the ability to take steps to diminish the oppressive elements in society” (p. 58). These practices can be interwoven and made complementary as critical consciousness is also seen in the area of mental health.

Prominently, in the realm of mental health psychology and parallel to the work of critical theory Freire (1971, 2013) highlights critical consciousness. A colleague of Freire, Martín-Baró, who was born between 1942 and 1989, was a Spanish-born Jesuit priest and social psychologist who dedicated his work to addressing the needs of oppressed groups in Latin America and is noted as one of the founders of liberation psychology. Martín-Baró (1994) referred to the transformative recognition of this intrinsic interconnection between the individual and the sociopolitical as concientización or conscious raising. This “awakening of critical
consciousness,” further, “joins the psychological dimension of personal consciousness with its social and political dimension” (p. 18). In liberation psychology theory four key tenets of Field Martín-Baró (1994) can help school counselors implement CSSC for undocumented students and they include (a) realismo-crítico, (b) recovering historical memory, (c) concientización, and (d) deideologized reality.

When striving to understand the undocumented persons’ worldview, it is important to validate and honor the experiences and identities of our undocumented communities. To awaken one sociopolitical and individual critical consciousness one must further examine and understand it through an undocumented person’s lens. Undocumented Critical Theory or UndocuCrit (Aguilar, 2019) is an attempt to understand undocumented scholars in academic endeavors to uplift our communities. Aguilar (2019) highlights four tenets: fear is endemic among immigrant communities, different experiences of liminality and documentation status translate into different experiences of reality, parental sacrifices become a form of capital, and acompañamiento (to accompany, empathize, and empower) is the embodiment of mentorship, academic redemption, and community engagement. Tenets like these are central to acknowledging the strengths and understanding power differentials while formalizing this research study.

Likewise, these concepts can be expanded in group counseling circles with undocumented students using liberation counseling (Ivey, 1995) which focuses on cultural identity formation and reviews the cultural group orientation model. As acculturation is a prominent issue for many undocumented immigrants (Yakushko & Chronister, 2005), its understanding can be integrated with theory to create healthy acculturation pathways for immigrants (Park-Taylor et al., 2007). One such theory is found within liberation counseling and is the cultural group orientation model (Ivey, 1995) which includes working through stages of
naivete and acceptance, naming and resistance, redefinition and reflection, and multiperspective integration. Using liberation counseling (LC) helps promotes cultural identity formation (Ivey, 1995) and strengthens cultural identity by providing a social-historical point of reflection to alleviate oppression and its effects (T. Grothaus et al., 2020).

**Antiracism within a Multitiered Systems of Support Framework**

The principles of CSSC practices can be expanded beyond developing critical consciousness in educational settings (Freire, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Mayes & Byrd, 2022; Singh et al., 2020). As an extension of these intertwined mental health and educational theories, one may include antiracist school counseling practices within an MTSS framework. Betters-Bubon et al. (2022) expand on the antiracist development of MTSS by providing a systemic lens that emphasizes: introspection of self; interrogation of the school, its district, community, and the environment; action; and evaluation. More expansion of culturally sensitive practices is being highlighted by scholars in the field (Betters-Bubon et al., 2019; Fallon et al., 2021) emphasizing the need for an emancipatory paradigm in this transformative mixed methods study.

To conclude this section, CSSC focuses on strengthening mental health support for undocumented students and is composed of seven major strands: (a) multicultural education; (b) multicultural and social justice-focused counseling; (c) culturally responsive pedagogy (d) culturally responsive strength-based counseling; (e) culturally sustaining advocacy; (f) critical practice in an UndocuCrit lens and (g) antiracism within an MTSS framework. As culturally sensitive practices have increased in importance, the Illinois State Board of Education (2021) has implemented *Culturally Responsive Teaching And Leading Standards for all Illinois Educators,*
and other states are introducing similar culturally relevant pedagogies in schools such as critical race theory which has officially expanded into school learning standards or law for the states of Idaho, Iowa, Oklahoma, Texas and Tennessee (Breen, 2021). With all of this in consideration, CSSC informs my transformative mixed methods research and establishes the underpinning of my conceptual framework of MTSS which is also a critical component of this study.

**Conceptual Framework**

A theory is understood to be a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory, that is constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships (Eisenhart, 1991). Then a conceptual framework can be expressed either graphically or in the narrative form of the presumed relationships among the main components or key constructs, variables, or factors in your study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Moreover, a conceptual framework is not simply a string of concepts, but a way to identify and construct the epistemological approach to the study and it offers a logical structure of connected concepts that help provide a picture or visual display of how ideas in a study relate to one another within the theoretical framework (Luse et al., 2012). Providing a conceptual framework, allows us to have a better understanding to specify and define the concepts around the problem that is faced by addressing undocumented students’ mental health.

Therein, I wish to provide an overview of MTSS, a framework that is critical in establishing mental health support in a comprehensive school counseling program. As previously mentioned, MTTS is an evidence-based framework implemented in K–12 schools using data-based problem-solving to integrate academic and behavioral instruction and intervention at tiered intensities to improve the learning and social/emotional functioning of all students (Sink, 2016).
The application of MTSS aligns with the role of school counseling at any grade level and can be used in the academic, college/career, and social-emotional domains (Goodman-Scott et al., 2015, 2019; Messina et al., 2015). Two of the most known versions of MTSS are Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Goodman-Scott et al., 2015, 2019), and although MTSS conceptual frameworks may differ in their emphasis such as academic (RTI) or behavioral (PBIS) they share similar features.

In the area of mental health services in K-12 school systems, growing attention has been given to providing services and intervention through tiered supports. Vaillancourt et al. (2016) explain that by structuring a tiered system of mental health supports, the school counselor can provide multiple layers of preventative and intervening services. A tiered system has three levels, where school counselors and stakeholders should ensure that evidence-based and empirically supported practices are used at each level to guarantee the most effective methods are being used. In MTSS, students are screened for behavioral and academic challenges, progress monitoring occurs and data-driven decisions are made to help students succeed (Fabiano & Evans, 2019; Goodman-Scott et al., 2020). Additionally, students can be screened through systematic universal screening (US) for school counselors to identify social, emotional, and behavioral student concerns (Peg et al., 2015). When addressing mental health challenges, tier one is a universal tier and provides support and interventions for all students, tier two is targeted to those who are at risk of mental health concerns, and tier three students with identified mental health concerns are provided interventions for their condition (Fabiano & Evans, 2019). All school staff is directly or indirectly involved in the application of MTSS, specifically, an MTSS facilitator or coach often takes a leadership role in coordinating the school teams and sustaining effective support are maintained across school teams (Sugai & Horner, 2006). For example,
notable elements include school-wide procedures and social skill lessons, and reinforcement in tier-one (Sugai & Horner, 2006). At tier three and/or two a team-based problem-solving process (e.g., problem-solving teams) to analyze student data, develop goals, and progress monitor the implementation of interventions. Tier three may also include mental health consultation with a crisis mental health worker (SASS) if a child is suicidal or self-harms, in compliance with state school board regulations.

MTSS implementation improves students social-emotional, behavioral, and academic well-being; it enhances academic performance and cognitive skill acquisition (Curtis et al., 2010; Goodman-Scott et al., 2019; Simonsen et al., 2011). When looking at schools that implemented MTSS vs those that did not, MTSS has been shown to lower office disciplinary referrals, suspension rates, and dropout rates (Marin & Filce, 2013). The benefits of MTSS have been demonstrated in a range of K-12 settings and have been demonstrated in rural, suburban, and urban settings (Farkas et al., 2012; McCrary et al., 2012; McIntosh et al., 2012). Nationwide, there has been an increased interest and growth in MTTS models. As of 2016, 45 states implemented Response to Intervention (Patrikakou et al., 2016), and nearly 26,000 schools nationwide implemented Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Overall, MTSS is implemented in every state and nearly 30% of schools across the United States utilize this framework (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020). Furthermore, the growing demand in the area of mental health leads to an increased interest in MTSS and its interconnectedness to mental health frameworks (Barret et al., 2017). This study seeks to understand the roles school counselors have in providing mental health support in turbulent times and explore how they are extended to undocumented students.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore culturally sensitive mental health practices in the MTSS and to understand how school counselors and undocumented students reciprocally experience the delivery of these mental health supports. To dynamically examine MTSS, I selected to use an explanatory sequential mixed methods design in this transformative mixed methods study. Transformative mixed methods designs are based on the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a study that has a goal of social change at levels ranging from the personal to the political (Mertens, 2009; Mertens & Wilson, 2019). Additionally, in this study, multilevel analysis is also introduced where quantitative data are collected at one level of an organization (school counselor level), and qualitative data are collected at another level (student level; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Multilevel analysis and transformative paradigm are used when trying to understand a complex social system as often seen in educational settings.

Furthermore, to understand this methodology it is important to understand the transformative paradigm’s epistemological assumptions that have shaped this transformative mixed methods study. Mertens (2007) highlights four basic beliefs of the transformative paradigm:

1) Ontology acknowledges there are multiple realities that are socially constructed, but different realities can emerge because different levels of unearned privilege are associated with the characteristics of participants and researchers. Transformative researchers need to be aware
of societal values and privileges in determining the reality that holds potential for social transformation and increased social justice. 2) Epistemology, highlights to know realities, it is necessary to have an interactive link between the researcher and the participants in a study. Knowledge is socially and historically located within a complex cultural context. Respect for culture and awareness of power relations is critical. 3) Methodology for the researcher their methods should be adjusted to accommodate cultural complexity, power issues should be explicitly addressed, and issues of discrimination and oppression should be recognized. 4) Axiology, highlights three basic principles that underlie regulatory ethics in research: respect, beneficence, and justice. The transformative axiological assumption outlines that respect is critically examined in terms of the cultural norms of interaction within a community and across communities. Beneficence is defined in terms of the promotion of human rights and an increase in social justice. An explicit connection is made between the process and outcomes of research and the furtherance of a social justice agenda (Mertens, 2007, 2020).

These epistemological assumptions lead to a model of research that emphasizes partnerships between researchers and community members, including the recognition of power differences and building trust through the use of culturally competent practices incorporated in the design of this study. The present transformative mixed methods study uses an explanatory sequential mixed methods design that has two distinct phases, as data from the first phase is used to build the second phase of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The study is carried out in two phases with quantitative and qualitative data collected sequentially.

This transformative mixed methods study follows an explanatory sequential mixed methods design and is weighted as QUAN → qual (quantitative design dominant), where
quantitative data is collected first and is more heavily weighted than the qualitative data. Explanatory sequential designs are usually weighted QUAN → qual quantitative design dominant (Abeza et al., 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Mills & Gay, 2019). Additionally, this study follows the steps outlined for explanatory sequential design procedures in this transformative mixed methods study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Step one is the quantitative stage, step two is using mixed methods strategies to connect the quantitative results, step three is the qualitative study, and step four includes an interpretation and explanation of the quantitative results which help to explain the qualitative results. These steps will be detailed respectively in the sections that follow.

Quantitative Investigation

Participants

ASCA has a network of 50 state and territory associations and a membership of nearly 40,000 school counseling professionals (ASCA, 2021a). Participants in the quantitative phase have been recruited through the ASCA scene discussion group and are ASCA members. Additionally, the survey link was shared with school counselors through online forums and social media sites which included: the ASCA scene, ASCA’s LinkedIn social media, ASCA’s Twitter, and Facebook groups designated to Illinois School Counseling Association, California School Counseling Association, Texas School Counseling Association, etc.,

I apply a quantitative procedure (Mills & Gay, 2019) to gather school counselors’ perceptions through survey demographic data and collect the results of them taking The Multicultural School Counseling Behavior Scale (MSCBS; Greene, 2019). Before conducting the
study, I performed a priori power analysis. The effect size for this analysis was calculated using Cohen’s formula, $f^2 = \frac{R^2}{1 - R}$. Effect size indicates the degree to which the phenomenon is present in the population (Cohen, 1988). Additionally, a power analysis calculates, for varying sample sizes, a probability (power, $\beta$) of finding a statistically significant result (at chosen Type I error, $\alpha$) for a given population effect size (Cohen, 1988).

By using G*Power version 3.1.9.2. to determine Cohen’s effect size for Pearson’s R all effect sizes were established with 95% of significance. The following should be considered concerning the sample size for this study: a large effect size of .50 equals 46 participants, a medium effect size of .30 equals 138 participants, and a small effect size of .10 equals 1293 participants where the effect explains 1% of the total variance. For this study, I strived to obtain a medium effect size of 138 participants to perform a linear multiple regression with four predictor variables outlined in the MSCBS, as seen in Appendix A.

**Procedure**

Before starting the research project, a pilot study was conducted to determine if the directions are clear and determine the amount of time that is needed to complete the survey (Dillman et al., 2014). I asked for feedback, from a panel of 1 school counselor and 3 school counselor educators on the clarity of directions and items in the questionnaire, as well as how much time it took to complete. The panel included practitioners that have had previous experience with undocumented students or have done related research with immigrants. Pretest questionnaires and procedures to identify problems prior are essential to identify (American Association for Public Opinion Research ([AAPOR], 2021), as is determining time. Appendix A shows the results of my goal to establish a questionnaire that can be taken in 10 to 15 minutes.
Qualitatively, a research tool that I have used is a descriptive survey, intended to gather information about the types of mental health supports that school counselors may use with undocumented students. Heppner & Heppner (2004) outline standard practices that may be utilized when employing a descriptive survey data collection method. I will explore the following quantitative research questions:

1. What is the relationship between school counselors' perceived multicultural competency and MTSS development among school counselors when providing mental health supports to undocumented students?

2. What other factors attenuate multicultural competency for school counselors working within MTSS and this population?

Expressively, the main analysis in phase one of this study is a multiple regression analysis (MRA) where a specific statistical test is used. Multiple regression is an extension of bivariate regression in which several independent variables instead of just one are combined to predict a value on a dependent variable for each subject (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). “The result of regression is an equation that represents the best prediction of a dependent variable from several continuous (or dichotomous) independent variables” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 118). A multiple regression analysis has been run using the following independent variables of MTSS development, noted in Appendix A, and on the dependent measures of the factors in interventions, leadership, psychoeducation, and seeking input from the MSCBS scale. When significant differences are found between groups means a linear regression has been performed to further define differences. Furthermore, a sample of continuous demographic variables has been analyzed using a t-test to understand one independent variable. Table 1 provides an overview of the analysis.
Table 1

Statistical Analysis in the Quantitative Phase

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<th>Independent Variable (IV)</th>
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<td>Multiple Regression</td>
<td>SC Multicultural Competency</td>
<td>MTSS development factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Independent Sample t Test</td>
<td>SC Multicultural Competency</td>
<td>Language fluency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Three-way ANOVA</td>
<td>SC Multicultural Competency</td>
<td>Urbanicity, caseload number, and school level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations

There are limitations to mixed methods, for example, a specific sample error occurs during nonresponses in the sampling frame and coverage errors when people who should be in the sampling frame are not there or when ineligible people are included (Mertens, 2020). Sampling bias occurs when estimates are systematically shifted one way or the other this may happen when one underestimates socially undesirable behaviors or the low reliability of the question or instrument (Dillman et al., 2014). Social-desirability bias is a type of response bias that tends to survey respondents to answer questions favorably (Dillman et al., 2014), by employing qualitative methods in phase two and creating an inclusionary point for both school counselors and undocumented students, my goal is to address this bias through qualitative procedures and decrease the bias that may occur in solely using quantitively procedures.

To reduce these limitations in my study, I followed the suggestions given by Dillman et al. (2014), reduction of sampling error is done by surveying a large number of participants and therein increasing generalizability. Additionally, sampling bias is reduced through the use of a pilot study and increases the overall clarity of the participants (AAPOR, 2021; Dillman et al.,
2014). Other suggestions include using a shorter survey, offering incentives to participants, and conducting follow-up requests for participants to increase the participation rate and reduce sample errors (Dillman et al., 2014).

Permissions Needed

Upon receiving permission from the Institutional Review Board at Northern Illinois University, Qualtrics an internet survey system has been used for survey distributions. An initial email with an introductory letter (Appendix B) has been created and sent to all practicing school counselors listed in the American School Counseling Association online membership directory stating the purpose of the study and providing a link to the survey. By collecting the email address through the system, it has helped to prevent the same participants to reply twice and ensure proper follow-up that may be needed after following the online link to the surveys, an informed consent form (Appendix C) has been shared immediately on the Qualtrics survey, emphasizing participation is voluntary and confidential. Furthermore, it outlines that participants could stop participating in the research study at any time. After viewing the informed consent form and agreeing to participate in the research study, participants have been directed to the Multicultural School Counseling Behavior Scale (MSCBS; Greene, 2019; Appendix A) and the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) which has been developed specifically for this study.

Instruments

Data has been obtained from self-reported surveys. School counselor participants in the first study completed the MSCBS (Greene, 2019), a four-factor scale with 29 items.
Additionally, school counselors completed a 10-item demographic questionnaire, which has been developed for this study. Multicultural counseling is the crux of culturally sensitive school counseling and this construct if closer examined can help to illuminate change for the supports in place for undocumented students.

The MSCBS (Greene, 2019) was created to measure the multicultural counseling competence of school counselors. The author shares, “Despite its development for research, the Multicultural School Counseling Behavior Scale has many possible additional uses… School counselors could evaluate which behaviors they engage in regularly and which they would like to incorporate more often” (Greene, 2019, p. 7). I want to consider this respectively as the purpose of this study is to explore culturally sensitive mental health practices in MTSS. Although multicultural counseling competence is understood as a significant asset for school counselors, no prior measure has existed, or a scale has been created that has been normed specifically for school counselors (Greene, 2019). To formulate the MSCBS, participants were recruited from the membership of the ASCA; 689 ASCA members participated. ASCA is the largest professional association for school counselors and the only national school counseling association.

The MSCBS was delivered electronically to 689 practicing school counselors to establish its initial psychometrics and factor structure. Factor analysis of the MSCBS resulted in a four-factor solution: factor 1: interventions; factor 2: leadership; factor 3: psychoeducation; and factor 4: seek input. Some examples highlighted in Greene's (2019) scale include interventions (factor 1) such as working with diverse staff, intervening when faced with discriminatory behavior, learning students’ names, and changing helping styles when culturally appropriate. Leadership (factor 2) includes consultation with stakeholders, seeking knowledge, and taking professional
development classes or attending workshops on diversity. Psychoeducation (factor 3) is comprised of items such as conducting classroom guidance lessons, small group lessons, and implementing school-wide diversity programs. Finally, seek input (factor 4), contains only three items, which all included seeking feedback from stakeholders such as parents, students, staff, and administrators. Notably, the anchors of potential responses in the scale include six possible responses: never, infrequently (less than once a school year), yearly, several times a school year, monthly, and weekly. All these factors are consequential to understanding the qualitative phase of this study.

Moreover, I utilized the MSCBS to gauge multicultural competency and I used the scale to answer quantitative research questions exploring frequently used culturally sensitive mental health practices in MTSS. In overview, the frequency of such items and their anchors helped to establish frequently used culturally competent activities.

In summary, being able to assess multicultural competence is a vital tool for creating healing and growth in culturally sensitive spaces (Chung et al., 2008; Gay, 2010; Jones-Smith, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lee, 2001). Multicultural competence and cultural responsiveness are needed in several mental health support systems for undocumented students’ lives and having a substantial measure of this helps strengthen the MTSS. In this study, a survey assessing the multicultural competency of school counselors, determining frequently used culturally sensitive mental health MTSS practices, and a demographic questionnaire are included in the quantitative phase of this study.
Validity

Quantitative validity (also called construct validity) means that the scores received from participants are meaningful indicators of the construct being measured (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This underlines the importance of using a scale measure such as the MSCBS in my study. The MSCBS (Greene, 2019) was developed based on a review of multicultural competence literature in the field. The initial item pool consisted of 36 items describing school counselors’ multicultural behaviors and various aspects of their profession. After the initial item development, five content experts reviewed the items for face validity before their use in the pilot study. They provided feedback on the content as related to the constructs, wording of the items, and potential responses, which through rewording, combining some items, and dropping some items resulted in a 3-item survey. Overall, the MSCBS was delivered electronically to 689 practicing school counselors to establish the initial psychometrics and test its validity and reliability, which demonstrates that the 31 items in the MSCBS had high internal reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha of .912. Although reliability scores were high with the sample involved in this study, the author recommends further testing using this instrument to test its validity.

Furthermore, as I am adopting a transformative mixed method design there are various threats to validity specifically in the data collection phase, where I utilize an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Specific threats to validity include a failure to identify prominent qualitative results to explain, not explaining surprisingly contradictory quantitative results with qualitative data, and not connecting the qualitative results with the quantitative follow-up (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). I address these threats by considering all possibilities
for the explanation of the results and purposefully selecting the qualitative sample as outlined in the inclusion criteria for the quantitative participants.

Other perspectives to consider are what Kirkhart (2005) and Lincoln (2009) have been integral in considering, the quality of human connections in research settings, and considering the validity of the information assembled. Kirkhart (2005) proposed specific consideration of what she terms “multicultural validity,” which she describes as referring to the “correctness or authenticity of understandings across multiple, intersecting cultural contexts” (p. 22). Additionally, Mertens (2020) argues that multicultural validity is a good candidate for considering transformative validity.

Kirkhart (2005) outlines five justifications for multicultural validity:

Theoretical: The cultural congruence of theoretical perspectives underlying the program, the evaluation, and assumptions about validity.

Experiential: Congruence with the lived experience of participants in the program and the evaluation process.

Consequential: The social consequences of understandings and judgments and the actions taken based upon them.

Interpersonal: The quality of the interactions between and among participants in the evaluation process.

Methodological: The cultural appropriateness of measurement tools and cultural congruence of design configurations. (p. 23)

Through using transformative mixed methods my goal is to enhance the multicultural validity of this study. I have considered these factors in detail in my procedures and ethical considerations of interactions with participants as explained in the qualitative procedures of this study.
Strategies to Connect the Quantitative Results

Sequentially, after my quantitative findings, I must determine which results are explained. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) explain, I must outline significant quantitative findings by describing non-significant results, explaining outliers, and highlighting group differences. Furthermore, it is valuable to explain overall strategies to connect the quantitative strands to the qualitative ones. For example, in this study, the inclusion criteria for the qualitative portion of this study are composed of school counselors who are from schools that utilize MTSS in their schools and may have taken the MCSCBS. I must highlight in an explanatory sequential mixed method design the quantitative phase builds the qualitative phase. As I develop my study, I use the quantitative results to develop my specific interview questions that have developed later in the second phase, in alignment with mixed methods procedures (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Morse & Niehaus, 2009). It is important to specify that the “qualitative phase cannot be fully specified in advance” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 82) until the quantitative phase is complete as the quantitative phase helps to determine which results need to be further explained in the qualitative phase. Nonetheless, it is important to provide a framework for the qualitative phase of my study.

Qualitative Investigation

The focus of my study is to complement the quantitative data and create the inclusion of community voices to define an entry point for transformative dissemination and cause for social action (Mertens, 2003). I do this by exploring the following qualitative research questions in the design:
1. How are school counselors experiencing the delivery of mental health supports for undocumented students within MTSS?

2. How are undocumented students experiencing mental health supports from their school counselor?

For this study, Simons (2009) illustrates that a case study procedure is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program, or system in a real-life context. Additionally, it is research-based, inclusive of different methods, and is evidence-led and the primary purpose is to generate an in-depth understanding of a specific topic (Simons, 2009). One central component of this study that is very complex is an MTSS, since it supports the work of many individual stakeholders in this study, I explore specific cases in this transformative mixed methods study. Case study exploration explains a phenomenon or issue and these explanations may be context-specific it strives to explain the how and why of some sequence of events that happened (Yin, 2017). Furthermore, it is critical to illustrate and understand that a case study method of collection is an empirical inquiry that investigates the case or by addressing the questions as it asks “how” or “why” questions concerning the phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2017).

Participants

A case study analysis sample size typically has no criteria (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2017), some examples illustrate 3-6 cases (Morales et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2016). In this qualitative phase, school counselors (n=3) and undocumented students (n=2), in total five participants were recruited through snowball sampling (e.g., word of mouth). The goal is to capture culturally sensitive practices in the field of mental health support. It is as Hipolito-Delgado et al.(2021)
share during times of rapid change such as the current pandemic, student voices enable school counselors to make decisions informed by what young people need from their schools and it is school counselors that take action at multiple levels and make systems more responsible. Participants were provided a $100 gift card to minimize barriers to participating in the study (e.g., cost associated with taking time away from work and child care). After discussion with participants, $100 was established to be an appropriate amount to offset barriers to participation. Interviews ended when complementary findings from the quantitative phase are explained more in-depth by the qualitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

**Ethical Issues**

Although the institutional review board does allow children to participate in research studies, for ethical and methodological purposes, I have decided to collect outcome data on the experiences of undocumented students who are adults. Their ages are between 18-25 and they received mental health support from their school counselors. Adults have more agency and being undocumented has many levels of complexity. As Chang et al. (2019) advise in their work that there is a politicization of researching undocumented students, and there must be an acknowledgment of the power and privilege that researchers possess in the researcher–participant relationship. Issues that scholars must take into account when engaging in such research are the ethical, logistical, and relational problems that arise when working with undocumented students (Chang et al., 2019). Therefore, I do wish to exercise ethical and logical practices in employing methodical choices to create extra protection for this population.

Potential participants (undocumented students and school counselors) have been recruited through snowball sampling. Through this sampling method, the researcher starts with key
informants who are viewed as knowledgeable about the program or community. The researcher asks the key informants to recommend other people to whom they should talk based on their knowledge of who should know a lot about the program in question. More specifically, recruiting has been made directly by myself, by their school counselor, or through personal and professional networks. For example, potential subjects may be those I know from their family networks, neighbors, sports teams, religious organizations, and through volunteer, professional, and activist work. This recruitment approach improves the study’s ability to access undocumented students, which are a hard-to-reach population. Similar approaches have been reported as successful in prior research on undocumented immigrants (Cornelius, 1982; Diaz-Strong, 2021; Garcia & Tierney, 2011; Gonzalez et al., 2015; Siddharthan & Ahern, 1996). By relying on multiple networks to develop the sample, this recruitment approach has avoided selecting individuals with very similar experiences. In addition, at the end of the interviews, study participants have been asked to refer others to the study to build a “snowball sample” (Mertens, 2020, p. 350). Participants have been told that they can decline to refer others to the study without any negative consequences.

Procedure

As I delve deeper into this study, qualitative interviews have been done through Zoom an online media platform, and have been recorded. Informed consent has been obtained before starting the interviews through a Qualtrics survey. Qualitative techniques have been used to analyze in-depth individual interviews (Baxter & Jack, 2015; Berríos & Lucca, 2006). Specifically, after I transcribe the interviews, I adopted a case study approach across and between cases.
According to Stake (2006) and Yin (2017), the case study includes six sub-sections to illustrate findings at each level. The six levels are highlighted below:

1. A detailed description of the case as a whole including describing its setting(s) and contexts, creating a rich and textured picture of the case and its settings.

2. Direct interpretation of the case with the description of single instances which may have rich meaning.

3. Included will also be categorical aggregation, collections of meaning-rich instances from the data that are aggregated into categories of meaning, where thematic findings are highlighted.

4. In developing a within-case analysis, one describes themes and patterns of meaning which emerged from the data and illustrates the connections among the themes. These themes and patterns should be described and developed using verbatim passages and direct quotes from the data. The objective is to illustrate patterns and themes.

5. The thematic synthesis will also be included and highlight a thematic analysis within the case using verbatim passages and direct quotes from the data to elucidate each theme as well as present the interpretations of the integrated meaning of all the cases in the study.

6. Developing and presenting naturalistic generalizations of the results of the interpretive phase of the study.

To expand on thematic analysis, I use Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflective thematic analysis which is an iterative process consisting of six steps: (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) generating codes, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) locating exemplars. In summary, data analysis has been analyzed through an interrelated process (Baxter & Jack, 2015; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Thematic content analysis of qualitative findings with some elements of culturally sensitive school counseling theory has been used to analyze the data, in alignment with transformative mixed method practice (Annamma et al., 2016; Mertens, 2020). The analysis of interview transcripts began after the first interview. The relationships and differences between codes were identified
(Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Interviews ended when complementary findings from the quantitative phase are explained more in-depth by the qualitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

**Instruments**

Instruments in the qualitative phase are the interview questions. The interview questions have been developed after the quantitative analysis in phase one. Following transformative and sequential mixed methods practices, phase one quantitative findings have helped to develop phase two qualitative elements (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Mertens, 2020). The integration connection bridges from the initial quantitative results to the follow-up qualitative data collection this is called a sequential integration approach (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). A strong connection between the phases, such as the selection of participants and interview questions for the qualitative phase from information arising from the quantitative data analysis, helps achieve more meaningful explanations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Elements to review from my literature review have included *Qualitative Methodological Considerations for Studying Undocumented Students in the United States* (Chang et al., 2019), *The ASCA National Model* (ASCA, 2019a), and *The Culturally Responsive Teaching And Leading Standards for all Illinois Educators* (2021). The interview questions have been screened by school counselors and counselor educators to assess the clarity, language, and purpose of the interview questions’ format and structure.

**Reflectivity Statement**

I am a first-generation immigrant who was born into a mixed-status family. My parents came to the United States when they were young from central Mexico. My father came with a
student visa and started the journey of completing community college. Unfortunately, he did not complete college, his visa expired, and he was left undocumented. My mom was also undocumented and came from a small town in Mexico called Acambaro, Guanajuato. Being undocumented in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s had its own set of challenges, but through their hard work and resilience, they created a strong familial capital (Yosso, 2005) that is a center of support and has assisted me in maintaining balance throughout this research project.

During this time the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 established financial and other penalties for companies that employed illegal immigrants. The act also legalized most undocumented immigrants who had arrived in the country before January 1, 1982. This paved the way for undocumented immigrants like my parents and granted them a pathway to citizenship. I remember growing up and seeing my mom’s eyes light up when she obtained her legal resident card. She was so happy; little did I understand as a child how many obstacles she overcome to finally become a naturalized citizen. It was transformative to see the pride that both my mother and my father demonstrated in becoming citizens of the United States, but I know that our family’s journey as a mixed-status family has had many hurdles.

In the 1970s migration was more inclusive, and my father made a life-changing choice to migrate to Chicago, Illinois. My parents fostered in me the importance of education and academic resiliency. While growing up on the southwest side of Chicago, my family was posed with economic challenges and hardships. Chicago was violently transformed by societal marginalization: I saw friends go to jail, some of my friends died of gang violence, and identities were shaped by socio-economic stresses. Nonetheless, it was through community meetings and artistic gatherings that I found a sense of belonging and activism. It was in these meetings that I advocated for many of my family members, cousins, relatives, partners, and friends that
carried the label of “undocumented.” It was through community-based activism that I learned about the history and how the struggle for human rights has worked in a continuum.

A parallel movement that was created as a catalyst in my life was called the Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride (Cleeland, 2003). Historically, during the civil rights era, a rise in activism was exemplified by groups of White and African American civil rights leaders who participated in Freedom Rides. The Freedom Riders mobilized bus trips through the American South in 1961 to protest segregated bus terminals (Cleeland, 2003). This freedom movement was an axiom of change in my life and introduced me to the importance of grassroots movements and learning from the civil rights leaders of this decade.

In 2003, I participated in the Immigrant Worker’s Freedom Ride an initiative of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HEREIU), the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), with the close collaboration of other unions, immigrant and civil rights organizations, and faith-based and community-based organizations throughout the United States. For this Freedom Ride, hundreds of buses from multiple locations traveled as far as California to rally in promotion of immigrant rights, and they landed in New York to promote immigrant legislation, most notably the Dream ACT introduced to legislation in 2001 (Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride (IWFR) Documentary Project Collection, 2003).

I was 21 years old at the time, I remember not knowing how big this moment was. I remember the stories, people, and activists whom I still see at protests and rallies today. I remembered fighting for the right of millions of undocumented immigrants, from Haiti to Nigeria to Mexico as this event culminated in Flushing Meadows, New York with over 100,000 people in attendance and stopping in over 100 towns to meet local immigrant and civil rights
activists, as it became the largest rally for immigrant rights in U.S. history. This was the start of my fight for legislative acts like the Dream Act of 2001, the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019, and the Dream and Promise Act of 2021.

As I reflect on this experience, I acknowledge I was truly privileged to be part of the caravan of buses that filled New York. It was my first time traveling so far. It reminded me of a concept that Aguilar (2019) emphasized where “parental sacrificios become a form of capital” (p. 2). It is the concept of parental sacrifice and communal empowerment that underlies my motivation to write on mental health for undocumented students in schools. I also acknowledge the privilege of being a male and a husband. I see this privilege as my wife, who is also an immigrant from Mexico, has made continual sacrifices as the primary caretaker of our children and allowed me certain privileges to become an educator and researcher. Being male has given me the particular status of being the primary provider in my cultural family dynamic. I also acknowledge the privilege of citizenship that I inherited through the sacrifices that my parents endured. It has thought me to practice cultural humility and it has enhanced my ability to see power differentials in the research that I plan to embark on.

Transformative Mixed Methods

To organize a transformative mixed methods study, researchers need to include the following ten criteria (Appendix D) in their research process. The transformative paradigm asks that the researcher be aware of power differentials and be aware of how privilege can impact the methodological constructs of the inquiry (Mertens, 2010, 2020). The main tenet of the axiological assumption in the transformative paradigm is the “recognition of power differences and ethical implications that derive from those differences” in relationship to marginalization,
discrimination, and oppression. (Mertens, 2010, p. 195). As a researcher reflects on these constructs it can help to reduce bias and create a transformative environment for the population and researcher that is involved.

A researcher should strive to understand power differences to ensure ethical standards and discrimination of participants do not occur. In conclusion, (Mertens, 2008) states that this method can be utilized in the following standards: “ a) Raising hypotheses concerning the dynamics that underlie the quantitative results, b) Conducting subgroup analyses to look at the differential impact on diverse groups in the study, c) Improving understanding of the results from the perspective of power relationships, and d) Reporting the results in such a way as to facilitate change.” (p. 93)

**Timing**

The timing of this transformative mixed methods study comes in two major phases. Figure 1 highlights the steps in this study. The first phase involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data, and the second phase involved the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The quantitative data collection has taken place over the course of two months specifically during January, and February 2023. The qualitative interviews took place over the course of one month, more specifically in March 2023. Table 2 outlines the timeline and items needed during the time of data analysis. Appendix E is a budget highlighting how grant funds obtained have been utilized in this study.

In conclusion, this process can be used to operate inductively in a study and help alleviate marginalization by identifying gaps in systems already in place. Overall, the goal of this mixed methods research is to focus on addressing issues of social justice and humanitarianism
(Mertens, 2007), which may enhance mental health supports for undocumented students as facilitated by school counselors, educators, administrators, and counselor educators.

Figure 1: Transformative mixed methods analysis overview.

Table 2
Transformative Mixed Methods Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps: One to Four</th>
<th>Date and Time Frames</th>
<th>Items needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. PHASE 1 - quantitative</td>
<td>January 2023</td>
<td>Qualtrics Survey, Gift Cards for Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Quantitative Data Analysis and Mixing</td>
<td>February and beginning of March 2023</td>
<td>MAXQDA software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. PHASE 2 - qualitative</td>
<td>March and beginning of April 2023</td>
<td>Flyer recruitment and zoom invitation, Gift Cards for participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Qualitative Data Analysis and Mixing</td>
<td>April and beginning of May 2023</td>
<td>MAXQDA software and Transcribing service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

This transformative mixed methods study sequentially explored culturally sensitive mental health practices in MTSS that address the needs of undocumented students. In this chapter, I will be sharing the findings of this study. First, I will be reviewing the results of the following research questions: What is the relationship between school counselors’ perceived multicultural competency and MTSS development among school counselors when providing mental health supports to undocumented students? And what other factors attenuate multicultural competency for school counselors working within MTSS and this population? After reviewing the quantitative relationships in phase one, I will be sharing the qualitative findings and answering the research questions, how are school counselors experiencing the delivery of mental health supports for undocumented students within MTSS? And how are undocumented students experiencing mental health supports from their school counselor? Then I will be expanding on the mixed methods research question: How do the follow-up qualitative results based on personal experiences illuminate the statistical results in the study? This will help to give an in-depth overview of how mixed methods amplifies the voices of the participants in a transformative lens.

Quantitative Relationships in MTSS

As part of phase one of this study, I interviewed school counselors. I obtained participation from 458 school counselors from across the United States. Forty-two responses were eliminated due to partial survey completion, leaving a final sample size of 416, which
ensured that the dataset has sufficient statistical power. The survey was designed as a web-based survey using Qualtrics. The web-based survey was made available to participants for 20 days (January 25 to February 13, 2023). Participation was voluntary and a $25 raffled gift card was offered as an incentive. The anonymized data was obtained from the Qualtrics form at the end of the survey time and stored safely in a password-protected SAV. file for further analysis. The survey results were obtained from Qualtrics software as a SPSS Statistics Data File Format Family (.sav) file. The data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software (IBM, 2019) and Microsoft Excel. To ease analysis, I have encoded the categorical questions to numerical values based on the Likert-like scales used for each question.

Participants

The total sample in this study consisted of 416 participants. Males (N=202, 48.6%) and females (N=202, 48.6%) were equal in number. Transgender participants (N=9, 2.1%) and gender non-conforming (N=1, 0.2%) participated in this study. Two participants (0.5%) declined to answer the question of gender. The average age of the participants was 35. Latina/o/x school counselors accounted for 38.5% (n=160) of those that participated. Ethnic/Racial groups were represented by Black or African American (n=68, 16.3%), Asian (n=33, 7.9%), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (n=14, 3.4%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (n=14, 3.4%), White (n=285, 68.5%). Two participants (0.5%) omitted their racial selection.

School counselors that spoke a language other than English accounted for a majority (n=299, 75.9%) of the participants. Of the 8 languages listed the four most spoken were Spanish (n=128, 30.8%), French (n=103, 24.8%), Italian (n=50, 12%), and Portuguese (n=32, 12%). The average work experience of school counselors in this study is 11 years. School counselor's
student caseloads varied from 0-250 (n=83, 20%), 251-400 (n=134, 32.2%), 401-800 (n=102, 24.5%), 801-1200 (n=63, 15.1%), 1201-1599 (n=26, 6.3%), and 1600-2000 (n=8, 1.9%).

In describing their school’s geographic surroundings, participants were from Urban (n=204, 49%), Suburban (n=151, 36.3%), Rural (n=59, 14.2), and Unsure (n=2, 0.5%). Geographically school counselors came from various regions of the United States, Northeast (n=90, 21.6%), Midwest (n=132, 31.7%), Southeast (n=107, 25.7%), Southwest (n=66, 15.9%), West (n=19, 4.6%) and failed to respond (n=2, 0.5%).

School counselors also reported the percentage of students in their district that received free/reduced lunch, which is given after low-income eligibility is established by the student’s family (ISBE, 2021). They reported that in their districts 90% to 100% (n=29, 7%), 61% to 90% (n=136, 32.7%), 31% to 60% (n=164, 39.4%), 0% to 30% (n=70, 16.8%), and some noted they were Unsure (n=17, 4.1%) who received free/reduced lunch. School counselors shared the building and age level that they worked with: Elementary (27.9%), Middle School (37.0%), High School (25%), Multiple Buildings (6.7%), and Other (3.4%). School size varied with 800 students being the average. School counselors were also asked if they received Title I funding, which highlights schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40 percent of enrollment and receive Title I funds (ISBE, 2021). One hundred and eight participants (26%) shared that they did not receive Title I funding and 308 (74%) shared that they did receive Title I funding.

Quantitative Findings

I ran a multiple regression analysis to measure the perceived multicultural competency (Greene, 2019) of school counselors who worked with undocumented students. Additionally, I
measured four independent variables of MTSS development (school counseling program and MTSS development, MTSS funding, MTSS training, and MTSS alignment with mental health programming). I assessed the partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals against the predicted values, which demonstrated linearity. I assessed the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.930, it demonstrated that there was independence of residuals (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Homoscedasticity was assessed by visual inspection of a plot of studentized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There were two cases of studentized deleted residuals greater than ±3 standard deviations, no leverage values greater than 0.2, and no values for Cook's distance above 1. The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by a Q-Q Plot. $R^2$ for the overall model was 0.09% with an adjusted $R^2$ of 0.08%, a medium effect size according to Cohen (Cohen, 1988). The multiple regression model statistically significantly predicted the perceived school counselor's multicultural competency when working with undocumented students with $F(4, 441) = 9.490$, $p < .0005$. All four variables entered simultaneously demonstrate statistical significance to the prediction, $p < .05$. From the four independent variables, MTSS alignment with mental health programming had a distinct slope coefficient and p-value of .002 (i.e., $p = .002$). Therefore, the slope coefficient is statistically significant, meaning that there is a linear relationship in the population (Frost, 2019). This finding also reveals that as MTSS alignment with mental health programming increases so does the perceived multicultural competency of school counselors who support undocumented students in a linear pattern. Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate the scatter dots of multicultural competency and their linear relationships to the independent variables (IV), note the R squared value in the first chart’s IV.
Figure 2: MTSS development factors and multicultural competency regression plot 1.

Figure 3: MTSS development factors and multicultural competency regression plot 2.
An independent-samples $t$ test was run to determine if there were differences in the mean multicultural competency of school counselors that speak a language other than English versus those that only speak English. Data are mean ± standard deviation unless otherwise stated. When asked if school counselors speak a language other than English, 299 participants selected yes, 95 selected no, and 22 participants choose not to respond (Figure 4). There were two outliers and no extreme points in the data, as assessed by inspection of boxplots. On the mean scores of multicultural competency for those that speak a language other than English, the outliers had values of 1.00 and 1.17 with no extreme points. Multicultural competency scores for those that speak English were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$). The multicultural competency scores for those who speak more than one language were not normally distributed. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p = .080$). Speaking a language other than English was selected (3.91 ± 0.87) over those who only speak English (3.83 ± 0.77). There was no statistically significant difference in the mean multicultural competency scores between those that speak a language other than English and those that did not, $t(392) = .75$, $p = .46$, $d = 0.09$. Those who speak a language other than English had a mean multicultural competency that was $M = 0.07$, 95% CI [-0.12 to 0.27] higher than those who only speak English.

A three-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the effects of caseload, urbanicity, and school level on the mean of multicultural competency among school counselors that work with undocumented students. There were two outliers and three extreme points assessed as a value greater than 3 box lengths from the edge of the box. I included the outliers in the analysis since they did not substantially affect the results of this test. Multicultural competency scores were
normally distributed (p > .05) except for six of the forty-three groups, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test of normality. The model was predominately normally distributed and I proceeded with testing as ANOVAs are considered to be fairly robust to deviations from normality (Field, 2018). There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances, p = .213. There was no statistically significant three-way interaction between caseload, urbanicity, and school level, $F(22, 348) = 0.606$, $p = .920$. No other simple two-way interactions were found to be statistically significant.

In summary, I analyzed what factors attenuate multicultural competency for school counselors working with undocumented students. The findings have illustrated the four measures of MTSS development (school counseling program and MTSS development, MTSS funding, MTSS training, and MTSS alignment with mental health programming) significantly predict perceived multicultural competency for school counselors working with undocumented students. Moreover, findings demonstrate that as MTSS alignment with mental health programming increases so does the perceived multicultural competency of school counselors who support
undocumented students in a linear pattern. This emphasizes the importance of mental health programming in schools and demonstrates its relationship to increasing multicultural competency. Through further analysis, no other simple two-way interactions were found to be statistically significant. The tests illustrated that language, caseload, school grade level, and urbanicity do not significantly impact multicultural competency when working with undocumented students (Figure 5).

![Graph showing Mean of Multicultural Competency by Caseload, School Level, and Urbanicity](image)

**Figure 5:** School counselor multicultural competency with various factors.

**Qualitative Multiple Case Study Approach**

To connect the initial quantitative results with my qualitative exploration, I recruited school counselor participants for the second phase of data collection according to the sampling
procedures described in Chapter 3. I carefully choose a sample of participants that could further explain the mental health supports in schools with MTSS that serve undocumented students. To understand the quantitative finding in phase one, the qualitative research questions ask: How are school counselors experiencing the delivery of mental health supports for undocumented students within MTSS? And how are undocumented students experiencing mental health supports from their school counselor?

To analyze these questions I utilized a case study approach, as it is the investigation of a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems through the collection of multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) argued that there is not a set number of cases required for a multiple case study, but that “the more cases an individual studies, the less depth that there is in any single case” (Creswell, 2007, p. 76). Customarily, no more than four or five cases are investigated in multiple case study research (Creswell, 2007); as many multiple case studies have fewer than four cases (Stake, 2006). I took a look at five cases that are diverse in illustrating MTSS mental health supports for undocumented students in distinct school settings. For this investigation, I employed a multiple case study approach within a CSSC framework.

Both school counselors (n=3) and undocumented students (n=2), a total of five participants, were recruited through snowball sampling (e.g., word of mouth). Specifically, I recruited through personal and professional networks, or they were referred by survey participants in phase one. This recruitment approach improves the study’s ability to access undocumented immigrants, which are a hard-to-reach population, and takes into account ethical considerations when working with undocumented students (Chang et al., 2019). Snowball sampling has been reported as successful in prior research on undocumented immigrants.
(Cornelius, 1982; Diaz-Strong, 2021; Garcia & Tierney, 2011; Gonzalez et al., 2015; Siddharthan & Ahern, 1996).

There were two pools of criteria for this phase of the study. Pool one participants must be (a) current school counselors in the United States, (b) be employed by a school currently implementing MTSS, (c) and as a school counselor have direct experience providing mental health support to undocumented students anytime between the start of the pandemic which began on January 20, 2020, until the present day. In the second pool, participants must fit these criteria: (a) undocumented students in the United States, (b) adults ages 18-26 (c) have received academic or social-emotional support from their school counselor in a K-12 school setting during the pandemic which began January 20, 2020, or up until the present day. This may include a few years before the pandemic began with age being the main factor to qualify. The main objective to capture cases and illuminate the central phenomenon in this portion of the study, MTSS, and mental health supports for undocumented students was achieved and helped to expand on the quantitative findings.

Data Collection

I developed a semistructured interview protocol based on an extensive review of the literature. The interview protocol included 12 questions for school counselors and 13 questions for undocumented students. The questions focus on the participant's identities as school counselors and as undocumented students. Chapter 3 explains how the interview protocol was designed and they are detailed in Appendix F. All interviews were conducted confidentially through Zoom in English and Spanish, they lasted between 60 to 70 minutes each, and were transcribed verbatim within 1 week. Each transcription was checked by the investigator who is
bilingual in English and Spanish. Informed consent forms were provided to all participants in English since it was the predominant language they spoke, and was in accordance with IRB guidelines from the university by which this study was approved. Table 3 describes the characteristics of the five participants in the qualitative phase of my study.

Table 3
Characteristics of Five Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Description of Participant</th>
<th>Description of their MTSS School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>School counselor serving undocumented students Age 46 Ethnicity: Mexican American Years in role: 13 years</td>
<td>High School in the Westside Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayra</td>
<td>School counselor serving undocumented students Age 44 Ethnicity: Mexican American Years in role: 4 years</td>
<td>High School in SW Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa</td>
<td>School counselor serving undocumented students Age 36 Ethnicity: Mexican American Years in role: 13 years</td>
<td>High School in the NW Suburbs of Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>Undocumented Student Age 26 Ethnicity: Mexican Age of Migration: 15 years old</td>
<td>High School in SW Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco</td>
<td>Undocumented Student Age 22 Ethnicity: Mexican Age of Migration: 3 years old</td>
<td>Charter High School in SW Chicago</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in three steps. First, an extensive review of transcripts was done and interviewer responses and reactions were examined resulting in the development of initial themes. Second, the data were coded for meaning and description thus the codes contained one, two, or more sentences (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative software MAXQDA Pro 22.6 program was used for data management and analysis. The study followed a multiple case study approach where the data were analyzed case by case through reflective thematic analysis and later by cross-case analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Stake, 2006). Thus, interviews were analyzed for each case. Following a case-by-case analysis, identified themes were used to conduct the cross-case analyses. Third, I prioritized merging the findings across the cases to make generalizations about the cases. In this manner, the themes that emerged were salient across the five cases and became part of the cross-case analyses. 82 initial codes emerged which created five themes. Of those five themes, four major themes were identified from cross-case analyses. Cross-case analyses allow for generalization across the cases examined in the study (Stake, 2006). Table 4 illustrates a heat map with the number of codes that were frequently found in the four major themes across cases.

Three validation strategies of triangulation, clarification, and external audit were used to ensure credibility and rigor (Creswell, 2007). Triangulation encompassed that the multiple sources provided corroborating evidence, which included transcripts from semistructured interviews, demographic information describing the school where the participants came from, and the review of the interviewer notes. Clarification involved critically examining the
researcher’s biases and worldviews did not impact the interpretation bias, this was done through reflexivity memos as outlined in reflective thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

An external audit was done. I demonstrated to the auditor my research questions and interview questions. I mentioned that all the questions where informed by theoretical frameworks CSSC and MTSS. Through MAXQDA I showed samples of coding analysis. Various coding analysis examples were shown to the external auditor, as the content reviewed followed repetitive steps. I explained to the external auditor that it was inductive coding process with several steps. First, I broke my qualitative dataset into small sentences or fragments. Furthermore, I would read the dataset and create a code for that dataset. After applying codes, I would repeat the process to finalize my codes. I would then read and reread a new sample of data; creating codes for the second sample. I would add new codes when needed, during the rereading of the samples. I would go back and code my responses again. I then place my codes into a hierarchical coding system within MAXQDA. As I explained to the external auditor it was an iterative process with many cycles, I would also do reflective memos when necessary, to help

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**Table 4**

Heat Map of Codes Found Across the Major Themes in Each Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Culturally Sensitive MTSS for undocumented students</th>
<th>Educator Tools and Advocacy</th>
<th>Academic Resiliency and Intersectional Development</th>
<th>School Adjustment Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undocumented Student- Elena</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undocumented Student- Francisco</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counselor- Oscar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counselor- Mayra</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counselor- Elisa</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
curb bias. Reflective memos assisted me when I felt emotionally impacted by a participant’s statements. Figure 6 is an example of various sample data that I showed the external auditor.

Figure 6: Example of coding using MAXQDA software.

I also demonstrated the themes and subcategories generated by the code segments with their respective frequency this assisted in the cross-analysis. The summary grid of themes and subcategories is demonstrated below. I reviewed the code segments samples generated through this summary grid with the external auditor (Figure 7).

I further explained how frequent codes generated a heat map as illustrated in Table 4, which established the themes of my study. Finally, I discussed the six steps in the reflective thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2022). An external audit ensured that the interpretations were set forth by the data. The auditor gave feedback by asking insightful questions such as: What is my theoretical framework? How did my theories help to shape my
research and interview questions? What was my coding process? How do I define inductive coding?

Figure 7: Summary grid using MAXQDA software.

What is reflective thematic analysis? Through Socratic questions, my understanding of the qualitative process was deepened. The auditor holds a Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision and has experience in qualitative research.

Qualitative Findings

The cross-case analysis yielded four themes across the five cases: (a) culturally sensitive MTSS practices; (b) educator tools and advocacy; (c) academic resiliency and intersectional identity; (d) school adjustment barriers. Themes emerged through analysis of the transcripts from the semistructured interviews, demographic data of participants’ schools, and interviewer’s notes. Quotes were not edited for grammar, as this would prevent the participants’ authentic voices from being heard.
Culturally Sensitive MTSS Practices

Participants discussed how tiered interventions occurred at different stages of interaction between undocumented students and school counselors. School counselors described being able to facilitate lessons on social-emotional learning that would be administered to the general student population, which also included undocumented students. School counselors would facilitate classroom instructional lessons and bring in guest speakers which are tier-one level MTSS supports for all students. The school counselors would partner with different community-based agencies that would give presentations in their schools. For example, they would bring guest speakers that addressed issues such as depression and suicide prevention but they would also tackle issues of social justice in the immigrant community. Elisa, a school counselor shares,

I brought in folks who provided services like legal rights services to my school. I actually brought someone from MALDEF [Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund] at a point because they were deporting our students…not only did we have undocumented students, but we had refugees from Syria, from Palestine. We had a very multicultural student population. A lot of them were immigrants or recently arrived or undocumented.

School counselors also shared that several undocumented students would be found in the English language learner (ELL) student group since many ELL students would approach them for resources. School counselors mentioned that tier-one services that were provided for ELL students would also include social-emotional learning lessons such as social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Undocumented students mentioned that many times they would approach their school counselors after receiving a lesson on college and career awareness as the lessons would impact them emotionally. Francisco, an undocumented student shared “Am I gonna be able to go to college and afford it? So it would affect me in that way, it kind of brings me down, like whether I was doing everything for no reason”. The three
school counselors that participated in the qualitative phase of the study all related having very emotional and complex conversations around going to college with undocumented students. These conversations around being undocumented would usually continue weekly over the course of many semesters and be part of tier-one interventions under the career domain. The two undocumented students in the qualitative phase shared with their school counselors uncertainty about whether or not they would be able to work in certain fields. Furthermore, they voiced concerns about not being able to be employed in the field of study that they would choose. Thus, school counselors demonstrated that they were ready to have these difficult conversations because they were prepared. In this area, Oscar a school counselor elaborates, “So working with undocumented students here a counselor needs to be open to every different case, learning, 'cause we need. There are so many resources out there potentially, but we need to educate ourselves and every time there's new ones available”.

Tiers two and three within MTSS were also mentioned by the participants. School counselors emphasized the importance of facilitating tier-two groups that were inclusive to undocumented students, but also were specific to their struggles. Mayra, a school counselor shares, “I initiated it [a Newcomers Immigrant Support Group] because our ELL Department had identified the need for providing higher level support for our newcomers.” Undocumented students also shared knowledge about undocumented student groups that would take place after school. The undocumented students were very appreciative of having those groups available as it made them feel like they “belonged”. Tier two level mental health supports also included providing all students, which included undocumented students, access to groups such as anger management groups, anxiety groups, and stress management groups. School counselors shared that tier-two and three-level interventions were advised by a specialized group of
interdisciplinary professionals in the building called the Behavioral Health Team (BHT). The BHT would meet regularly to talk about a specific group of students that were more in need and refer to services such as a specific support group or a partnering mental health professional for specialized mental health care. All the school counselors that participated shared a story of an undocumented student that impacted them and in these instances, they mentioned the students needed specialized tier three support such as mental health care, housing, or access to hospital care because of the difficult instances the undocumented student encountered.

Mayra, a school counselor shared,

Students in Temporary Living Conditions so a lot of them [undocumented students] are being sponsored by somebody. It could have been an extended family member, uncle, aunt. Sadly, for one of our students one that actually came with a parent, their parent passed away while they were here, so then they ended up becoming independent…And to me, they're still very young, 16, 17 years old. They're still very young and surviving out here on their own. And making sure they had uniforms, books, bags, pencils, making sure they knew that we were there supporting them.

Overall, one of the essential aspects of all these tiered interventions is that specialized information when needed is being communicated in Spanish, Mandarin, French, etc., or whichever language is needed to help support the undocumented student. Additionally, as the school counselors shared it is important to communicate with parents in their native language.

**Educator Tools and Advocacy**

Educator tools and advocacy for undocumented students are key elements that all participants were knowledgeable about. First, all school counselors shared that it is essential to use evidence-based curriculums that are inclusive towards working with undocumented students, it is key to partner with outside organizations to increase access for students in need and become cognizant of culturally sensitive and responsive services that will assist undocumented students.
Participants shared that it is important to learn how to be culturally sensitive in discussions around college and career pathways. Specifically, the school counselors mentioned that it is important to consider that many conversations around immigration status occur when an undocumented student is in high school through college and career discussions. The school counselors in the qualitative phase of this study mention these are conversations that can be difficult to manage, but each school counselor demonstrated they were ready because they knew specialized resources. The undocumented students that participated related positive interactions with educators in the building that spoke to them about colleges. Francisco, an undocumented student shared,

She [my school counselor] was really helpful. I remember, I think I even mentioned to her that I was undocumented. I don’t know if they knew or not but I mentioned to her that I was undocumented and I was starting to worry about what colleges could pay or if there are any colleges that could pay full ride. If I have the academic achievements and if I have the stuff that they [colleges] need.

It is important to take into consideration that more conversations around status happen in high school because it is as Mayra, a school counselor shares,

In high school, we need it [a social security number] because we need to get them [students] to apply for summer jobs, see if they're eligible for a scholarship. Half of the programs that they offer our kids, they require that information. So I do have to ask them [for a social security number].

The undocumented students shared disclosing their status during transitional times in high school to obtain more information about college and career access. School counselors share that they need to be informed on specialized resources such as scholarships, the alternative financial aid application for undocumented students in Illinois.

Participants also shared the importance of advocacy for resources. If one is an educator an important role in the eyes of undocumented students and the school counselors who
participated is that you are knowledgeable on specialized resources. Francisco, an undocumented student shares,

    So kind of be educated on that topic if it needs to happen or if they know that they're gonna be meeting with someone like that [that is undocumented]. I say this because I know that there are still a lot of people who don't even know what DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals] is.

At times there may not be any resources in specific areas available and an educator must advocate for undocumented students. All of the school counselors mentioned advocating either to an administrator in their building for more resources or the need to demonstrate a social justice advocacy lens to obtain critical support for an undocumented student. The school counselors mentioned having to think outside of their school for specialized support, as Mayra advises,

    A lot of times helping a student that's undocumented actually takes a lot more work because it's not like the resources that are eligible for 100% of students. That's not the case for undocumented students. As you know even in Illinois, we have collectives where we like reach out to each other, like, hey, do you know where you can get this?

Similarly, undocumented students shared that they connect with educators that were knowledgeable about programs, such as college summer programs that would assist them or scholarships that would help to pay for college. Finally, undocumented students shared they were able to connect with educators that made them feel safe and were accepting of who they are.

    **Academic Resiliency and Intersectional Identity**

    There were various academic strengths and intersectional characteristics of undocumented students that were made relevant by the participants. One characteristic that was made evident was demonstrated high levels of academic resiliency, determination, and perseverance when in school. The undocumented students shared stories and stressors around being undocumented such as migration, language acquisition, acculturation, fear of their status,
etc... Nonetheless, they shared stories about how they took advantage of the resources in high school and became good students. They demonstrated academic resilience despite the various barriers that were at times outside of their control.

School counselors relayed similar stories about the undocumented students they served, as Oscar shares,

I guess for her [the undocumented student] since academics for her was never difficult, she was a bright kid, great GPA, always handled school well. I think for her the stress was now becoming can she overcome the hurdles that are coming her way because of documentation.

School counselors mentioned that they were surprised by the stories of many undocumented students as some had lost family members, migrated to the U.S. through difficult conditions, and encountered difficulties because of their status. Nonetheless, undocumented students were able to be present in school and be average or in some cases were above average students.

Participants also understood that the development of undocumented students is complex as they have many intersectional identities. As Elena, an undocumented student shares,

I feel like if there's already a lot of people that tell you no as just as a person and then put all the filters, being Latino, Latina, Latin-A, Latinx, a woman, undocumented, DACA, non-DACA, like, I think that it's important to give grace to ourselves, but also to embrace ourselves.

Understanding the complexity of undocumented status can help alleviate some common day stressors or alleviate awkward discussions. Both undocumented students shared being asked various common day questions, such as “Would you like to travel to Europe?” and “Where they would like to work?” without taking into consideration that they could not travel outside the United States or were unsure about their legal status on working. Understanding that certain intersectional characteristics that undocumented students encounter can become part of their identity and impact their self-esteem. Both students mentioned being viewed as “illegal” or
“criminal”, and as Francisco shared that this impacted his self-esteem, “I would think, I'm not right. I'm not born here, so I'm a little bit below. And so I kind of, that's kind of what was implanted in my mind at that time.” Fostering the intersectional identities and challenges of undocumented students is a critical component of school adjustment, Francisco adds “I think the most important thing is to be able to feel welcomed, feel like we are not different and to be I guess shown care”.

School Adjustment Barriers

There was a myriad of school adjustment barriers for undocumented students as shared by all the participants. One obstacle was how disclosing their immigration status occurred for undocumented student. It can become an uncomfortable conversation for everyone involved, Oscar, a school counselor explains,

There are some students that didn't know they were undocumented until they had to start filling out financial aid and that was a different type of trauma for them, thinking like, what now I can't even become an engineer anymore, 'cause how am I gonna go to college.

For undocumented students disclosing one’s status is a stressor that educators need to be aware of in facilitating transformative dialogues that can be empowering. Culturally sensitive educators can demonstrate care when working with students with undocumented students, by being aware of the complexity of intersectionality of a student’s background. This was highlighted by Mayra, a school counselor,

It is your [the undocumented students’] private information. I said, but if you do share with me, I'm letting you know that I have a better understanding of how to serve you better and identify resources and opportunities for you. Would you be willing to share with me what your citizenship status is so that way I can give you resources? And I try to share examples of that so that they may feel more comfortable. So that to me is being
sensitive to the fact that maybe they don't wanna disclose, but then it might give a motivation to self-disclose.

This school counselor demonstrates the importance of developing a welcoming and safe environment so that students may disclose to better assist them through complex situations.

As participants in this study shared another characteristic for one to consider is the developmental timing of their immigration to the U.S. As described by the participants, developmental differences take into account one’s education level and English language development, age, and time of arrival to the United States. Francisco, an undocumented student in this study who arrived in the U.S. at the age of three explains,

I started [kindergarten] one year earlier. I don't know. I think, I mean luckily, everybody spoke Spanish. The teacher was bilingual. I was still only three years old, three or four. I don't think I spoke that much. So it wasn't that much of a challenge for me, learning the language because I was so young and because I started so early.

Another, developmental characteristic to take into account is a student’s access to quality education in their home country. Oscar, a school counselor explains,

It depends on if the student comes from a rural area ...If they [the undocumented student] come here from a small school setting compared to if they come from Mexico City, chances are their education levels they differ, and so they're easier to adapt or harder to adapt depending on what their foundation looks like.

Elena, an undocumented student in this study that arrived in the U.S. at the age of 15 shares,

I was in a private school in Mexico, so when my mom provided the transcripts and all that, [the school in the U.S.] agreed to keep me and matriculate because of my extracurriculars and reputation that the school had in Mexico. So they kept me on as a sophomore year. And I went to a charter school.

The student shares that they felt more confident in classes, such as math because her private school had prepared her very well in that area, she excelled in math and later graduated high
school. She shares that her elementary schooling in her home country prepared her well in many subject areas.

Interconnected, another critical adjustment barrier that was mentioned by all participants and is interrelated to one’s developmental growth is an undocumented student’s linguistic development. Language can be a major barrier if an undocumented student arrives in their teenage years as opposed to one who may have arrived when they were a toddler. Elena, an undocumented student in this study that arrived in the U.S. at the age of 15 explains,

Well, the immediate one [barrier] was language. I was extremely self-conscious of my accent. I did know English which helped me, but I was able to understand maybe 70% of what I would hear, but I was not confident on speaking. Something, another challenge. So one of the challenges are understanding 100%. Second one was not being confident on speaking.

This passage emphasizes the developmental timing of their immigration to the U.S and language as a barrier. All school counselor participants acknowledged that seeing older undocumented students struggle with the English language was a big challenge. School counselors in this study shared that their inability to speak English would hinder their access to resources, block their ability to learn in core courses in school, and it could also limit their access to post-secondary options.

There is a myriad of contributions that the participants in this transformative mixed methods study shared. The commonality of their experiences revealed four themes culturally sensitive MTSS practices; educator tools and advocacy; academic resiliency and intersectional identity; and school adjustment barriers. These findings help to amplify the voices of school counselors that work in MTSS schools and serve undocumented students within this study. The undocumented students that participated not only illustrated barriers to obtaining mental health support but also were open to giving recommendations to professionals in the field that helped
developed themes for strengthening MTSS mental health practices. In the following section I will look further into this study and explore how the quantitative and qualitative results contribute to mental health supports for undocumented students.

Mixed Methods Findings

In this study the mixed methods research question asks, “How do the follow-up qualitative results based on personal experiences illuminate the statistical results in the study?” The mixed methods findings explain at least two major aspects. First, they give experiential examples of how multicultural competency factors are operationalized by school counselors in the field. They open a descriptive window into the complexities of how MTSS systems may support undocumented students. Second, they illustrate key quantitative findings of how MTSS development and the multicultural competency of school counselors are innately tied and demonstrated in the field of school counseling. In the following, I will illustrate a few key examples of how multicultural competency is demonstrated by school counselors who serve undocumented students.

The three school counselors in the qualitative phase of this study came from schools that had MTSS. Two of the three school counselors acknowledged that their school district where proactive in developing their understanding of MTSS. After further investigation into their school district, their school district website highlights various professional development trainings about MTSS with a specialist which is another factor in MTSS development. All three school counselors had practical knowledge of employing MTSS, served undocumented students, and demonstrated multicultural competency.
One of the three school counselors in this study successfully completed the survey in phase one. I included the findings of her survey in Table 5

Table 5
Survey and MSCBS Scale Sample Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym for Participant</th>
<th>Mayra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S.C. program and MTSS development.</td>
<td>Partially in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTSS development and funding.</td>
<td>Partially in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTSS training.</td>
<td>High Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTSS alignment and M.H. prog.</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention score</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership score</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychoeducation score</td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks Input score</td>
<td>5.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full scale Multicultural Competency</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this study, I measured multicultural competency by utilizing the scale measure in the MSCBS which include: interventions, leadership, psychoeducation, and seeking input. Table 5 shows MSCBS scores of Mayra, with 6.0 being the highest one can score, it also demonstrates the measurement of MTSS development she gave her school district. Mayra, a school counselor, illustrates how this looks within the daily scope of her work,

So I'm providing as much as I can social-emotional supports for every single student. And we did it in bilingual ways. We did it, I mean, we did it in both English and Spanish. We did several workshops, and then … which is the community-based organization that was partnered with [our high school], they did more of the work. They did more lessons than I was able to do, but it was in partnership.

In this example, Mayra exemplifies two of Greene's (2019) scale measures which include interventions (factor 1). Another measure that is evident is psychoeducation (factor 3). This
coincides with the findings because the school counselor partnered with an outside agency to increase outreach and mental health programming, thus increasing the efficacy of the MTSS intervention.

As the quantitative findings have demonstrated as MTSS development factor raise, so does the multicultural competency of school counselors when working with the undocumented student population. Here Elisa, a school counselor, is advocating with their administrator to open a resource group.

I was like listen like I want to run an undocumented, like resource group, ...I want to be able to be like, hey, this is DACA. This is like you know... And this is actually post 2016, I think it was my first year where there was a lot of fear. And so like let's do it this way, like we'll provide a resource group. But it was also educating staff, how do we support undocumented students, and them being aware of that support.

The school counselor expands on this and explains how she was able to educate undocumented students on college applications, and legal resources, and how this group helped the students connect with other undocumented students. Elisa is demonstrating MSCBS factors such as psychoeducation (factor 3) which in this case includes small group lessons and leadership (factor 2). Furthermore, she is displaying interventions (factor 1) as she demonstrates changing helping style when culturally appropriate and seeking input (factor 4) which includes seeking feedback from stakeholders such as students, community partners, and administrators.

Although the undocumented students in the study were not familiar with MTSS, their statements expand on the quantitative findings by adding more description on what some improvements can be done in schools. Here Elena, an undocumented student, explains a tier 2/3 support that can be implemented in schools.

Well, I think that if schools had more of like therapy options, I think that it would be great, where people are able to express themselves freely without feeling like, oh my God, they're gonna call ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement]. That was
something that like I will hear a lot, there were ICE like raids… That would freak me out and I wouldn't know who to tell. So it would be nice to have a space where people can do that [have therapy].

Elena speaks on the importance of providing therapy in schools. According to the quantitative findings if I increase MTSS alignment with mental health programming the multicultural competency of the school counselors increases. As Elena explains if the school provides therapy options to undocumented students it would demonstrate the multicultural competency of school counselors and the schools they serve.

In conclusion, the mixed methods question in this study illustrates the importance of school counselor voices in the field and the importance of including undocumented students' voices into this study. The mixed methods findings have also helped to give tangible examples of how tiered interventions are being employed by school counselors working in MTSS schools. In this transformative mixed methods approach, I seek to activate and amplify the voices and experiences of marginalized identity groups to advance social justice. By adding the experiences of school counselors and undocumented students I acknowledge their stories and demonstrate how multiculturalism can create social justice initiatives that not only impact the mental health of students but help in the development of the undocumented student.

**Conclusion**

Examination of this study's phase one quantitative research questions explored if certain multicultural variables impacted MTSS development factors. It revealed a statistically significant quantitative finding, when working with undocumented students as MTSS development factors (school counseling program and MTSS development, MTSS funding, MTSS training, and MTSS alignment with mental health programming) change so does the multicultural competency of
school counselors. Moreover, other independent variables that were explored did not yield a significant finding but guided me in the formation of my qualitative questions. The next set of research questions explored how undocumented students and school counselors are reciprocally experiencing mental health supports. This exploration led to four themes across the five cases: (a) culturally sensitive MTSS practices; (b) educator tools and advocacy; (c) academic resiliency and intersectional identity; (d) school adjustment barriers. The examples and quotes highlighted in this chapter help to illuminate the findings of the quantitative research question and in turn, answer the fifth research question which underscores this transformative mixed method study.

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings represented school counselor voices in the field and helped to illustrate specific practices experienced by both undocumented students and school counselors. The descriptive statistics at the beginning of the chapter highlighted the importance of MTSS and how it could grow through investment in mental health supports for undocumented students. The qualitative findings expanded on specific tools one may use and barriers one may anticipate when working with undocumented students. Chapter Five will provide further discussion about these findings.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This transformative mixed methods study examined the mental health supports that school counselors deliver to undocumented students using quantitative and qualitative analysis to amplify the voices of both school counselors and undocumented students. I followed a sequential pattern of data collection where 416 school counselors participated in a national survey. All school counselors that participated in both phases of this study worked with undocumented students and in schools where MTSS was implemented. The second phase of this study qualitatively examined undocumented students and school counselors that were from MTSS schools who were familiar with either receiving or administrating mental health support.

The five research questions that helped to guide this study expanded on the complexities found within MTSS. The five research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

Quantitative:

1. What is the relationship between school counselors' perceived multicultural competency and MTSS development among school counselors when providing mental health supports to undocumented students?

2. What other factors attenuate multicultural competency for school counselors working within MTSS and this population?

Qualitative

3. How are school counselors experiencing the delivery of mental health supports for undocumented students within MTSS?

4. How are undocumented students experiencing mental health supports from their school counselor?
Mixed methods

5. How do the follow-up qualitative results base on personal experiences illuminate the statistical results of the study?

These five research questions allowed for an intensive examination of the mental health supports within MTSS that help support undocumented students. The mixed methods aspect of this study enables the enhancement of students' and school counselor voice in a participatory method. It further illustrated the complexities of educator advocacy strategies and undocumented students' obstacles. Table 6 illustrates a joint display of the findings of this study.

Findings from this research demonstrate that school counselors that serve undocumented students tap into the resources of MTSS schools with a culturally sensitive approach. They advocate for their students and are actively seeking professional growth to better serve undocumented students. These findings are consistent with several theoretical perspectives in school counseling undocumented students that assert “school counselors are in a unique position to serve as agents of change” (Chen et al., 2010) and emphasize the importance of a systems-based approach to enhance the utilization of multitiered systems (Chen et al., 2010; Talleyrand & Vojtech, 2018). The findings suggest that undocumented students encounter unique challenges that are important for school counselors to understand when serving this population and outline specific strategies that educators may utilize to increase educational outcomes. The findings highlight, in a transformative paradigm, the importance of utilizing school counselors' and students' voices to direct systemic changes that can increase services for marginalized services proportioned undocumented students. This section will review the findings that were outlined in detail in Chapter 4.
### Table 6

Joint Display of Transformative Mixed Methods Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Quantitative Results of Survey</th>
<th>Qualitative Interview Finding</th>
<th>Mixed Methods Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Culturally Sensitive Tier 1 example | “I brought in folks who provided services like legal rights services to my school. I actually brought someone from MALDEF [Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund] at a point because they were deporting our students…not only did we have undocumented students, but we had refugees from Syria, from Palestine. We had a very multicultural student population. A lot of them were immigrants or recently arrived or undocumented.”
Elisa - School Counselor | MTSS provides a guiding framework for culturally sensitive interventions. |

**Culturally Sensitive MTSS for undocumented students**

MTSS development factors statistically significantly predicted the perceived school counselor's multicultural competency working with undocumented students, \( F(4, 441) = 9.490, p < .0005 \).

**Example of Being Aware of Disclosing Status**

There was no statistically significant difference in the mean multicultural competency scores of those that speak a language other than English and those that did not, \( t(392) = .75, p = .46, d= 0.09 \). Language does not significantly impede school counselors from assisting undocumented students, and they should be aware of specific issues such as the sensitivity of disclosing one's status.

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Table 6 continued on following page
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Quantitative Results of Survey</th>
<th>Qualitative Interview Finding</th>
<th>Mixed Methods Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Resiliency and Intersectional Identity</strong></td>
<td>There was no statistically significant three-way interaction between caseload, urbanicity, school level, and multicultural competency, $F(22, 348) = 0.606, p = .920$.</td>
<td>“I feel like if there's already a lot of people that tell you no as just as a person and then put all the filters, being Latino, Latina, Latin-A, Latinx, a woman, undocumented, DACA, non-DACA, like, I think that it's important to give grace to ourselves, but also to embrace ourselves.” Elena - Undocumented Student</td>
<td>Undocumented students attend school in complex environments which may add to the acculturation stressors of their intersectional identities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Adjustment Barriers</strong></td>
<td>There was no statistically significant three-way interaction between caseload, urbanicity, school level, and multicultural competency, $F(22, 348) = 0.606, p = .920$.</td>
<td>“I started [kindergarten] one year earlier. I don't know. I think, I mean luckily, everybody spoke Spanish. The teacher was bilingual. I was still only three years old, three or four. I don't think I spoke that much. So it wasn't that much of a challenge for me, learning the language because I was so young and because I started so early.” Francisco - Undocumented Student</td>
<td>Undocumented students attend school in diverse environments, which adds another layer complexity to them evolving in different developmental stages of their lives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 continued
Through regression analysis, MTSS variables (school counseling programs and MTSS development, MTSS funding, MTSS training, and MTSS alignment with mental health programming) significantly predicted the multicultural competency as measured by the Multicultural School Counseling Behavior Scale (MSCBS) of school counselors who serve undocumented students (F4, 441, p < 0.05). MTSS factors can strengthen a school district’s response to developing school counselors that are culturally sustaining in their practices with undocumented students. MTSS emphasizes multiculturalism, has the ability to serve diverse populations, and actualizes change through a system of school-wide behavioral supports (McCrary et al., 2012; McIntosh et al., 2012; Tillery et al., 2022). The mean scores of the following variables: school counseling programs and MTSS development (M=2.16), MTSS funding (M=2.18), MTSS training (M= 2.89), and MTSS alignment with mental health programming (M=2.74) demonstrate the influence of each variable. The mean scores also underline the high impact MTSS training has on the overall model, it is an influential variable in preparing school counselors and enhancing their multicultural competency when working with undocumented students as it has the potential to enhance MTSS delivery. MTSS and training in this area have been noted to enhance the multicultural competency of school counselors by interlacing various social justice-based principles such as advocacy and culturally sustaining theory (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020; Grothaus et al., 2020). MTSS training and professional development focused on undocumented students could focus on multicultural competency factors such as developing leadership skills to empower undocumented students and focusing on specialized interventions such as a newcomer immigrant group curriculum that was demonstrated by Mayra who is a school counselor in this study. Multicultural competency factors such as psychoeducation could be expanded to include visits from immigration lawyers.
or legal aid groups, this can be beneficial for all students in different age groups, as it can heighten the multicultural awareness of all that participate in the discussions.

Another instrumental variable in exploration is MTSS alignment with mental health programming which was demonstrated to have a high mean in the overall model. Additionally, MTSS alignment with mental health programming had a distinct slope coefficient, meaning that there is a linear relationship in the population (Frost, 2019). This highlights the statistical significance of this variable and demonstrates that as multicultural competency increases so does MTSS alignment with mental health programming.

This study and its data were collected during the COVID pandemic, underscoring the need for mental health programming in schools. This illustrates that the school counselors that took this survey the urgent need for mental health programming and evidence-based programs like MTSS when working with undocumented students during a pandemic. MTSS has been utilized in schools throughout the nation and it has been utilized as a guiding framework to organize mental health programming in schools (Barret et al., 2017; Fabiano & Evans, 2019). This is a critical reference point that may help other marginalized communities in crises such as the pandemic. The school counselors in this study demonstrated utilizing specialized groups for immigrant students and being culturally sensitive in discussing undocumented students' status to enhance the mental well-being of the undocumented students that they worked with. It is valuable to have empirical evidence demonstrating that MTSS is culturally sustaining and supports the unique needs of undocumented students as seen in this study.

In summary, the model predicted that as MTSS variables increase so do MSCBS factors. The MSCBS factors have been conceptualized in articles and delineate culturally sensitive school counseling practices that support undocumented students (Chen et al., 2010; Storlie &
Jach, 2012; Talleyrand & Vojtech, 2018). The MSCBS factors, which are interventions, leadership, psychoeducation, and seeking input, if further developed by school counselors can raise the mental wellness and resiliency of undocumented students in school systems.

The other research questions illustrated that language, caseload, school grade level, and urbanicity do not significantly impact perceived multicultural competency when working with undocumented students. This can demonstrate the intricate nature of multicultural competency by researchers who theorize that anti-oppressive practices for school counselors who work with undocumented students can be highly complex and have various components of the delivery (DeLuca-Aconci et al., 2022; Todd et al., 2020; Walley & Knight, 2018).

Nonetheless, variables such as language are reported to be an important developmental factor in undocumented students’ success in schools (Aganza et al., 2019; Arbona et al., 2010; Bernal-Arevalo et al., 2021). In this study, speaking a language other than English was selected (3.91 ± 0.87) by school counselors over those who only speak English (3.83 ± 0.77), there was no statistical difference in the mean of multicultural competency. This may highlight the school counselors’ abilities to use translation and culturally sustaining practices to enhance the delivery of the school counseling program. This is a critical finding for those that only speak English because it demonstrates their ability to demonstrate multicultural competency and it emphasizes the universality of CSSC practices.

Furthermore, there was no statistically significant three-way interaction between caseload, urbanicity, and school level. In this analysis, suburban and urban school counselors demonstrated higher multicultural competency than rural school counselors. This may be due to the heightened diversity and number of students found in urban and suburban schools as opposed to those found in rural schools. Additionally, the recommended caseload for school counselors is
a ratio of 250:1 (ASCA, 2020), but a higher caseload did not significantly impact the mean multicultural competency of school counselors working with undocumented students. Finally, the school level did not have a significant impact on multicultural competency, but it did demonstrate a higher level of multicultural competency for school counselors that work in multiple buildings. This adds to the previous inference that if school counselors work with a larger number of students this may increase their multicultural competency.

In the second phase of this study, I interviewed undocumented students and school counselors that were in MTSS schools. The qualitative findings revealed four themes: culturally sensitive MTSS practices; educator tools and advocacy; academic resiliency and intersectional identity; and school adjustment barriers. Culturally sensitive MTSS practices have been highlighted by many scholars in research studies to assist marginalized students (McCrary et al., 2012; McIntosh et al., 2012; Tillery et al., 2022). One researcher conceptualized that MTSS can enhance mental health practices for student support professionals such as school counselors working with undocumented students (DeLuca-Acconi et al., 2022). This study adds to empirical research that focuses on MTSS mental health practices and considerations that may benefit school counselors working with undocumented students. When I illustrated the finding of educator tools, a central idea emerged, using culturally sensitive evidence-based practices when looks different with this population. School counselors shared the features of these differences included the need for translation or to have a bilingual school counselors present for the activity. The school counselors mentioned that they would have to reshape the resource, translate it on their own, and personalize it to the group to make it culturally sensitive. Evidence-based curriculums and practices are essential tools in the school counseling practice (Alvarez et al., 2022; ASCA, 2020), practices that are specialized for undocumented students also adhere to the
ASCA (2020) position statements. Advocacy for undocumented students is not only a central finding but an ethical and professional stance for school counselors (ASCA, 2016, 2020). Advocacy ties into the CSSC framework that was utilized in theoretically framing this study and is expanded on in the multicultural and social justice competencies (Ratts & Greenleaf, 2017; Singh et al., 2020).

Moreover, advocacy is needed because the political realities of the undocumented participants in my study are complex. These realities are encountered when one arrives in this country and transmutes undocumented youth's experience. One participant Elena shared vivid memories of the harsh conditions of crossing the border at the age of 15, she explains it as a surreal experience that felt like she was in a movie. Crossing the border or overstaying a visa creates a stress point in the socio-political realities of U.S. immigration system and adds to the acculturation stressors that undocumented students face (Ee & Gándara, 2020; Zayas et al., 2015).

Undocumented students in my study related being scared of sharing their status, yet feeling supported when they shared it with a school counselor or teacher established a sense of belonging with them, making it easier to share their status. These messages from the new of alienation, illegality, and criminalization are real. A participant Francisco shared that these media messages shaped his sense of self and made him feel that he was not good enough to be in this country. This is concurrent with other scholars' qualitative findings that affirm that the socio-political climate affected undocumented students' well-being (Bernal-Arevalo et al., 2021). Advocacy is needed to help undocumented students who are in a differentiated power system and in several U.S. states where they are systemically marginalized.
The other theme that resulted from the study was academic resiliency and intersectional identity. Research suggests that immigrants are highly motivated and demonstrate remarkable patterns of strength (American Psychological Association, 2012; Solis-Cortes, 2018). Resiliency has been found as a relevant theme in the lived experiences of undocumented Mexican immigrant women (Solis-Cortes, 2018). Academic resiliency was described by the participants in this study and demonstrated in the interviews with undocumented students. Undocumented students in this study were also described to have complex intersectional identities, which is a feature of identity that intersects fluidly and is a social construct that encompasses all human identity (McCall, 2005; Singh et al., 2020). School adjustment barriers mentioned by the participants included disclosing immigration status, developmental time of migration, and language development. These academic barriers are consistent with researchers who speak about the impact of developmental time migration and its adverse effect on the learning process of undocumented students (Diaz-Strong, 2021; Diaz-Strong & Gonzales, 2023). In summary, the aforementioned fourth theme demonstrates the innumerable academic and social-ecological barriers that undocumented students face.

In conclusion, the mixed methods findings highlighted the MTSS factors (school counseling programs and MTSS development, MTSS funding, MTSS training, and MTSS alignment with mental health programming) that predicted the multicultural competency of school counselors who serve undocumented students. These findings were also extended and explained by the qualitative data, this confirmed that school counselors had strong beliefs that MTSS development factors supported their multicultural skills and development when working with undocumented students. These findings are consistent with researchers that highlight the
continuum of care within MTSS helps to promote racial equity (Fallon et al., 2021; Vaillancourt et al., 2013) and demonstrates multiculturally awareness in school counselors.

Implications

The findings of the study have implications for school counselors, counselor educators, administrators, educators that work with undocumented students, and education policymakers. For school counselors, this study will give a better understanding of culturally sensitive and responsive practices within the domain of mental health. School counselors will be able to link which factors within MTSS can better help them to develop multicultural competency. School counselors may use the modified MCSCBS to examine their values, beliefs, assumptions, marginalization, and axes of privilege to develop an action plan to enhance their culturally sensitive school counseling practices to better serve undocumented students. Furthermore, school counselors will be able to identify strength-based characteristics such as resiliency and intersectionality within the undocumented student lens. School counselors will also be able to identify school adjustment barriers that are prevalent in the undocumented student population.

Relatedly, counselor educators will be able to share some of the findings to promote cultural awareness among counselors in training. This can be done by embedding empirical research articles that give specific examples of how to work more effectively with undocumented students. Counselor educators can also use this research as a template for transformative mixed methods practice in the field to illustrate multilevel data collection within school counseling practice. Counselor educators may benefit from this transformative study as it creates access to inclusionary practices for research. The participatory knowledge of the voice of students and
school counselors is a critical component to include in counseling research because it can effectuate changes in practice and policy.

The study has implications for school administrators and educators who work with undocumented students. They have key roles in the school system and may interact daily with undocumented students. The findings help to illustrate strengths, barriers, and evidence-based practices that will help strengthen culturally sustaining services to undocumented students. Reports from school counselors and undocumented students from this study provide unique insights that can be utilized as a part of professional development for all staff. Additionally, school administrators play a unique role in supporting department changes for school counselors and educators. If MTSS development factors are going to improve in a school district it will need a culturally sensitive administrator that will help support or pilot specialized trainings for undocumented students. School administrators can also take the lead in aligning MTSS and mental health services and MTSS and school counseling department objectives in a manner that would better serve undocumented students. As they work with undocumented students the can see how these services also translate to other marginalized populations in schools.

Additionally, this study has implications for education policymakers, especially as the mental health crisis grows in schools. Mental health practices in schools that are specialized for undocumented students should include culturally sensitive professional development, ongoing training, and it should employ specialized practices such as those found within MTSS. To actualize these changes policymakers at a state level can mandate professional development training that focuses on undocumented students. State policymakers can allocate specific funding or offer grants to school district that hire multilingual professionals which included training them in culturally sensitive MTSS practices. This can be expanded into federal policies to allocate
more funding sources. In a transformative lens, it takes the action of an entire community of professionals to create legislation. Strong advocacy that includes school counselors' and undocumented students' voices in policy reform is a vital step in eliminating the barriers that undocumented students face.

Limitations

The design of this study is not comprehensive and does have limitations. A complex problem in data collection was posed when forming the pool for my qualitative data. The participants in the first phase of this study were contacted via the email they provided as part of a purposeful sampling method which failed. I did not receive any responses from school counselors that wanted to participate in the second phase of my study, except for one that I reached out to personally since they were part of my professional network and I recognized their email. One of the three school counselors that were part of the qualitative phase of my study completed the MCBSC portion of the survey and I included their results in the findings section. More precise follow-up could have occurred with participants if I had collected more contact information from participants such as names and phone numbers, instead of just email addresses. Lack of time was a limiting factor in following up with participants and finding participants on a national level. Additionally, multiple regression analysis may have limitations concerning generalizability, it may not be generalizable to other groups or situations (Hill & Lewicki, 2006), as the findings may only apply to school counselors who work with undocumented students in MTSS schools.

Moreover, throughout the United States there are different opportunities that are granted to undocumented youth. Illinois has many welcoming policies that help support undocumented
students which includes culturally sensitive standards for all students in schools. This may vary in other states that have more antagonistic immigration policies or do not support culturally responsive practices in education that strive to empower marginalized students. Nonetheless, the findings support the possibility to strengthen mental health supports in schools for undocumented students by giving voice to undocumented students and includes insights from school counseling professionals.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the purpose, findings, and limitations of this study, future research could include studies in the following areas. First, future research may replicate this study and collect more detailed follow-up information, to expand more on the qualitative phase. Researchers may also want to add other scales to the quantitative portion of this study that are standardized for school counselors and can more accurately capture mental health practices in schools.

Second, future studies could examine undocumented students that are not of Mexican descent. Similarly, subsequent studies can include a school counselor's and undocumented students’ voices that are from other varied racial/ethnic backgrounds. It could be beneficial to focus on school counselors that only speak English, to see what strategies they use to connect to a diverse undocumented student population.

Finally, further research may look at including additional perspectives into this transformative mixed method study that may give a more complete picture of mental health practices in schools. In addition to school counselors, researchers may want to include teachers, parents, administrators, school social workers, etc... To create a systemic view of people that work to support the mental well-being of undocumented students.
Conclusion

Historically, 2020 and 2021 have been unprecedented times within the United States with a COVID pandemic, mental health crisis, racial inequities, and marginalizing immigrant policies. This study seeks to alleviate inequities in schools by providing solutions that can support marginalized populations. The barriers for undocumented students highlighted in this study mirror those encountered by other low-income students of color. The findings emphasize factors that may contribute to more equitable practices that may enhance mental health outcomes in MTSS schools. The framework of MTSS has demonstrated common practices found in schools throughout the United States, that can support the mental health of undocumented students.

Moreover, this study has looked at a currently popular discussion of mental health in schools by applying it to a relatively unstudied population of undocumented students. The practitioners and students highlighted the strengths of undocumented students and provided a lens into how culturally sensitive practices may be employed. Nonetheless, additional policy and systemic support are needed at a local and national level to ensure that undocumented have more access to mental health support.
REFERENCES


Breen, P. (2021, June 17). *See which states have passed critical race theory bills.* https://www.nbncnews.com/news/nbcblk/map-see-which-states-have-passed-critical-race-theory-bills-n1271215


APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE AND MSCBS SCALE
Survey Questionnaire and MSCBS Scale

1. To participate in this research study your email address is needed. Some school counselors participating in this study might be chosen to participate in phase 2 of this study which includes interviews.

If needed the researcher may contact you over the span of 1 -3 months. The researcher will not share your email with others or email you about non-research-related details. Appropriate data safeguards will be taken.

Please provide your email address in the box below. Thank you.

2. As a school counselor, you have direct experience providing mental health supports (e.g., SEL, support groups, etc.,) to undocumented students anytime between the start of the pandemic, which began on January 20, 2020, and the present day.

- Yes
- No

3. Were you a school counselor that was employed by a school implementing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, e.g., PBIS, RTI, etc., in some form, when the mental health supports to undocumented students were provided?

- Yes
- No

This section includes demographic questions.

4. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender Male
- Transgender Female
- Nonconforming
- Other

5. What is your age?

- A scale allows them to enter a number between 0-100.
6. Are you Latino/a/x, Hispanic, or of Spanish origin?
   • Yes
   • No
   • Unsure

7. How would you describe yourself?
   • Black or African American
   • Asian
   • Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   • American Indian or Alaska Native
   • White

8. Do you speak a language other than English?
   • Yes
   • No

9. If applicable, besides English what other language(s) do you speak?
   • Spanish
   • French
   • Portuguese
   • Italian
   • Tagalog
   • Polish
   • Arabic
   • Other: Please Specify__________

10. How many years have you been a school counselor?
    • A scale allowed them to enter a number between 0-100.

11. Approximately how many students are on your total caseload?
    • 0 - 250
    • 251- 400
    • 401-800
    • 801- 1200
    • 1201-1600
    • 1601-2000

12. How would you describe your school’s geographic surroundings?
    • Urban
    • Rural
    • Suburban
    • Unsure
13. In which geographic region of the United States are you located?
   • Northwest
   • Midwest
   • Southeast
   • Southwest
   • West

14. According to your school report card or district knowledge, what percentage of your school receives free/reduced lunch?
   • 0 to 30%
   • 31% to 60%
   • 61% to 90%
   • 90% to 100%
   • Unsure

15. At which building level do you primarily work?
   • Elementary School
   • Middle School
   • High School
   • Multiple Buildings
   • Other

16. Approximately how many students are in your school building?
   • 0
   • 400
   • 800
   • 1200
   • 1600
   • 2000

17. Does your school receive Title I funding (Schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40 percent)?
   • Yes
   • No

The next page includes questions on school counseling/MTSS utilization and mental health integration. To clarify common terms, the Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is often used to describe a K-12, school-based, data-driven, systems-focused, tiered framework for prevention and intervention, including positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), response to intervention (RTI), and similar frameworks.
*Indicates the questions where the independent variable will be measured as posed in Research Question 1 the multiple regression of the MCSCBS measures.

15. *School counselors, please describe the level of implementation of your school counselor program and MTSS (e.g., PBIS/RTI) during your school year.
   • Not in place
   • Partially in Place
   • Fully in Place

16. *Our school district supports the school counseling program with MTSS development with funding, coaching, and professional development.
   • Not in place
   • Partially in place
   • Fully in place

17. *Indicate the extent of your training in MTSS models, such as RTI, PBIS, and other tiered supports that you have experienced in your school district.
   • No training
   • Low training: Initial training, a basic understanding of information, a single training or presentation, or introductory knowledge of MTSS given by my district this year.
   • Medium Training: In-depth training, practical topic understanding, repeated training or presentations, and have been trained or has been implemented in less than six months.
   • High Training: extensive on-site training and coaching, mastery of material, training or presentation provider, have been fully trained and coached and have been implementing for six months or longer, and/or coaching and training others.

18. If applicable to your district, in alignment with MTSS models and your school counseling program how is your district expanding its mental health supports for undocumented students? Open-ended question.

19. Please rate the value of your school’s district’s MTSS alignment with its school counseling program and mental health support given to all students in your district.
   • Not developed
   • Underdeveloped
   • Developing
   • Highly developed
**Multicultural School Counseling Behavior Scale (MSCBS) (modified version)**

**Directions:** Please indicate how often you engage in the following activities when working with undocumented students during the regular school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes, omissions, or additions to original scale questions will be crossed out. or in italics.</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequently (Less than once a school year)</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
<th>Several times a school year</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conduct classroom guidance school counseling lessons on diversity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Conduct small group counseling sessions on respecting diversity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Teach classroom guidance school counselor lessons about conflict resolution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Conduct small group counseling sessions about conflict resolution.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Implement schoolwide diversity programs (e.g., Mix It Up at Lunch)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>6. Intervene in bullying that involves racism, sexism, ableism, linguicism, immigration status, religionism, sexual orientation (perceived or known), gender expression, or other forms of discrimination)</td>
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<td>7. Conduct lessons to prevent bullying that involves racism, sexism, ableism, linguicism, religionism, sexual orientation (perceived or known), gender expression, or other forms of discrimination.</td>
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<td>8. Change helping style when Culturally appropriate.</td>
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<td>9. Intervene when cultural beliefs deter help-seeking for students or families.</td>
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Changes, omissions, or additions to original scale questions will be crossed out or in italics.

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<th>Never</th>
<th>Infrequently (Less than once a school year)</th>
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<tr>
<td>10. Use bilingual/multilingual school counseling program materials that represent all languages used by families in the school community.</td>
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<td>11. Conduct consultations with teachers on diversity issues.</td>
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<td>12. Provide workshops to families to increase collaborative two-way communication between families and the school.</td>
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<td>13. Use translators to communicate with linguistically diverse families in the school community.</td>
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<td>14. Seek out feedback from teachers and/or administration about the school counseling program.</td>
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<td>15. Seek out feedback from parents about the school counseling program.</td>
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<td>16. Seek out feedback from students about the school counseling program.</td>
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<td>17. Deliberately seek out perspectives from diverse individuals about the school counseling program.</td>
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<td>18. Affirm the multiple cultural identities of every student.</td>
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<td>19. School staff discusses program goals for diversity, especially when addressing undocumented students’ needs.</td>
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<td>20. Facilitate teacher in-service lessons on diversity issues.</td>
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<td>21. Coordinate community speakers to discuss diversity, which may include speakers focusing on undocumented student issues.</td>
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<td>22. Take professional development classes or attend workshops on diversity, which may include topics focusing on undocumented students.</td>
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<td>23. Seek knowledge about the cultural identities of students, families, and colleagues.</td>
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<td>24. Address personal biases/values that affect helping others.</td>
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<td>25. Build coalitions with teachers who are different from me (in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, first language, disability, and other identities).</td>
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<td>26. Work with school leaders and parents to create programs that help close any achievement gaps.</td>
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<td>27. Learn to pronounce every student’s full given name correctly.</td>
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<td>28. Lead initiatives to increase availability of translators for families of diverse languages.</td>
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Changes, omissions, or additions to original scale questions will be crossed out or in italics.

| 29. Intervene for students who are undocumented and are dealing with issues based on migratory status and disabilities and are dealing with ableism (Discrimination based on status). |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never | Infrequently (Less than once a school year) | Yearly | Several times a school year | Monthly | Weekly |


APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER
Dear Professional School Counselors,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study! If you choose to participate, you may access the survey at the following web address:

https://niu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5z4yalBt6QMHPKu

If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact the researcher, Oliver Camacho at ocamacho1@niu.edu.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study,

Oliver Camacho, M.A., LPC, PEL:SC
Doctoral Candidate, Counselor Education and Supervision
Northern Illinois University
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT
Informed Consent

Undocumented Students’ Voice, MTSS, and School Counselors’ Mental Health

Title of Study: Advocacy: A Transformative Mixed Methods Study (phase one-quantitative)

Investigators
Name: Oliver Camacho  Dept: COUN  Phone: 773-615-2784

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Key Information

• This is a voluntary research study that will explore culturally sensitive mental health practices in the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) that support undocumented students.

• The total survey is 6 pages long and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participants will first be asked to review informed consent. Then participants will be invited to complete a few non-identifying demographic questions (e.g., gender, years of experience, etc.). Next, participants will be invited to complete a survey assessing their multicultural competency, a modified form of the Multicultural School Counseling Behavior Scale (MSCBS). Some participants who take part in this study may be invited to take part in the second phase which includes interviews through zoom.

• One participant will receive compensation through a raffled Amazon gift card of $25 in phase one of this study. Interview participants, if selected through purposeful sampling to be part of phase two of this study, will receive a $50 dollar gift card. Your participation will help advance knowledge in the school counseling profession.

Description of the Study
The purpose of this mixed methods study is to explore culturally sensitive mental health practices in the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). It seeks to understand how school counselors and undocumented students reciprocally experience the delivery of these mental health supports in schools. If you agree to be in this study, Participants will first be asked to review informed consent. Then participants will be invited to complete a few non-identifying demographic questions (i.e., gender, years of experience, etc.). Next, participants will be invited to complete a survey assessing their multicultural competency, a modified form of the Multicultural School Counseling Behavior Scale (MSCBS). Some participants who take part in phase one may be invited to take part in the second phase of this study which includes interviews through zoom.

Participants
(a) Must be a school counselor in the United States.
(b) As a school counselor, you have direct experience providing mental health supports (e.g., SEL, support groups, etc.,) to undocumented students anytime between the start of the pandemic, which began on January 20, 2020, and the present day.

**Risks and Benefits**

The study has the following risks. This study is anonymous, and privacy is of utmost importance in this study. Nonetheless, some risks may include physiological stressors in reflecting and thinking of responses. The benefits of participation include helping to advance the knowledge in the school counseling profession. The study will also provide insight into how to better support undocumented students in school settings.

**Confidentiality**

The records of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permissible by law. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. Only the researchers will have access to the raw data. Data associated with this study will be destroyed after five years. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

**Compensation**

One participant will receive compensation through a raffled Amazon gift card of $25 in phase one of this study. Interview participants, if selected through purposeful sampling to be part of phase two of this study, will receive a $50 dollar gift card.

**Your Rights**

The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right to skip any question or research activity, as well as to withdraw completely from participation at any point during the process.

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered before, during, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact the researcher, Oliver Camacho at ocamacho1@niu.edu. You may also contact the faculty mentor, Dr. Melissa Fickling at mfickling@niu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that has not been answered by the investigator or if you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your participation, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety at (815)753-8588.

By continuing below, you are indicating that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study and that you have read and understood the information provided above. Please take a screenshot or picture of this form to keep for your records.

(c) Must be employed by a school implementing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, e.g., PBIS, RTI, etc., in some form when the mental health supports were provided to the undocumented student(s).
I agree to participate in this study. [or “Continue” or “Next”]

I do not agree to participate in this study. [or “Continue” or “Next”]

Title of Study: Undocumented Students’ Voice, MTSS, and School Counselors’ Mental Health Advocacy: A Transformative Mixed Methods Study (phase two- qualitative)

Investigators
Name: Oliver Camacho         Dept: COUN         Phone: 773-615-2784

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Key Information

- This short form is to confirm your participation in the Zoom interview, it includes this consent form, availability, and has 4 additional questions please fill out all questions to participate in the study.

- This is a voluntary research study that will explore culturally sensitive mental health practices in the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) that support undocumented students.

- If you are an undocumented student, you must be between the ages of 18-26 and fit the criteria noted below. The identifying information you share will remain anonymous.

- If you are a school counselor you must fit the criteria noted below.

- Interview participants will receive a $100 dollar gift card that will be emailed after the Zoom interview.

Description of the Study

The purpose of the qualitative phase of this mixed methods study is to explore culturally sensitive mental health practices in the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). It seeks to understand how school counselors and undocumented students reciprocally experience the delivery of these mental health supports in schools. School counselors and undocumented students will be recruited through snowball sampling. Participants will first be asked to review informed consent, complete a few non-identifying demographic questions (i.e., gender, years of experience, etc.), and complete a 30- 60 minute zoom interview on the topic being addressed.

Participants
Pool 1: Participants must be (a) current school counselors in the United States, (b) be employed by a school currently implementing MTSS, (c) and as a school counselor you have direct
experience providing mental health supports to undocumented students anytime between the start of the pandemic which began on January 20, 2020 until the present day.

Pool 2: Participants must be (a) undocumented students in the United States, (b) adults ages 18-26 (c) have received academic or social-emotional support from their school counselor in a K-12 school setting during the pandemic which began January 20, 2020 or up until the present day. This may include a few years before the pandemic began with age being the main factor to qualify.

**Risks and Benefits**
The study has the following risks, this study is anonymous, and privacy is of utmost importance in this study. Nonetheless, some risks may include physiological stressors in reflexing and thinking of responses. The benefits of participation include helping to advance the knowledge in the school counseling profession. The study will also provide insight into how to better support undocumented students in school settings.

**Confidentiality**
The records of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permissible by law. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. Only the researchers will have access to the raw data. Data associated with this study will be destroyed after five years. We will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

**Compensation**
Participants will receive compensation through of an Amazon gift card of $100 for participating in interviews, these gift cards will be delivered shortly after our interview session.

**Your Rights**
The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to stop the study at any time. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right to skip any question or research activity, as well as to withdraw completely from participation at any point during the process. You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered before, during, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact the researcher, Oliver Camacho at ocamachol@niu.edu. You may also contact my faculty mentor, Dr. Melissa Fickling at mfickling@niu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that has not been answered by the investigators or if you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your participation, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety at (815)753-8588.

☐ Do not agree to participate in this study. [or “Continue” or “Next”]

☐ I agree to be audio/videotaped in this study. [or “Continue” or “Next”]
APPENDIX D

TRANSFORMATIVE MIXED METHODS CRITERIA
<table>
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<th>Research Phase</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Operationalizing Criteria</th>
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| **Conceptualization of Study** | 1. Did the authors openly reference a problem in a community of concern?  
2. Did the authors openly declare a theoretical lens?  
3. Where the research questions written with an advocacy stance? | 1. A large community concern of mental health in schools has been cited by several authors (ASCA, 2015; Cloutier & Marshall, 2020; Cook et al., 2017), and school counselors have specialized training in this area. (ASCA, 2020a; CACREP, 2016).  
2. Culturally sensitive school counseling (CSSC) is used to address mental health supports among undocumented students.  
3. Yes as they incorporated culturally sensitive school counseling (CSSC) as a framework to examine mental health supports for undocumented students and is composed of seven major strands: (a) multicultural education; (b) multicultural and social justice-focused counseling; (c) culturally responsive pedagogy (d) culturally responsive strength-based counseling; (e) culturally sustaining advocacy; (f) critical practice in an UndocuCrit lens and (g) antiracism within a multitiered systems of support framework. |
| **Data Collection** | 4. Did the literature review include a discussion of diversity and oppression?  
5. Did the authors discuss appropriate labeling of the participants?  
6. Did the data collection and outcomes benefit the community?  
7. Did the participants initiate the research and/or where they actively engaged in the project? | 4. Yes, power differentials and oppression are reviewed in the literature review.  
5. Undocumented students and immigrants have been contextualized in this study with appropriate references.  
6. A main objective highlighted in the finding was interventions that may benefit undocumented in obtaining mental health supports in schools.  
7. Research questions, survey instrument, and interview questions where screened by school counselors who helped to provide input into this study. |
Data Analysis

| 8. Did the results elucidate power relationships? 
| 9. Did the results facilitate social change? 
| 10. Did the authors explicitly state use of a transformative framework? |

8. The results elucidated power differentials in understanding mental health supports as obtained by undocumented students, the findings illustrate the barriers faced by the students, and they highlight systemic changes that are needed.

9. The results of this study provide a framework to facilitate change through policy and increased access to mental health supports. This is elaborated on in my chapter five implication section.

10. Yes, a transformative framework has been elaborated on.

Note: Criteria added by Sweetman et al. (2010) and operationalizing criteria added by the author of this study.
### Budget: Melanie E. Rawlins Research Grant

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>1 gift card for survey participants.</td>
<td>One raffled gift card for a school counselor that does the survey.</td>
<td>$25</td>
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<tr>
<td>School counselor participants gift cards.</td>
<td>Three participants will do 40-minute interviews. Each participant will receive a $100 gift card. School Counselors can donate their gift card to an undocumented student</td>
<td>$300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult undocumented student participants gift cards.</td>
<td>Two participants will do 40-minute interviews. Each participant will receive a $100 gift card.</td>
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<td>Multilingual - transcription and cleaning</td>
<td>Academic Transcription; <a href="https://multilingualconnections.com/services/transcription/">https://multilingualconnections.com/services/transcription/</a>; $100/hr. for six hours</td>
<td>$399</td>
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<td>MAXQDA Analytics Pro - Student License</td>
<td>12 month subscription; source: <a href="https://onthehub.com/download/software-discounts/maxqda-analytics-pro-students/">https://onthehub.com/download/software-discounts/maxqda-analytics-pro-students/</a>; qualitative and mixed methods analytical software.</td>
<td>$76</td>
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**Grant Total**                                                                                       **$1,000**
APPENDIX F

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Questions for School Counselors:

1. Demographic questions included asking about age, race/ethnicity, the number of years as a school counselor, and the state that they live in.

2. Tell me about your role as a school counselor and the school you serve.

3. How would you describe your work with undocumented students?

4. How do you support the mental health or social-emotional well-being of undocumented students?

5. How do the Multi-Tier Systems of Support inform the work that you do?

6. The initial findings of this study show that the more invested and developed a school district is the more multiculturally competent school counselors may be perceived to be when working with undocumented students. These are the four measures of MTSS development (school counseling program and MTSS development, MTSS funding, MTSS training, and MTSS alignment with mental health programming). As MTSS development rises so does one perceived multicultural competency when working with undocumented students. What are your thoughts on this?

7. What does it mean to you to be culturally sensitive or culturally responsive when working with undocumented students?

8. How did the COVID pandemic impact the way that you support the mental health or social-emotional well-being of undocumented students?

9. Describe an undocumented student that has impacted you professionally. How did they shape your work with undocumented students?

10. What resources can schools like yours give to undocumented students to help support their mental health?
11. What resources are most useful to you when working with undocumented students?

12. What advice would you give to school counselors that work with undocumented students?

Questions for Undocumented students:

1. Demographic questions included asking about age, race/ethnicity, and state that they live in.

2. Tell me about yourself. Where were you born?

3. How did you come to the United States? What was the experience like?

4. How would you describe the first years that you started school in the United States?

5. What challenges did you have when you were in school?

6. When did you find out that you were undocumented? How did it impact your adjustment to being in school?

7. Where did you meet the school counselor(s) that helped you academically or socially-emotionally?

8. How did this school counselor impact your life?

9. What resources did they share with you that help you during school? How did that help you socially-emotionally?

10. What advice would you give school counselors who try to help support the social emotional well-being or mental health of undocumented students?

11. What resources can schools give to undocumented students to help support their emotional well-being or mental health?

12. What years were you in high school?
13. Were you in high school or elementary school during the COVID pandemic? If yes, how did that experience impact your mental health?