From Moratorium to Auditorium: A Case Study of the Latino Undocumented Student in Secondary Music Education

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Globalization, climate change, and political instability are increasing migration patterns across the world with millions of people, including children, adapting to new host nations (UNHCR, 2019). There is evidence that immigrant children have obstacles and influences in psychosocial development beyond language acquisition (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Eriksonian Developmental Theory (Erikson, 1968) suggests as adolescents progress in typical identity maturation, they explore their future purpose in society while also establishing personal ethics. Further, Marcia et al. (1993) describe some adolescents who have actively sought personal ethic exploration, but cannot fully pursue a future purpose, as "Moratoriums." More broadly, the term "moratorium" can define a delay in legal motion, creating a waiting period (Miriam-Webster, 2024). This term aptly depicts the situation many undocumented youth face while waiting to live their lives fully in the United States regarding both legal status and identity development (Gonzales, 2011). This case study of five Latino immigrants, four being undocumented, asks adult respondents (aged 19-26) to reflect on moments of exclusion/inclusion in their secondary music classes through a set of open-ended questions. Using Quirkos software (2013), in vivo inductive coding revealed several themes found in transcribed interviews. Additionally, Suárez-Orozco et al. Integrative Risk and Resilience Model for Understanding the Adaptation of Immigrant-Origin Children and Youth (2018) provided the framework for deductive coding also revealing similar emergent themes. Findings show respondents felt included in music classes except regarding group travel. Several emergent themes encompassed identity, language acquisition, acculturation/enculturation, boundaries, and feelings. Research findings shed light on a clandestine population in the context of music education, general education, social-emotional learning, immigrant-specific adaptations, undocumented student's identity development, and meaningful music-making. This study gives some evidence that within the school immigrant adaptive microsystem, secondary music education programs may serve as a "nanosystem" for Moratoriums to feel safe to explore their future purpose actively without judgement, building resilience for the challenges that lie ahead.

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The Brookings Institute states approximately 3.2% - 3.6% of the American population is undocumented with millions of these students in the public school system (Kamarck & Stenglein, 2019). Most live in fear of discovery, while others are unaware of their status (Gonzales, 2015). There is a growing body of research regarding immigrant and undocumented students' academic, socio-economic, and emotional obstacles (Figueroa, 2017; Gonzales, 2015; Mendez & Schmalzbauer, 2018). The immigrant student's musical education can be fundamental to their development, not only intellectually (Kraus & White-Schwoch, 2020), but socially as well (Jacobi,

2012; Lage-Gómez & Cremades-Andreu, 2021). Often music rehearsals become a welcome and safe place to be vulnerable and free of judgment (Marsh, 2017). Studies show that students with protective factors such as supportive parents, routine, and a sense of belonging in their school communities, including participation in music education activities are more likely to build resilience (Green et al., 2008; Heise, 2014; Perez et al., 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018).

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court case *Plyler v Doe* established it would be in the best interest of society to educate all children despite their legal status (legality); however, the decision set limitations on what schools can ask both parents and students regarding residency. This creates a "don't ask, don't tell" conundrum for undocumented students and families (Gonzales et al., 2015). For undocumented students who arrived in their childhood and know no other homeland, their future may be limited in both advancement and legality. As they mature, they come to recognize the legal limitations or liminality (Gonzales, 2011). Only those granted Deferred Action Childhood Arrival (DACA) status or asylum can legally work, drive, and move their lives forward without fear of deportation; however, these individuals cannot leave the U.S. and return, nor are they provided a manner to gain citizenship (*Pathway to U.S. Citizenship,* 2022). Without immigration reform, this part of the population has continued to grow with only a few glimmers of legal resolution from the conflict of "living a life in limbo" (Gonzales, 2015).

Intersection of Psychosocial Development, Belonging, and Empathy

In a 2010 study, Kirschner and Tomasello provided evidence that children who participated in a joint musical activity were more likely to collaborate in problem solving than those who did not. Rabinowitch and Meltzoff (2017) found synchronous movement enhances cooperation in pre-school aged children, while Marsh (2019) posits music provides a dialogic space promoting empathy and inclusion in social uncertainty among migrant children and youth. This research may suggest in context of the American Latino undocumented student, performing ensembles may build belonging, collaboration, and empathy.

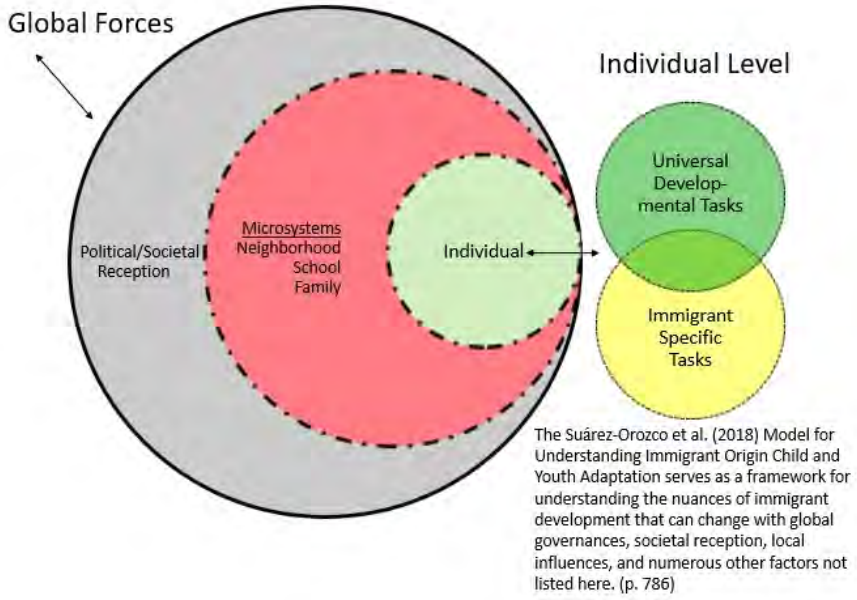
Immigrant Psychosocial Development

In 2016, Dunkel and Harbke's meta-analysis found evidence to support a general correlating factor in Erikson's (1968) eight psychological stages of development. Erikson theorizes psychosocial development centers on the conflict between personal psychological needs and society's needs. As these two opposing desires begin to acquiesce, a psychosocial strength develops. If the conflict remains, psychological challenges will continue to influence a person's development, possibly delaying or hindering the following developmental stage(s) (Salkind, 2005). In adolescence, development centers on identity exploration as youth begin to commit to one's sense of self *(Who am I?)* and society *(What is my future purpose?)* (Erikson, 1968, p. 314). However, as some adolescents fail to explore a future purpose, a period of moratorium may precede or hinder identity achievement (Marcia, 2006). In the Encyclopedia of Human Development, "a teen or young adult who is still experimenting without any [future] commitments is said to be in a moratorium or holding pattern" (Salkind, 2005, p. 1049). Marcia (2006) developed Eriksonian theory further: "Typically, 'Moratoriums,' currently in some form of identity crisis, appear as vital, struggling, engaging, and intense" (p. 581). Batra (2013) suggests, "If a person passes through a [psychosocial] stage unsuccessfully, he or she may develop a disposition that resembles one of two opposing forces. Consequently, the person may experience emotional discomfort or in extreme cases mental ill health" (p. 257).

Suárez-Orozco et al. (2018), in the Integrative Risk and Resilience Model for Understanding the Adaption of Immigrant-Origin Children and Youth (IR&RM), posited that immigrant children must not only navigate the same psychosocial tasks as other children, but additional immigrant-origin tasks possibly delaying development such as language acquisition. See Figure 1. Gonzales (2015) asserted, time is influential and adds a circumstantial effect to immigrant societal belonging, but for the undocumented "it alters the institutional landscape" and "changes the requirements for participation" (p. 18).

Figure 1

Suárez-Orozco et al. (2018) Interactive Risk and Resilience Model for Understanding Immigrant Origin Child and Youth Adaptation (IR&RM)



Immigrant Music Belonging

Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs places love and belonging as the third most important human requirement above only safety and physiological needs. Brown (2017) states, "True belonging doesn't require you to change who you are; it requires you to be who you are" (p. 40). There has been a growing body of evidence that music participation contributes to a sense of community belonging (Kirschner & Tomasello, 2010; Moss et al., 2018; Parker, 2010). Many undocumented students struggle with disclosure, trust within their peer groups, and often feel guilt for hiding their identity as they struggle building meaningful relationships and creating support systems (Figueroa, 2017; Vaquera et al., 2017). They may distance themselves from others, create a cover story, appear shy and passive, lack intrinsic motivation, avoid creating goals or future plans, avoid behaviors that can bring attention to themselves in public, or strengthen their school identity as a means of escape (Cobb et al., 2017; Yasuike, 2019).

Although there has been little research on the undocumented music student, there is evidence of immigrants and refugees using music to mitigate the difficult transitions these groups must make (Marsh, 2012). Benjamins (2018) found that immigrants in Canada use music to acculturate

and gain social mobility. Marsh (2012) provides evidence choral singing particularly gives a sense of closeness and trust. Additionally, Crawford's (2020a) case study observes cultural competence and social inclusion naturally embedded in rehearsal resulting in student-centered, practical, and authentic inclusive activities. Frankenberg et al. (2016) found immigrant students who participated in large ensembles rehearsing for at least eighteen months acquired more host cultural norms than those who did not participate in ensemble music-making.

Music Education as an Empathy Builder

With their additional psychological obstacles and/or liminality, the undocumented student may have to overcome fear, mistrust, ambiguous identity, isolation, and hopelessness. Music educators, as influential persons, can make a significant contribution to mitigating these risk factors by creating spaces of acceptance (Marsh, 2017). However, the inability of teachers to ask any student their legal status requires educators to be observant of the characteristics of the undocumented student. Brown (2016) argues successful educational leaders must have a high level of discomfort, a deeper understanding of personal emotions, and an understanding of how emotions work in their students. Gonzales et al. (2013) state undocumented students who have an adult at school they can trust are more likely to finish school. Heise (2014) argues that troubled students who build resilience have four things in common: social competence, adaptability, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and future. Music education classrooms are natural breeding grounds for these skills (Crawford, 2020b; Jacobi, 2012; Karlsen, 2014). Perhaps the most difficult mitigating factor to incorporate in a music classroom for the undocumented student, particularly, is the concept of future. Nevertheless, Heise (2014) argues resilience and creativity produce a feedback loop, each characteristic building upon the other, resulting in creative artists that are resilient people.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to investigate, retrospectively, secondary music education belonging among Latino undocumented students. While in school, did music classes provide a sense of inclusion other classes did not or could they participate fully in the same perceived way as their peers did? In addition, what do they wish now music educators understood regarding, for many, a secret unwanted identity? This case study, through a single qualitative interview, asks five adult Latino participants, four undocumented, to reflect on their secondary music education experiences of belonging. An important note in this study, although there is a small sample, (*N=5)* no two respondents have the same legal status, including siblings which emphasizes the nuanced nature of gaining legality.

Method

The chief aim of this study is to investigate the sense of belonging undocumented adults perceive of their time in secondary music education classes. Unsurprisingly, the inclination of most immigrants is to draw limited attention to themselves. For this reason, there was an attempt to build a strong sense of trust before any interviewing began between the respondent and interviewer. Sharing the intention of the case study's purpose of understanding secondary music education through the participants' perspectives provided motivation to share their stories and personal thoughts on the subject matter.

This case study contains participants who were purposively selected via the authors, colleagues of the authors, and other participants. One author knows three participants as undocumented residents. Using snowball recruiting, one participant encouraged another respondent to join the study. A colleague recruited the final respondent. The sample of participants (*N*=5) included three females (*n* = 3) and two males (*n* = 2), 19 to 26 years of age, all with varying degrees of legal status listed below in increasing risk of deportation. Each participant chose a pseudonym for anonymity.

Participants

Eugenio was a legal resident throughout his schooling and is now a citizen. He grew up in the Rio Grande Valley active in both junior and high school band, later joining choir. He is currently a music educator in the state of Texas and is included in the study to consider general immigrant perspectives without the threat of deportation.

Alex arrived legally in the U.S. at the age of 6 or 7 and believes his status of becoming undocumented occurred around the age of 16. He was a member of the choir from sixth through tenth grade. Alex applied and received his DACA status in his young adulthood. He currently is living independently and works as an installer of audio/visual equipment.

Ama is 19-years-old, graduated in the top 3% of her class, and has recently acquired asylum status along with the rest of her family. She works at a local restaurant legally and plans to apply to get her driver's license soon. Ama lives with her family and hopes to attend culinary school in the future.

Miriam is 19 years old and is Alex's younger sister. She entered the U.S. at the age of two with her mother using a valid guest visa. She participated in both choir and band (color guard). After graduation, she worked at a local restaurant and applied for DACA. However, due to complications surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, she has yet to receive confirmation of her application and is in a holding pattern. She is currently unemployed and living with her parents.

Nineteen-year-old Karla is in jeopardy of detention and/or deportation. She arrived in the U.S. under the age of two and was a member of the band for six years. She applied for DACA followed shortly by two separate arrests for possession of marijuana. She currently resides with four other people and works at a local restaurant. She expresses an interest to play with a community band but is fearful administrative staff will ask for legal information.

Study Design

Participants answered a series of eight open-ended questions asked in the same order while responses were audio recorded. If needed, the researcher asked follow-up questions for clarification. A week following the interview participants received, via email, a questionnaire asking for basic demographic information and an opportunity to share any other information or personal reflections for the study.

The interview questions included: *(1) Tell the story of how you and/or your family became undocumented. (2) Did you ever feel included or excluded while in junior high and/or high school? (3) Can you give any examples of how so for either or both? (4) Were there particular events you experienced that led to those feelings? (5) Looking back now, in what ways do you think your junior high and/or high school music classes affected you? (6) What could schools, teachers, or communities do to make school more inclusive for their undocumented students? (7) Has music continued to be a part of your life? If so, how? (8) What else would you like to share even in regards your work or home life?*

Post-interview, transcripts were coded through the qualitative software Quirkos (2013) in an inductive manner revealing particular themes. Those themes appeared to be similar to the Suárez-Orozco et al. (2018) Interactive Risk and Resilience Model (IR&RM). Data was then more thoroughly deductively coded using the IR&RM framework. A week later, participants answered a Google form collecting basic demographic data and were given an opportunity to add any thoughts. Three participants responded in written form and their comments were coded and added to the final analysis.

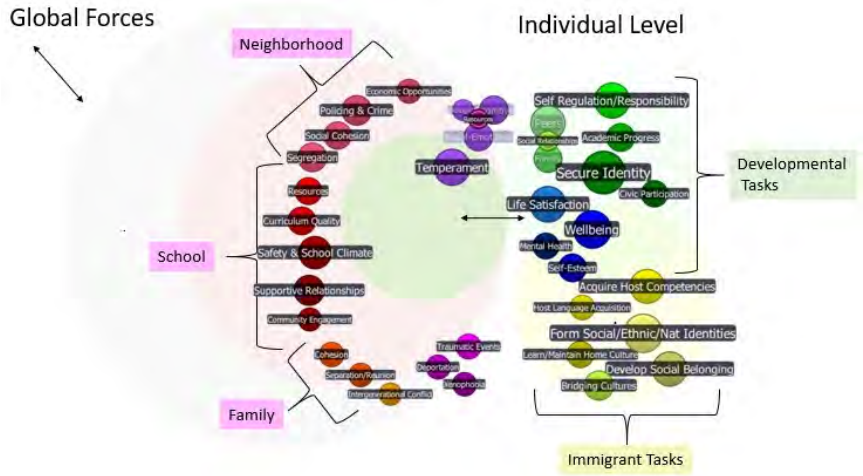
Interpretive Lens and Data Analysis

The researchers employed critical theory (Rexhepi & Torres, 2011) as an interpretive lens (Creswell & Poth, 2016) in a manner that replicated the methodology used in an earlier investigation regarding marginalized populations in music education (Fitzpatrick et.al, 2014). Similar to the research conducted by Fitzpatrick et al. (2014), this approach guided the data collection, data analysis, and the interpretation of the results of the current investigation.

Data provided from the participants provided a wealth of information on various topics, mostly unrelated to secondary music or exclusion/inclusion. Initially, inductive in vivo coding revealed identity, acculturation and other common immigrant adaptive themes. Using these themes to guide additional literature research, the researcher found and chose to use a framework from the Suárez-Orozco et al., (2018) IR&RM. Deductive coding presented developmental themes such as self-regulation, peers, overall identity, and academic progress with typical psychological development such as well-being, temperament, life satisfaction. Immigrant specific tasks present included social belonging, acquiring host country competencies (acculturation), language acquisition, balancing home and host country cultures, and maintaining interethnic peer relationships. Grouping similar themes together, the analysis of merged inductive and deductive codes revealed the following information. Larger spheres represent more frequently mentioned themes; smaller spheres reveal less frequency of themes. The codes are arranged and color-coded similarly to the IR&RM found in Figure 1. See Figure 2.

Figure 2

Inductive and Deductive Combined Themes in Context of the IR&RM Framework



Results

Typically, in case studies such as these, themes are presented with multiple examples from varying respondents. In this study's findings, however, there is an attempt to suggest a broader understanding. Here, every participant shared *elementary* positive or negative memories despite being asked more specifically about junior or high school. Each respondent then followed later in the interview with examples of using secondary music classes to reinforce positive feelings or mitigate negative ones within context of that core memory. The following contain these emerging themes within that of a single participant response to highlight the usage of music classes to mitigate difficulty or strengthen achievement in reference to a core memory. They also appear in correlation with the participant's residential legality beginning first with Eugenio, always a legal resident, and ending with Karla, most at risk for deportation and the only respondent to speak of music class exclusion.

Emergent Themes

Identity (Eugenio)

In his interview, Eugenio made clear his family arrived legally, naturalized through the normal process, and never spoke of inclusion/exclusion due to legality. Because of the nature of the questions, it is unsurprising that identity statements were the most common response such as "I am" or "I was." Referencing elementary school, Eugenio commented, "I had bilingual classes growing up from like Pre-K to probably first or second grade so I just, I never felt excluded because I was an immigrant really."

However, Eugenio did mention a memory of inner-ethnic conflict.

> There were maybe two instances when I was in high school where you had a kind of [bias] …there's certain Hispanic people in Brownsville [that] look down on the fact that they're Mexican which is weird . . .Because they look like you and they're brown too, but they're making these weird comments about not being Mexican.

The following example reveals how Eugenio has actively explored both future purpose and personal identity. When asked a follow-up question regarding what his instrument was in the band he replied, "I was a percussionist. So yeah…yeah eventually, eventually [I] became real musician when I became a vocalist (laughing aloud)." Both his descriptors referenced his identity ("I was" versus "I became,") but also show a commitment to future purpose and transitioning into a perceived "real musician" becoming the person and professional he is now.

Acculturation (Alex)

Alex is currently a DACA recipient and can legally work, drive, and travel freely throughout the continental U.S. Alex's responses tend to reflect those associated with social norms and standing out from others in an extraordinary way. He arrived around first or second grade unable to speak English and when asked about music ensemble belonging, he discusses nonmusical elementary school acculturation through a milestone moment of childhood.

> I remember one day. We had a field day going on. I don't remember what year it was and I don't know what event or race I won or whatever. I remember I was the reason why we won or whatever. And everybody was just praising me, I guess you could say but, it was … it felt good, honestly. I want to say … maybe it was third grade, maybe fourth grade.

Alex also describes breaking junior high social norms and standing out when he chose to join the choir, "Yeah, there's always all that 'what'd you pick' or 'what elective did you get.' And well, sometimes you would say, 'choir' and they would make fun of you." He goes on to describe the benefit of making friends. He explained, "Yeah, there is always people making fun of you like that. I remember going on field trips with choir and like ... If anything, I got to meet more guys."

The only mention of liminality Alex gives is an example, before he had DACA, the difficulty of cashing his first IRS refund check at a local grocery store and resisting the urge to point out perceived discrimination. He explains, "I could've done it, but I just chose not to because I...I'm not gonna waste no time on it either, [I'm] gonna walk away from it. You know, just ignore it. That's usually how it is."

Language Acquisition, Enculturation, Bridging Cultures (Ama)

Ama recently has received asylum status that allows her the same legal allowances as those with DACA. Similarly, it does not provide a pathway to citizenship. Most of Ama's responses referenced language acquisition more than any other respondent reference and expressed the multi-lingual song exposure in choral music as fundamental to her development. However, one might posit, while in early elementary school, the possibility of her mother's arrest, exacerbated by the inability to defend herself in English, was integral to Ama's understanding of the necessity of language acquisition.

> There was this one time when my mom went to the grocery store and someone accused her of stealing. She didn't know English at the time and that was really early when we got here, so she's never gone back to the grocery store alone. Like... it really traumatized her... was pretty, pretty... bad for her.

Ama also shared a story of her parents being upset with her reading English language books in an example of generational acculturation conflict. She said, "In my home life, our parents didn't like it when we listened to music in English because they couldn't understand it."

Regarding choosing choir in sixth grade, Ama mentioned, "I finally could take choir and it was really fun and everyone was pretty cool." However, she continued to explain, "I really wanted to take it back in fifth grade but my parents never allowed me to. They just didn't like us going anywhere. It was an after-school class." Although Ama did not perceive exclusion from school participation because of her or her parents' legal status, it is common that undocumented parents attempt to minimize time out of the home and travel for multiple reasons (Gonzales, 2015). Ama continued to describe how she only received elementary music instruction once or twice a week and reiterated her ability to participate more fully in sixth grade, "I got to do it every day and it was really fun. I made a lot of friends through choir."

A week after the interview, in her written response, Ama reiterated how music helped her with language acquisition, "choir has impacted my ability to listen to many different genres of music and appreciate them for different reasons, as well as giving me a solid building block for learning new languages, especially Latin ones."

When discussing generally belonging, Ama also mentions enculturation and the importance she believes experiencing her home country's heritage was to her youngest sibling since he was an infant upon arrival.

> We did have heritage stuff here. Since in Texas they do a lot of heritage stuff so we never lost, like, connection with that because my baby brother he... We moved over here when he was like four months old so he *never* really got that experience back in Mexico and here he got a little bit of it.

At the same time, this may show the inability of her family to visit their home country because of their legal circumstance.

Boundaries, Emotions, and Peers (Miriam)

Unlike older brother Alex, who relishes in standing out, younger sister Miriam speaks negatively of her perceived differences. She arrived in the U.S. at the age of two and associates the milestone with the Fourth of July as her arrival anniversary. Like many undocumented youth, she is unable to legally drive, work, and travel in the U.S. during the time of her interview and described the reality of her work legal limitations, "I can apply wherever, but they're going to be, 'you need a social,' or 'you need some type of Texas ID or something,' but I have none of those."

Although Miriam speaks positively about both her choir and band experience, she does delve deeper into peer judgement, negative emotions, and identity struggles in terms of breaking boundaries, some clear and others ambiguous. Early in her interview Miriam spoke of the fear of judgment of English mispronunciations, "even *still* in junior high or high school there's just some words that I can't pronounce or I'm scared to pronounce." Despite these language difficulties, Miriam shared this not as an example of exclusion, but the perception of an additional personal obstacle she overcame with time. Miriam also shared a painful story of a conflict with a bully.

> There was this one incident... Us Hispanics have a little more hair on our arms, a little more hairier (motioning to her forearm) so there was this one white kid who was kind of trying... bullying me because of it. And I was like, I'm just brushing it off, I had always had it in the back of my head, 'oh, I'm not pretty' or oh, 'this is weird, I'm not up to the beauty standards.'

Here, we can see she feels excluded and negatively standing out due to a perceived racial boundary. This continues when she speaks at great length about the struggle of taking advanced academic classes due to the lack of Hispanic friends in those classes. In the following excerpt, Miriam intermingled race with ethnicity and nationality with legal status.

> I just felt more comfortable with the Hispanic people rather than the white people, or people of different cultures...around for my more advanced classes, I felt like I was the only brown kid there, so I felt a lot of pressure in those classes. Not necessarily because of the teachers or the students, I just felt pressure on myself. And so in those classes, where I really didn't see any familiar faces or anybody the same color, I just was really more quiet and more in my own little bubble of just learning than expressing myself in school.

Concerning music classes specifically, Miriam shared in her later high school years a yearning for a more diverse group of friends that shared similar interests rather than culture or ethnicity alone. This is an indication of identity exploration and a search for belonging.

> Like I said earlier how I felt more comfortable with my Hispanic friends and making more Hispanic friends, with the music programs I felt more comfortable with having other friends because we have the similar likes or similar dislikes... instead of like joining, because I had some Mexican friends that would join band, instead, I would have friends in choir... when I branched out a little more...and had some friends that are older than me, younger than me... different race than me, black, white...

As Miriam explores adolescence, she attempts to better herself academically through advanced classes and personally, through diversifying friendship. She also shares the utilitarian purpose of music classes. "Well, music was always kind of like my *safe* space. The same way of me not trying to, like, stand out, [it] helped me kind of *blend in* and make more friends." Here, Miriam felt fully accepted in music but also used full participation as a mechanism for hiding her undocumented

status from her peers both in and out of music. In her written response a week later, Miriam reiterated this psychosocial duality conflict between belonging and hiding.

> I always felt welcome and accepted in my music classes through the years and also found that my music friends helped encourage me to try new things in school and be more involved in the school spirit/community rather than hiding away.

Travel/ Future Planning Exclusion and Emotional Regulation (Karla)

Karla arrived in the U.S. younger than any other case study participants did; however, she is at most risk for deportation. She has applied for DACA, but has been arrested twice for possession of marijuana. It also appears she understood the ramifications of her liminality younger than the other respondents did. Karla is the only study participant that never discussed language acquisition or enculturation in any manner; however, she was the only participant that discussed feelings of exclusion at the elementary level related to her childhood understanding of her legal status. When asked *(2) Did you ever feel included or excluded while in junior high and/or high school?*

> Sometimes I did feel excluded just because there were certain things I couldn't do that my other friends could, so I was kind of, was just *stuck* at home… like going out, even going out of the state. I've never been out of Texas. So, it was like the Florida trip for example, for the band, I didn't get to go on that because my parents were, 'no that's, that's a little risk(y) so probably not a good choice.' So yeah, I did miss out on a couple of things. It was just … nothing you could do about it really.

(3) Can you give any examples of how so for either inclusion or exclusion? She elaborated with a story from elementary school.

> I do have one. It was… I was still pretty young around like fifth grade. I had gotten this award for an academic award and it was a whole trip. We could go to New York and stuff like that and that was another thing I missed out on because I couldn't fly over there. We didn't even like… it wasn't really a choice. I think it was a presidential award. I don't remember the exact name of it.

Of all the participants, only Karla described feelings of music exclusion, as related to her status.

(4) Were there particular events you experienced that led to those feelings?

> Well, there was also (a time) before graduation. All of my friends were already planning what college they're going to. What they're studying. I was like… I, I wasn't even sure if college was an option for me, so… I'm *still* not sure if college will be an option for me, so I'm kind of just *stuck*… working where I am… for now.

However, Karla also expressed how much she enjoyed her music classes and her friendship with fellow students. "I enjoyed it. It was the reason I did it for all the years so it was like a good time… to just relax. Be with my friends; play around, so it was pretty, pretty enjoyable." When asked if there was any way to improve inclusion for the undocumented Karla's response referred to school trips again, she articulated:

> I don't know. I think, I think just give out more opportunities to where we're able to actually participate in stuff that requires…like not going out of state. Activities still, we can all be included. All be able to join.

In her written response, Karla expressed the following:

> I'm just thankful that music education is provided in schools, a lot of people use music as a therapy, like myself. And for students who don't have as many opportunities due to their financial or legal status, being able to play with a bigger group of people is a great experience. If I could go back to high school and play with a band one more time, I would.

Discussion

Unwanted Identity

The Brown states, “We know from research that *unwanted identity* is the most powerful elicitor of shame” (2021, p. 29). Shame is associated with risky behaviors such as various addictions, emotional disorders, and domestic violence (Ferguson et al., 2000). Brown (2021) also states, “Shame thrives on secrecy, silence, and judgment” while empathy can mitigate shame. There is longitudinal evidence that adolescents who keep a secret for six months or longer have an increased risk of psychological problems (Frijns & Finkenauer, 2009).

In the *Plyler v. Doe*, 1982 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court made clear the public school system and agents cannot ask or require proof of legal residency. Although the original intent was to protect undocumented students and families from politically driven discriminatory practices, one can posit without identification, meeting the specific needs of this marginalized population is highly improbable unless students self-identify. There is evidence that shows students who self-identify as undocumented are more resilient and more likely to self-advocate (Sánchez, et al., 2022).

Brown defines “invisibility as a function of disconnection and dehumanization, whereas an individual or group’s humanity and relevance are unacknowledged, ignored, and/or diminished in value or importance” (2021, p. 175). In context of Brown’s (2021) dysfunction of invisibility, the evidence makes clear identifying immigrant students, particularly the undocumented, may be in the best interest of the student psychologically.

Research shows that a healthy balance of acculturative and enculturative behavior (immigrant specific needs) builds healthy self-esteem and later, identity in immigrant children (Marsh, 2017) whereas an avoidance of enculturation may indicate identity issues (Meca, et al., 2017). The Suárez-Orozco, et al. IR&RM (2008) provides a framework for understanding that both acculturative and enculturative tasks, on an individual level, build resilience along with multiple intersecting influences, varying from religion, gender, xenophobia, socioeconomics, deportation, and others. In addition, outward microsystems such as neighborhoods, schools, and families affect integration into a host culture. Global forces such as governing policy, laws, attitudes towards refugees and immigrants, and aid programs can influence immigrant reception too (2018). Political and societal reception are threatening the inclusion of immigrant students (Farivar, 2022) ultimately having a negative impact on their psychosocial development and increasing the risk of negative adult behaviors (Burt et al., 2012).

Meaningful Music-Making

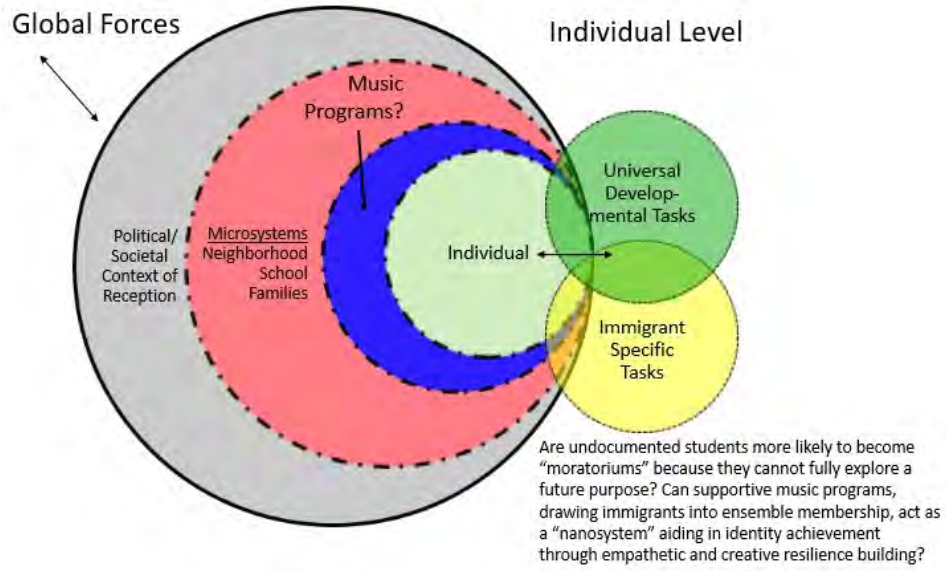
Music education and music educators may offer a unique place of sanctuary for any immigrant or undocumented student, especially concerning building empathy by providing a supportive “nanosystem” for healthy development within the microsystem of school. Neuroscience synchronicity and rhythmicity research inform us there may be a neurological-prosocial link to group musical activity (Xavier & Bonnot, 2013). Schellenberg et al.(2015) show that elementary-age children who participate in group-music activity have increased prosocial emotional skills, particularly those with lower behavioral skills. Ros-Morento (2019) provides evidence that adolescent student musicians compared to non-student musicians have greater competencies in emotional awareness, autonomy, and well-being. The emotional regulatory nature of music is

well-documented (Henley et al., 2012), but there is growing evidence of music-making's societal impact (Marsh, 2019).

For undocumented immigrants who cannot self-identify due to their vulnerable status, music educator training in identifying indirect non-disclosure signals could have an enormous impact on children's psychosocial development and inclusion among their peers (Kam et al., 2018). Music educators should be aware of the additional developmental tasks these youth must maneuver compared to their native-born peers. Understanding Eriksonian psychosocial conflict in terms of immigrant adolescent students can aid in building resilience for the future for not only these but also other students too, building empathy in the next generation. See Figure 3.

Figure 3

Are Music Programs A Nanosystem?



Of all respondents, Miriam gave the most obvious examples of identity versus role confusion (moratorium) in her interview. In discussing junior high, she shared the fear of judgment by peers due to her mispronunciations of English words (competency) through roll confusion regarding her physical appearance. In high school, Miriam expressed isolation she felt due to her perception of being the only Hispanic student in advanced classes to eventually wanting to expand her group of friends. When asked about her current situation as an undocumented adult, Miriam struggled to answer questions due to her legality.

> I'm just really like in a bubble of what I can and can't do. And I kind of feel hopeless sometimes because I want to do things. I want to do this. I want to do that, but I am limited in to what I can do.

The inability to fully develop and share their whole identity during the period of adolescence can create "belonging uncertainty." Brown (2021) states, "Belonging uncertainty can be high among members of marginalized groups, and this can have real consequences. For example, among underrepresented students at mainstream organizations, belonging uncertainty can have a negative impact on motivation and achievement" (p. 165).

There is a common saying in the Latino community that illustrates "belonging uncertainty." In

Spanish, “Ni de aqui, ni de allá.” The English translation is, “Not from here, not from there.” Although many undocumented adolescents deal with xenophobia, discrimination, poverty, racism, and liminality due to status, the hope is that the research presented here provides evidence that music education and music educators may be able to help those who may need it most but cannot ask.

Summary

The participants of this study expressed and perceived a sense of belonging regarding their secondary music education programs with one particular exception, traveling. One participant spoke of safety within the music programs, but also shared the intent of using the class to “blend in.” Respondents discussed indirect influences of exclusion associated with either their societal, legal or ethnic status. For example, respondents spoke of feeling excluded due to poverty while others spoke of the inability to participate fully due to parental hesitation. Unrelated to legal status but directly related to immigrant experiences, several mentioned inner-ethnic or cross-cultural conflict in terms of belonging. Immigrant students may have additional difficulty building an identity during adolescence compared to their non-immigrant classmates. Every respondent referenced elementary school in some manner, unprompted, which implies the importance of elementary school inclusion. The majority of participants shared acculturative and enculturative stories in their responses, providing evidence for the Suárez-Orozco et al, (2018) model.

Study Limitations

Limitations of this study primarily include the established relationship between the author and several participants which can illicit researcher bias; however, Gonzales (2015, p. 17) for qualitative purposes in studying a vulnerable population, stresses trust usually must be established for more complete research data of the undocumented person. Other limitations include the relatively small sample size and the majority of the respondents deriving from a single community. In addition, there are unknown past experiences, including possible trauma, that shape the responses of each participant.

There is evidence that students who self-identify have a stronger sense of identity and may be more resilient; therefore, case-study participants may be outliers within the population (Vargas, 2018). Field notes suggest at least one participant identifies as a member of the LGBQT+ community, “coming out” at an early age. Evidence suggests members of this community have a stronger sense of identity due to early awareness of different behavioral norms than that of their peers (Vargas, 2018).

Research tells us legality influences positivity (Patler & Laster-Pirtle, 2018); therefore, participants’ responses in terms of inclusion/exclusion may have been different if asked in their youth while their status was uncertain. Finally, each respondent gave only one interview, providing only a starting point for research.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies could include the same sample of participants, longitudinally, or a larger study in general, either or both with complete anonymity. Another possible study could include comparing both legal resident and undocumented immigrant responses or those from different geographical, ethnic, racial, or socio-economic communities. In terms of music belonging among

immigrants, further investigation may show a correlation between music inclusion with current legal residency. Regarding music educators, an anonymous inquiry on undocumented students who disclose their status could reveal some surprising results not only in population but also in indirect non-disclosures or patterns educators became aware of prior to disclosure that could help inform other educators.

Keywords: Music education, immigrant student, undocumented student, belonging, adolescent identity, moratorium

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