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Culturally Relevant Coping Strategies Within Bicultural Latine College Students in the Face of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment and Policy

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at
Virginia Commonwealth University

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Bachelor of Science
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Abstract

Despite their protective potential against anti-immigrant sentiment and policy, the connections between bicultural identity development and culturally relevant coping among temporarily documented Latine college students remain unstudied. Therefore, this study (a) describes culturally relevant coping strategies used by bicultural Latine college students, (b) examines the role cultural identity plays in bicultural Latine college students' coping strategies, and (c) illuminates the role institutional level systems play in liminally-documented college students' coping with anti-immigrant sentiment and policy. Participants in this study included 16 Latine college students ($M_{\text{age}} = 21.19$, $SD = 3.21$) with DACA ($n = 14$) or TPS ($n = 2$) documentation. Participants completed a demographics questionnaire, the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS), and a semi-structured interview. Transcripts were coded by a Spanish-speaking research team ($N = 3$). Data were analyzed via a secondary qualitative analysis using an inductive thematic analysis approach. Results found that bicultural Latine college students with temporary documentation coped with anti-immigrant sentiment and policy by participating in activism, seeking social support, exploring and feeling committed to their cultural identity, engaging in private religiosity, avoiding/denying, and reframing their struggles. Results are discussed and contextualized within culturally relevant coping and bicultural identity development literature. Implications for clinicians, academic institutions, and researchers are outlined along with study limitations and future directions.

Keywords: biculturalism, coping, cultural identity, Latinx immigrants, undocumented immigrants, mental health

Background

“DACAmendment” and the Pursuit of Higher Education

In June of 2012, a transformative federal Executive Order established the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA; USCIS, 2012), allowing an estimated 2.1 million undocumented children and young adults to apply for legal work authorization and deferring possible deportation for two years (Batalova et al., 2014; Siemons et al., 2017). Researchers have noted the significant impact DACA has had on undocumented students' educational, professional, and personal trajectories; newly “DACAmended” students have experienced an increased sense of hope regarding the future, an increased sense of stability about their ability to pursue their educational and professional goals, a greater understanding of social support, and a reduction of shame about being undocumented (Hernandez, 2018; Siemons et al., 2017).

Moving from the tenuous existence of being undocumented to a temporarily documented status, paired with the normative social and political identity development that occurs in college, has also been shown to catalyze advocacy, hopefulness, and empowerment (Cadenas et al., 2018; Siemons et al., 2017). There is a growing body of literature investigating Latine DACA youth's sociopolitical identity development and related activism outcomes (Cadenas et al., 2018; Flores, 2016; Kiehne & Cadenas, 2021; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Similar modes of gaining temporary documentation, such as applying for a Temporary Protected Status (TPS), have positively impacted educational attainment and civic engagement (Menjívar et al., 2020). However, the impact of acquiring TPS on college students' sociocultural identity formation, activism outcomes, and well-being remains understudied.

Although gaining documentation either through DACA or TPS mitigates stressors around fear of deportation and access to services, the documentation process generates new stressors such as worries about ineligible family, inaccessibility to higher education, inaccessibility of healthcare, and uncertainties surrounding policy changes (Hsin & Ortega, 2018; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Siemons et al., 2017). At the institutional level, newly and/or liminally-

documented students may also encounter financial stress due to their inability to apply for financial aid, a lack of sensitivity to their unique needs, silencing in classrooms when discussing immigration, and a general lack of support from administration or peers (Abrego, 2011; Bjorklund, 2018; Muñoz, 2013; Nienhusser et al., 2016). These persisting barriers heavily impact temporarily documented students' academic trajectories and psychological well-being (Bjorklund, 2018; Teranishi et al., 2015).

Impact of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment and Policy

The proliferation of anti-immigrant nationalism and populism stemming from the election of Donald Trump in 2016 in tandem aggravated existing racial anxieties and xenophobia in the U.S. (Van Ramshorst, 2018). According to the American Psychological Association's 2017 "Stress in America" survey, 56% of Latines reported that the outcome of the election was a "very" or "somewhat" significant source of stress. Moreover, one qualitative study found that youth largely reported emotional symptoms that included anxiety, stress, worry, disappointment, and fear before the election that persisted up to 4-months post-election (DeJonckheere et al., 2018). Another qualitative study examining Latine youth specifically found that they reported feelings of fear, anger, anxiety, contempt, increased discriminatory experiences, and deportation-related worries due to the changing immigration policies of the Trump administration (Wray-Lake et al., 2018).

Research has well-established that the rescission of the DACA program by Donald Trump in 2017 limited the protective effects of DACA and created new stressors around DACA recipients' legal vulnerability (Benuto et al., 2018; Mallet & Garcia Bedolla, 2019; Moreno, Fuentes, et al., 2021). A study surveying over 3,600 educators across the country from 2017 to 2018 found that most educators reported seeing an increase in absenteeism, behavioral and/or emotional problems, and immigration-related concerns and fears (Ee & Gándara, 2020). They also noted a decline in academic performance and indirect effects on students due to concerns for their peers when they stop showing up to school or are grieving a deported family member.

In this way, anti-immigrant sentiment and policies within the U.S. at large impact Latine students regardless of immigration status, negatively impacting their psychological and physiological well-being.

Biculturalism: a Protective Factor and Developmental Process

According to Berry (1980, 1997), when individuals migrate to another country, they are shaped by the dual desire to participate in the host culture while maintaining their original cultural identity. Combining these two attitudinal dimensions yields four acculturation patterns: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Integration, contemporarily known as biculturalism, refers to retaining the heritage culture while having active participation in the host culture. A study investigating which acculturation typology would be associated with the most positive psychological functioning in undocumented Latine immigrants found that biculturalism was the most strongly related to positive outcomes (Meca et al., 2019). Specifically, bicultural undocumented immigrants self-report higher life satisfaction and perceived success in multiple domains, including life purpose, competence, relationships, and optimism compared to their assimilated, separated, and marginalized counterparts. These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing that bicultural individuals tend to have higher self-esteem and prosocial behavior and the fewest depressive symptoms than those with other acculturation typologies (Chen et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2007; Szapocznik et al., 1980).

Since the introduction of Berry's (1980) model, most of the literature on biculturalism and its protective nature has focused on drawing comparisons and analyzing differences between bicultural individuals and those with other acculturation typologies. Research has indicated that a technical understanding of biculturalism and a bicultural identity is needed; bicultural individuals' identities are multifaceted, interrelated, and dynamic and may not be fully captured by prevalent summative or comparative approaches (West et al., 2017). As a result, recent research has favored an ongoing, dynamic approach to how bicultural individuals negotiate their cultural identities and related contexts (Meca et al., 2019; Ward et al., 2018; West et al., 2017).

Bicultural identity development has been conceptualized as an ongoing and dynamic process between the self and environment "occurring both (a) within individuals as they navigate their context to make choices about goals, roles, and beliefs about the world, and (b) within a society as it recognizes and affirms these choices, thereby recognizing and affirming the multiple cultural streams from which it is comprised" (Meca et al., 2019). Drawing from cultural identity literature (see Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014), the process of bicultural identity development can be conceptualized as occurring at the individual level through the individual's ethnic identity commitment and ethnic identity exploration. Ethnic identity exploration describes learning about and becoming involved in one's ethnic group (Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Roberts et al., 1999; Santiago et al., 2016). Ethnic identity commitment involves a sense of pride and positive feelings about one's ethnic group and its knowledge, values, behaviors, and feelings. The individual's understanding and maintenance of their bicultural identity, in turn, shapes their self-system that regulates the actions they use to adapt to changing contexts, functioning as a behavioral guide for decisions and actions throughout the life course (Eichas et al., 2015). Thus, one's bicultural identity is cued and formed by the immediate environment and ultimately impacts one's behaviors.

Despite promising research on biculturalism's adaptability and protective nature, literature investigating the relationship between bicultural identity development and the culturally relevant coping mechanisms leading to these favorable outcomes remains scarce. Qualitative research is first needed to capture the complex and multifaceted ways individuals develop a bicultural identity and navigate their social, political, and cultural contexts. Further research is needed to understand how these processes of cultural identity exploration and cultural identity commitment impact the development of a bicultural identity. Investigating the ways bicultural Latine individuals navigate their sociopolitical and cultural landscapes in the face of AISP is imperative to understanding the connections between bicultural identity development,

particularly as a self-regulatory system described by Eichas and colleagues (2015), and culturally relevant coping mechanisms.

Culturally Relevant Coping Strategies

Despite the unique risk factors undocumented students face, Latine undocumented college students find ways to cope successfully. Coping has broadly been described as “an internal strategy that allows individuals to move toward challenging goals and personal growth” (Torres & Rollock, 2009). However, researchers have criticized the extant baseline coping literature as culture-independent, intrapersonal, and individualistic (Kuo, 2013). Systematic reviews of the intersection of culture and coping have identified cultural variability in coping behaviors across collectivism-individualism, interdependence-independence, and acculturation dimensions (Bhagat et al., 2011; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Kuo, 2011; Wong & Wong, 2006). Although collective coping has varied across studies, collective coping behaviors have thus been conceptualized as an amalgamation of stress responses informed by collectivistic norms, values, and tendencies (Kuo, 2013).

Many culturally-based coping responses have been identified in literature focused on Latine immigrants. As many Latines rely on religion and spirituality (i.e., *religiosidad*) to cope with adversity and stress (Abraído-Lanza et al., 2004; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Powell et al., 2003), the influence of religion and spirituality on Latine student coping may shed light on academic resilience within this population (Castellanos & Gloria, 2008; Gloria et al., 2017). For Latines, the cultural concept of *fatalismo* is heavily intertwined with both religious and spiritual views (Hovey & Morales, 2006; Sue et al., 2019). *Fatalismo*, or fatalism, refers to the belief that life events are inevitable and result from luck, fate, "divine will," or predetermination (Hovey & Morales, 2006; Piña-Watson & Abraído-Lanza, 2017; Sue et al., 2019). *Fatalismo* within Latines has been associated with more passive or avoidant coping strategies (Hovey & Morales, 2006; Sue et al., 2019), which sets it apart from religious coping. Religious coping includes cognitive or behavioral strategies based on religious beliefs or practices (e.g., praying, attending mass,

wearing relics, seeking comfort or strength from God; Abraído-Lanza et al., 2004; Gloria et al., 2017). In contrast to *fatalismo* beliefs, religious coping has been positively correlated with active, action-oriented coping (Abraído-Lanza et al., 2004). Spiritual and religious practices are often used as coping responses throughout Latine students' college experiences and may contribute to student success (Castellanos & Gloria, 2008; Gloria et al., 2017; Kneipp et al., 2009).

Familismo, or familism, has been defined as strong identification with, loyalty to, and interdependence among family members (Baumann et al., 2010; Tello & Lonn, 2017). In terms of coping, *familismo* may support adaptive responses to stress in Latine students; family closeness and support may serve as resources when managing stress on their own (Santiago et al., 2016; Tello & Lonn, 2017). Indeed, family members are essential parts of Latine students' support system as *familismo* values encompass emotion-focused (emotional support seeking), behavioral (purposeful cognitive/behavioral engagement), and relational (social support seeking) domains of coping (Gloria et al., 2017; Gonzalez et al., 2020). Thus, coping framed from a Latine point of view should consider the role of *familismo*, *fatalismo*, *religiosidad* to be relevant to said collectivistic culture (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Kuo, 2013). Literature describing culturally relevant coping mechanisms in immigrants at the intersection of biculturalism and a temporary documentation status is limited. Research relating the various coping mechanisms engaged by Latine bicultural immigrant college students is needed.

Present Study

The proposed qualitative study seeks to build upon existing research on the intersection between biculturalism and a temporary documentation status in Latine students by describing culturally relevant coping among bicultural Latine college students in the face of anti-immigrant sentiment and policy. The secondary aim of this study is to examine the role cultural identity plays in bicultural Latine college students' coping strategies against anti-immigrant sentiment and policy. Finally, this study will illuminate the role institutional level systems play in liminally-

documented college students' coping with anti-immigrant sentiment and policy. Through a qualitative thematic analysis, this study will begin to address the gaps in the literature by describing the connections between liminally-documented Latine individuals' understanding of their bicultural identity and their use of culturally relevant coping mechanisms.

Methodology

The present study utilizes a secondary qualitative data analysis approach via an inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Shenton, 2004) to investigate and describe culturally relevant coping mechanisms engaged by bicultural Latine college students experiencing anti-immigrant sentiment and policy. The data for the present study derives from a larger parent study focused on early immigration, policy, and psychological impact among first-generation Latine college students that collected qualitative interview data from 2018 to 2019. The primary aim of the Early Immigration, Policy, and Psychological Impact (EIPPI) study was to investigate the psychological impact, strengths, and coping mechanisms of Latine individuals in the context of reacting to the uncertainty and increased anti-Latine immigrant rhetoric. For full details regarding the EIPPI study, refer to Moreno, Fuentes, et al. (2021).

Recruitment and Procedures

Participants were recruited via snowball sampling and through flyers distributed on a college campus in the southeast. Announcements were also made within Latine organizations at the same college campus. Semi-structured individual interviews ranged from 60-90 minutes and were conducted in English, Spanish, or both/mixed languages (e.g., "Spanglish"). All interviews were digitally recorded and conducted by two research team members who identify as bilingual Latine. Efforts were made not to retraumatize interviewees when retelling their early immigration experiences, so frequent reminders were given not to answer questions participants may find uncomfortable. Mental health and wellness referrals and resources were also provided after the interview. Participants received a \$20 gift card for participating in the EIPPI study. For the present secondary analysis, participants met inclusion criteria if they were further identified

as DACA or TPS recipients and are currently attending or previously have attended a higher education institution. Furthermore, the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS; Marin & Gamba, 1996) was used as a screener tool as explained below.

Participants

The present dataset consists of 14 (87.50%) DACA recipients and 2 (12.50%) TPS recipients. Of the 16 total participants, 12 (75%) were female, and 4 (25%) were male. 7 (43.75%) were born in Mexico, 4 (25%) were born in El Salvador, 1 (6.25%) was born in Guatemala, 1 (6.25%) was born in Venezuela, 1 (6.25%) was born in Uruguay, 1 (6.25%) was born in Peru, and 1 (6.25%) was born in Bolivia. The average age was 21.19 years of age ($SD = 3.21$). Demographic data are presented in Table 1 in Appendix B.

Measures and Materials

Demographic Characteristics. Participant characteristics were assessed before the interview. Demographic information collected included age, gender identity, country of origin, age at migration, immigrating process (e.g., crossed the border, acquired a visa, boarded a plane, etc.), place of residency at the time of interview (i.e., city and state), type of temporary documentation (i.e., DACA or TPS), socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, education level, and religious or spiritual identity. See Table 1 in Appendix B for relevant demographic data.

Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS). Participants' acculturation orientation was assessed as part of the Moreno, Fuentes, et al. (2021) study via the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (BAS; Marin & Gamba, 1996). The BAS captures the bidimensional process of acculturation by providing an acculturation score for Hispanic and non-Hispanic domains via 12 items per cultural domain that measure 3 language-related areas. The BAS has been shown to have high internal consistency and high validity coefficients with Mexican Americans and Central Americans (Marin & Gamba, 1996). Scores above 2.50 in both cultural domains can be interpreted as indicating a bicultural acculturation orientation.

Semi-structured Interview. Interviewers followed an interview guide with main questions and subsequent probes per question. Interview questions centered around participants' immigration experience, experience with immigration policies, and their reaction to immigration policies like DACA. Examples of interview questions, pulled from Moreno, Fuentes, et al. (2021), include: How has it been living in the United States as a first-generation immigrant? Did DACA make you feel more American? How do you cope with everything that is happening at the policy level? What role does culture play in [your experiences with immigration policy]? How did you seek support? See Appendix A for the complete list of interview questions.

Data Analysis

Author positionalities. Digital recordings were transcribed and coded by a trained, bilingual Latine research team (N = 5) for the EIPPI study. See Moreno, Fuentes, et al. (2021) for the parent study's positionality statement. Given the different research aims of the present thematic analysis, transcripts were re-coded by a second research team (N = 3). Each member of the research team identified as a Spanish-speaking, Agnostic, able-bodied, cisgender, first-generation college student with immigrant parents and U.S. citizenship. In terms of racial/ethnic identity, research team members identified as light-skinned Latine, Latino, and Asian/Indian. One research team member derived from a mixed-status family. The collaborative nature of the present study's analytic approach, detailed below, allowed for ample conversations around positionalities and biases to ensure objectivity and validity (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Shenton, 2004). Particularly, research team members continuously reflected on their expectations (e.g., relying on cultural values and strengths would be critical for undocumented Latine college students' psychological well-being) and assumptions (e.g., undocumented Latine college students may experience a lack of institutional support), and how they may potentially influence the interpretation of the data. The positionalities of the second research team are listed in Table 2 in Appendix B.

Analysis. An inductive thematic analysis approach was deemed appropriate as culturally-relevant coping strategies among bicultural Latine individuals is an emerging topic with limited relevant theory. Although an inductive approach to thematic analysis typically involves coding the content of the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006), researchers adopted a modified approach due to the secondary qualitative analytic nature of the present study. Specifically, transcripts were initially coded for instances of coping behaviors and mentions of cultural identity during Phase 1 of the analysis. The research team also identified an external auditor, who is not involved in the data collection or analysis process, to review and approve the research team's analysis at Phase 5. This non-involved party agreed to resolve coding discrepancies between the three research team members that could not be resolved via discussion between members. Secondary qualitative data analysis using an inductive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Shenton, 2004) included five phases:

Phase 1. The sixteen total transcripts were divided among the research team (N = 3) who independently and actively read through the transcripts multiple times during Phase 1 of the thematic analysis process. The research team engaged in individual memoing after reading each transcript, where these meanings, patterns, and relationships were noted along with the reader's reactions to each transcript.

Phase 2. Transcripts were then coded during Phase 2 of the analysis using Taguette software, an open-source qualitative research tool (Rampin & Rampin, 2021). Units could be labeled with up to four codes each, where the first code was typically "coping", or "cultural identity" and the following codes described the data. Category codes were identified by each researcher, together with a description and examples of each code.

Upon completing a transcript, research team members consulted the original parent study's codes for the corresponding transcript. By reviewing the primary analysis' codes, each member of the research team had the opportunity to check their own biases in their interpretation of the transcripts' themes, concepts, and phenomena. Research team members

agreed to note discrepancies between their codes and the parent study's codes, if found, to be discussed at an online meeting held after all sixteen transcripts were coded. Such discrepancies did not occur. The online meeting involved a group discussion and refining of the codes, descriptions, and code examples. Agreement was reached on a total of 18 categories during this online meeting, marking the end of Phase 2 of the analysis.

Phase 3. The research team met online on a weekly basis during Phase 3 of the thematic analysis for a total of two meetings where relationships between codes, potential themes, and different levels of themes were continuously re-coded and organized. A concept map was drafted during the second weekly meeting.

Phase 4. Phase 4 occurred during an online meeting where 16 final themes and subthemes were identified, defined, and differentiated. For example, the subtheme of Acceptance was differentiated from Denial/Avoidance because it had underlying themes of *fatalismo*, or fatalism. Code and category definition disputes would have been presented to the auditor for review during this stage of the analysis, however, there were no such disputes.

Phase 5. Phase 5 of the inductive thematic analysis began when all research team members agreed on a final thematic map. Themes were defined, named, and analyzed by the main researcher. Tentative results in the form of a thematic map, theme definitions, example codes and quotes, and an analysis draft were then presented to the external auditor for review. At the conclusion of Phase 5, the research team had met online four times and the data had been audited once.

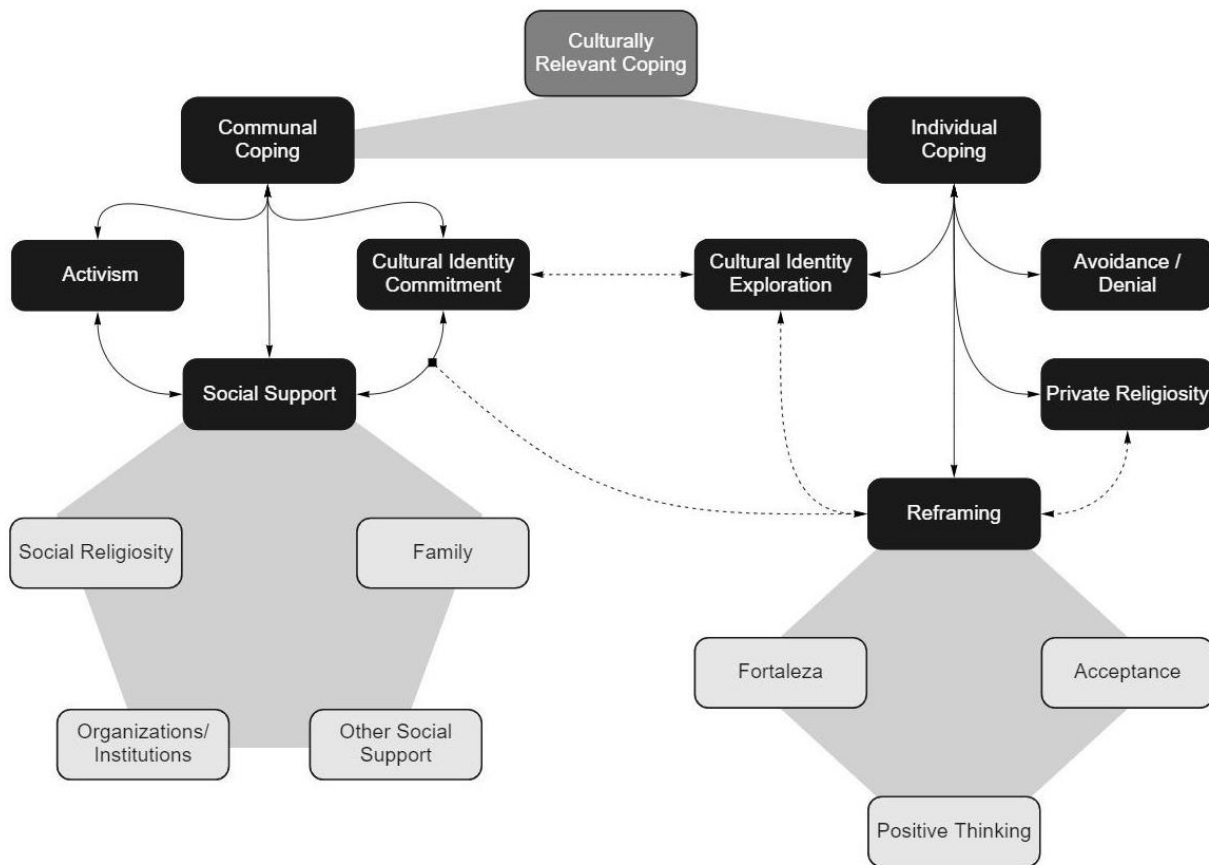
Results

Thematic analysis revealed two main groupings of culturally relevant coping strategies. In response to anti-immigrant sentiment and policy, bicultural Latine college students with temporary documentation (i.e., DACA or TPS) coped both communally and individually. Participants engaged in communal coping through (a) Activism, (b) Cultural Identity Commitment, and (c) Social support, which included codes pertaining to Family, Social

Religiosity, Organizations/Institutions, and Other Social Supports. Participants also utilized individual coping strategies such as (a) Cultural Identity Exploration, (b) Private Religiosity, (c) Avoidance/Denial, and (d) Reframing, which included the subthemes of *Fortaleza*, Acceptance, and Positive Thinking. See Figure 1 below for the present study’s conceptual map.

Figure 1

Bicultural Latine College Students’ Culturally Relevant Coping Conceptual Map



The seven main themes (i.e., Activism, Cultural Identity Commitment, Social Support, Cultural Identity Exploration, Private religiosity, Avoidance/Denial, and Reframing) are described in the context of culturally relevant coping strategies through anti-immigrant sentiment and policy (AISP). Second, the role cultural identity plays in participants’ coping with AISP is discussed through the two identity-based themes of Cultural Identity Commitment and Cultural Identity Exploration. Lastly, the role of institutional level systems in participants’ experiences

with coping with AISP is described through the subtheme of Organizations/Institutions. These findings are explained below.

Communal-level Coping Strategies

Thematic analysis revealed that participants responded to anti-immigrant sentiment and policy (AISP) by engaging in communal coping strategies, or coping methods that seek community, interdependence, and/or social support. Bicultural Latine college students with temporary documentation statuses responded to AISP on a communal level by participating in activism, seeking social support, and feeling committed to or proud of their cultural identity.

Activism

Although DACA uncertainty and AISP brought about feelings of stress, worry, anxiety, and fear in participants, many described how AISP brought their families and communities together through activism. This theme included codes directly referencing activism or organized events such as marches, rallies, protests, or speaker panels. For some participants, their DACAmentation statuses spurred activism efforts by providing an energizing sense of community, hope, visibility, and pride. This connected the Activism theme to both the Cultural Identity Commitment and Social Support themes. Daniela, a 19-year-old female from Mexico, described the impact DACA-related policy changes had on her community:

I have seen among the community, like so many people are scared, but that also leads to a unification among us all. Like we are gonna fight for this, we are here to seek refuge... I see a lot of unification among all of the hardships. It gives kind of [a] momentum. I feel like the policies or the people that intend to end DACA... bring a lot of us together through people because at least personally, a lot of people would never say that they have DACA in the past. There [was this] kind of sense of ashamed or scared to say that you have DACA, but because it's so big now – it's in the news, and you see people marching, you see your friends going out and fighting for it – I feel more people

are coming out and saying hey I got DACA and this is me... So, I feel like it brings out the strength in a lot of people.

Multiple participants described channeling their initial adverse emotional reactions to AISP (e.g., anger, sadness, fear, feeling upset) into activism efforts such as attending rallies, marches, protests, speaking on panels, giving public statements to their congress representatives, speaking at their city halls, publicly posting about their undocumented statuses on social media, and organizing workshops to educate others about current events.

As a result of coping through activism, Daniela and many others described the sense of unification among the Latine community, collective strength, and momentum as they saw other undocumented Latine community members speak up about their statuses and against AISP. Many participants further characterized this momentum as energizing, motivating, and a source of inspiration and hope. Activism efforts by community and school organizations, documented friends, significant others, and family members also positively impacted participants' perceived psychological and emotional well-being, illustrating this theme's strong connection to social support.

Furthermore, some participants described a sense of obligation to their community as why they engaged in activism. In this way, activism was a form of communal coping where participants protected a form of shared identity. María, a 20-year-old female from Mexico, illustrated this sense of responsibility for her community as well as a desire to protect the shared identity that she felt AISP threatened:

I feel like I have to keep advocating for myself and my community always, especially if it's under attack... because of policy changes. They're not only targeting DREAMers, they're targeting family members. They're targeting not only Latinx immigrants, they're targeting all kinds of immigrants. So, I consider myself to be part of those communities as well. And I feel like a lot of them are scared to raise their own voice, especially older generations... that's someone's mom, that's someone's dad or older sister, brother.

They're someone that cares and is cared about, so it's kind of like seeing my parents whenever I see those people.

This quote illustrates the shared identity that DACA policy changes and AISP created as interviewees described familial, experiential, and cultural ties to other Latine immigrants. These ties and the sense of social and collective responsibility they generate in tandem create the momentum needed for many participants to engage in activism despite their precarious documentation statuses. In this way, culturally relevant coping responses are employed when participants' collective identity through their immigrant or DACA identities feels threatened.

A subset of participants described channeling the momentum from the DACA movement into serving in mentorship positions for other DACA students and younger siblings, providing participants with a sense of unity and shared purpose. Coping through activism often resulted in the sense of satisfaction in knowing that they "gave a good fight" or tried to advocate for their communities even if it meant losing DACA benefits or facing deportation. One participant, María, even described continuing her activism efforts from beyond the border if she were deported, illustrating the deep-seated importance of collective identity in one's agency and advocacy.

Social Support

As previously mentioned, a sense of social support was often derived from participants' activism efforts. However, Social Support as a distinct theme described the way participants sought interpersonal emotional support after experiences of AISP through Social Religiosity (i.e., engaging in religious or spiritual practices with others), Family, Organizations/Institutions (i.e., formal mentors, identity-based academic organizations, and University Counseling Centers), and Other Social Supports (i.e., informal mentors, significant others, and friends).

Social Religiosity. Social religiosity emerged as a form of culturally relevant coping among bicultural Latine college students as it was often used to cope with the uncertainty surrounding DACA policy changes. Vanessa, a 32-year-old female from Mexico, evidences the way social religiosity embodied a communal coping strategy: "When things get hard or feel

uncertain, I depend a lot on my faith community and my spiritual practices, praying and reading scripture or going to church. It has always been like that, an encouraging aspect to uncertainty.” Echoing Vanessa’s sentiment, almost every participant who endorsed engaging in social religiosity described a sense of encouragement or hope. One participant, Amalia, even shared the instrumental or monetary support her church community provided each other if a member was in financial need.

However, the majority of codes under this theme described religiosity as it existed in the context of participants’ family units. Estela, a 20-year-old female from El Salvador, evidenced this phenomenon as she described how religion brought her family together through difficult moments:

When we were younger, we [her family] went to church a lot more and we prayed a lot, and I think that's always helped. That always brought us together not only with God but [with] ourselves, to have that family Sunday where we all would just go to Church and then go hangout as a family.

For most participants, their family’s belief in God and shared religious practices such as group prayer and attending church as a family created a sense of safety, comfort, trust, and encouragement. This form of culturally relevant coping persisted even among participants who did not identify with religion themselves but felt emotionally supported by their family’s prayers, faith, and assurance that everything would be okay.

Family. The second subtheme comprising the Social Support category was family support, which was not inclusive of codes about the aforementioned family-level religious support. Family support encompassed codes related to the emotional and instrumental support provided by family members and the motivation and hope derived from family interdependence. Family members often offered their emotional support by encouraging coping as a family unit through reframing techniques. Reframing and emotional support as a communal coping strategy

through family relationships are illustrated by Jose, a 20-year-old male from Mexico, in the following quote:

Every time Trump would make speeches and talk about DACA, about [how] he wanted to shut it down or talk about immigrants in general, [my family] would sit down and watch it. After the speech was done, we would just talk about it, and we basically made each other feel real comfortable. We would say positive things that would make us feel like we could go on with our day, to make us feel like we can do what we came here to do, and we helped each other just get through the day when things like that would show up.

Like Jose, many participants described a sense of relief from talking with or being with family members through stressful times. They would encourage participants to think positively and focus on their future aspirations. Thus, the present subtheme of Family support was connected to the individual-level coping strategy of Positive Thinking as some participants described learning how to think positively from their families. Family members often reinforced participants' sense of belonging in the U.S and feelings of pride in their identities as immigrants and/or DREAMers.

Several participants also described a sense of familial obligation that served as motivation or will to keep moving forward through socially and emotionally stressful situations. As Daniela expresses, "You guys did that [parents immigrated] for us. That gives my sister and I motivation to try to make an effort, to make a good living out here in the U.S. instead of Mexico, them [parents] showing their strength." In this way, participants identifying with wanting to repay their parents for their immigration-related sacrifices and strength named this future aspiration as a way they cope with experiences of AISP. Participants' desire to repay their parents for their perceived sacrifices, in turn, elicited motivation to keep fighting and moving forward as well as feelings of strength and hope.

Organizations/Institutions. The third subtheme comprising the Social Support theme consisted of ways interviewees sought support through organizations and institutions that

offered formal mentorship and mental health support. Organizations/institutions' subtheme included codes related to university-level organizations, resources, scholarships and programs, legal support, and formal mentors. Many participants coped with AISP-related stress by seeking socioemotional support from formal mentors, who ranged from other undocumented students in school organizations to lawyers. The Organizations/Institutions subtheme was exclusive of codes related to participants *servicing* as mentors, captured by the Activism theme, as it described ways participants sought mentorship.

Although friends, significant others, and informal mentors all provided socioemotional support through AISP, formal mentors offered tangible and concrete support in the form of guidance through university, legal, and economic systems. For example, Evelyn, a 23-year-old female from Guatemala, described the way her social connections allowed her to navigate DACA policy changes: "I had [my lawyer] as a mentor and I had him explain everything to me and explain everything to my parents as well... [It's important] having the right mentor that will help you [and] that will guide you." This quote illustrates the often-inseparable nature of mentorship and legal guidance as sources of institutional support.

María described her experience having older undocumented mentors she met through a Latine student board and their impact on her sense of hope and support:

Many of the people that I did meet [that] were undocumented were people that were older than me, and a lot of them had already graduated from college – they already had a career. They were well established in their lives so to speak. Growing up I never thought beyond graduating college [or] what I was gonna do after. So, seeing that they had pretty much the same struggles that I had growing up because of their status or because of their family situation, it gave me a lot of hope and it kind of gave me a good support system and a couple mentors if I ever need them.

Mentors, therefore, served as guides and sources of socioemotional support as participants emphasized the hope, wellness, collective struggle, and sense of solidarity through said

struggle derived from these organizational and institutional supports. Although only a few interviewees expressed being part of an identity-based student organization or scholarship program, university-based support in the form of mentorship through DACA policy changes and normative college adjustment was endorsed by five participants. One participant, Vanessa, expressed reaching out to her school's dean, retention offices, and multicultural offices for support and having to push her university to take action.

Only four participants – Daniela, Ines, Vanessa, and Amalia – described knowing about or seeking mental health services from their University Counseling Center (UCC) to cope with AISP-related stress. Multiple participants pointed toward a general lack of information about the availability of mental health resources at their universities. Vanessa specified that her mentors and counselors taught her coping mechanisms such as journaling and emotional regulation. Sofía, a 22-year-old female from El Salvador, shared her disappointment with the mental health resources offered through her UCC, mainly because she felt limited by the short sessions it provided. Overall, however, participants attempting to cope with AISP by seeking support from formal mentors in organizations and institutions found emotional release, instrumental support, hope, motivation, and collective strength.

Other Social Supports. The final component of the Social Support theme emerged as Other Social Supports, a catch-all category for codes related to support received from friends, informal mentors, and significant others. Participants primarily described friends and significant others as sources of emotional support. They sought out interactions with these support circles when they needed to talk, vent, cry, calm down, or distract themselves. Interviewees also described turning to friends when they felt their family was unavailable, either because they felt they couldn't rely on them or didn't want them to worry. Alejandra, a 19-year-old female from Mexico, supports this subtheme with her quote:

If I am ever feeling down or unsure of myself, I always have them [closest friends] to go to to bring more positivity into my life. [My friends reached out] because they were

thinking of me, which meant a lot because I knew there were people there that actually did care.

As Alejandra illustrated, coping through seeking support from friends and significant others provided emotional relief and validation during otherwise stressful or uncertain times. For some individuals, friends and significant others reinforced their sense of belonging in the U.S. and pride in their cultural identity, connecting this subtheme to the theme of Cultural Identity Commitment.

Cultural Identity Commitment

Finally, participants coped with AISP-related stress by expressing their Cultural Identity Commitment or pride in their shared cultural identity as Latine undocumented immigrant students. This theme included codes related to DACA, Latine, country-of-origin, first-generation immigrants, and bicultural pride. Thematic analysis revealed that participants' cultural identity pride manifested through participants learning about their cultural background, feeling bicultural, and feeling part of a collective. Cultural Identity Commitment emerged as a distinct theme interconnected with the communal coping strategies of activism and social support. Participants' processes of exploring, thinking, and learning about their cultural background – captured by the individual-level coping mechanism of Cultural Identity Exploration – were also closely tied to the present theme. It often generated feelings of cultural or identity-based pride. María illustrated this relationship as she described the way learning about and understanding her heritage impacted her sense of ethnic/cultural identity pride:

I'm aware now more so than ever about my history and my family's history within U.S. borders... In the past, I wasn't ashamed about my heritage, I just didn't really look to find my roots. But now I understand it's not really me that's the problem [about experiencing anti-immigrant discrimination], it could be anyone else. It gives me more pride. I have a lot more pride about where I come from, my family's roots, my Mexican roots.

Through experiences of AISP, participants became more aware of their ethnic/cultural heritage and began to develop their understandings of their unique cultural identity. Thus, through eliciting introspection and curiosity about their roots, experiences with AISP led participants to find pride, resolve, and strength in developing bicultural identity.

Experiences with AISP also led some participants to find strength and pride in identifying with their heritage culture while distancing themselves from their U.S. or American identity. Participants that expressed strongly identifying with their heritage culture sometimes incorporated aspects of American culture into their identity. Despite these attempts at integration, they perceived holding an American identity as incompatible with their cultural identity or signaling a loss of their heritage culture. As Daniela expressed:

Living here [in the U.S.] you... are gonna assimilate to how it is to live here. But it goes with the pride, I am not gonna lose every aspect of myself, you know – my culture ties into my roots of where I was born. For example, my necklace is very Mexican [and it] was sent to me from my family in Mexico. I am probably not going to take this off... because it's part of me, you know? My culture is me. I take that pride and having that within myself, pride in being myself, not changing because someone wants me to.

Participants like Daniela described taking pride in and identifying with their heritage culture or ethnic identity through outward displays of their ethnic culture (e.g., clothing and symbols), participating in cultural traditions (e.g., celebrations, holidays, food, music), attending social activities (e.g., being involved in Latine-oriented churches and Latine community organizations), and retaining cultural knowledge (e.g., Spanish language and family history) and values (e.g., familism). Understanding and being proud of their ethnic identity led participants endorsing such pride to remain strong in the face of AISP because it provided them the experience of cultural belonging they felt they were otherwise missing in the U.S.

Similarly, multiple participants associated this pride with belonging to something greater than themselves, whether their family or culture, which gave them the motivation and strength to

continue pursuing their goals. Karen, a 23-year-old female from El Salvador, expresses her pride and strength in being a part of the first-generation immigrant experience as well as an extension of her parents' hopes:

I am very proud [to be a first-generation immigrant] because my family, all the sacrifices they have made, they're on me. [I am] the fruit of the seed that they planted... I hope to graduate soon, and that will be a big accomplishment for them, to see that everything they did for me was worth it.

Facing AISP with pride allowed participants to cope by keeping them future-oriented or focused on their dreams and goals. Others noted that their identity-based pride came from their endurance of hardship. Valeria, a 20-year-old female from El Salvador, noted her mixed feelings in her quote:

Yes, but no [about being proud to be a first-generation immigrant] because I have to go through so much. In a way, it's made me the person I am. I feel like if other people were to go through the same things, it [would] break them down a little more. But since I [have been] going through [hardships] since I was a kid, I feel like it builds up my character.

This quote, along with others referencing pride stemming from hardship, link the present theme of Cultural Identity Commitment to the theme of *fortaleza*, or inner strength. Therefore, experiences of AISP reinforced participants' ability to confront hardship and struggle with a sense of dignity. Overall, coping with experiences of AISP through cultural identity pride gave participants motivation to keep pushing forward, keep fighting, working hard, and giving back to their communities.

Individual-level Coping Strategies

Thematic analysis also indicated that participants responded to anti-immigrant sentiment and policy (AISP) by engaging individual coping strategies, which were individual-based, private, self-reliant, independence-focused, and exercised in private. Bicultural Latine college

students with temporary documentation statuses responded to AISP on an individual level by exploring their cultural identities, private religiosity, avoidance/denial, and reframing.

Cultural Identity Exploration

Cultural Identity Exploration was a complex category involving participants' understanding of their cultural identity through their experiences integrating into the U.S. and acquiring temporarily documented statuses. Although participants' cultural identity exploration often led to cultural identity commitment or pride, this theme focused on their coping through introspection and understanding of themselves as Latine bicultural liminally-documented immigrants. Carlos, an 18-year-old Male from Peru, describes his understanding of his bicultural identity after experiences with AISP: "I lean a little more towards my Hispanic roots, my Peruvian roots. I feel like half American half Peruvian. [I feel like] an accepted alien... like we'll accept you, but you're still foreign, and you're still not one of us." This quote captures the impact AISP has on participants' understanding of their cultural identities and subsequent feelings of belonging. Many participants experiencing AISP coped by piecing together aspects of heritage and U.S. cultures they found compatible to create a unique bicultural identity, such as Carlos describing himself as an "accepted alien" and others describing themselves as "Americanized."

Similarly, participants' transition to liminal legality seemed to usher in a unique understanding of their cultural identity as one with greater privileges and opportunities than their peers in their home countries yet not thoroughly American. Participants' shift in the understanding of their cultural identity allowed them to cope with experiences of AISP by highlighting the privileges and opportunities offered by their newly/temporarily documented status. For instance, Arlene, a 21-year-old female from Uruguay, shared:

It [DACA] gave me a little bit of a step closer to being American.... I have the opportunity to actually go to college and get a degree. Hopefully, in the long run, I'll be able to repay my parents for everything that they've done. Definitely [the benefits of DACA] would be being able to go to college and be the first in my family to graduate.

For many interviewees, obtaining DACA mentation allowed them to feel more American. They were afforded similar opportunities to those of their documented peers, such as acquiring a social security number, applying for jobs, applying for college, and obtaining a driver's license. Focusing on the opportunities offered by their new and/or temporarily documented statuses allowed participants to remain future- and goal-oriented.

For others, however, experiences of AISP and acquiring DACA led them to distance themselves from the U.S. or American identity and identify more strongly with their heritage culture. Daniela shared the impact acquiring DACA had on her understanding of her cultural identity: "Even without DACA, I didn't feel American. I don't know if I would ever feel American... It [DACA] doesn't make me feel less Mexican, it actually makes me feel more Mexican." Participants identifying more strongly with their heritage culture often coped with experiences of AISP by exhibiting cultural pride, connecting this theme to Cultural Identity Commitment. Whether DACA led participants to identify with American or their heritage culture, DACA allowed participants like Arlene and Daniela to cope with AISP by focusing on the new opportunities it offered them.

Despite endorsing experiences of othering and discrimination, many participants described the benefits gained from understanding their bicultural identity, such as an appreciation of their unique strengths, experiences, and perspectives. Participants specifically noted the ways their cultural identity provided individual strengths and skills, which connected this theme to the theme of *Fortaleza*. For almost all interviewees, understanding their cultural background in the context of the U.S. gave them the motivation to keep pushing forward, appreciate their unique experiences, and focus on their career goals.

Private Religiosity

Private Religiosity differed from Social Responsibility in that it involved ways participants engage in religious or spiritual practices by themselves. This theme included private/solitary prayer codes, trust in God, wearing religious symbols, and reading religious texts. Participants'

spirituality often involved themes of *fatalismo*, or fatalism, where leaving things in Gods' hands was a way for participants to relieve the AISP-related stress they felt. Alejandra, a 19-year-old female from Mexico, demonstrates the role *fatalismo* plays in her spirituality as she expresses the emotional relief that private religiosity offers her: "I just trust in God so much that sometimes those things [DACA and TPS policy changes] don't matter to me and if it doesn't pass or something or doesn't go on, I'm sure there is something better stored. I'm sure God has something better stored." Even when faced with AISP, many participants expressed that it was comforting to leave their fate in God's hands and know God will support them.

Alejandra and many others felt emotional relief, hope, and protection through their belief in God. Although private prayer fell under the Individual Coping umbrella, multiple participants described never feeling alone in their spiritual practice as they felt God was caring for and looking after them. To most participants endorsing religiosity, their private relationship with God mirrored their other social supports. They felt comforted, encouraged, supported, and strengthened by their interactions through prayer or belief. Participants who characterized themselves as not religious or questioning religion still described drawing comfort from prayer, keeping up cultural traditions such as religious shrines, or wearing religious jewelry during stressful moments.

Avoidance/Denial

Avoidance/Denial appeared as instances of withdrawal from stressors, not knowing how to cope with AISP, denial about the impact of AISP, and minimizing one's emotional reactions to AISP. Many participants described not learning how to manage with the possibility that DACA or TPS protections would end and instead chose to avoid triggering conversations, news, media, and environments. Several individuals recalled not wanting to stress themselves out by following news updates and actively chose to ignore media coverage of the DACA debates to protect their well-being. When selecting to avoid AISP-related stress, many participants also described wanting to remain calm to not worry their family members or friends. Alejandra

described her initial reactions to hearing that former President Donald Trump wanted to end the DACA program in her quote:

I tried not to make it obvious that I was going through something. I was in my room when I found out, and I was crying, but after I had spoken to my mom on the phone, I kind of just wiped my tears and forgot about it because I didn't want people knowing that I was going through such a tough situation.

Thus, remaining calm was a way many avoided confronting or discussing the negative impact DACA and TPS policy changes had on their emotional well-being. For some individuals, remaining calm was a way to put loved ones first at the expense of their well-being and sense of support.

Other participants chose to cope with AISP by distancing themselves from triggering media or isolating themselves from their social responsibilities. Ines, a 21-year-old female from Bolivia, reflected on the 2019 DACA political debates: "I felt really bad that day. We had a campus protest.... [and] there was a lot of backlash. That made me really stressed, and I skipped class that day... I was just tired and sad. I just took a nap and left the room." Although participants reporting avoidance, denial, and distancing coping techniques did not engage their stressors, many participants reported redirecting their worries to other activities. For example, focusing on school or work allowed some individuals to stay busy and avoid worrying about the state of DACA and TPS policy. Others named avoiding and suppressing their AISP-related stress by watching TV, stress eating, sleeping or taking naps, and playing sports.

Reframing

The theme of Reframing contained codes relevant to *fortaleza* (i.e., inner strength and related individual qualities), acceptance, and positive thinking. Although thematic analysis revealed that other coping strategies – such as family support, cultural identity exploration, and private religiosity – often incorporated reframing techniques, Reframing emerged as a unique theme as participants also practiced reframing individually.

Fortaleza. The first subtheme comprising the Reframing theme was that of *Fortaleza*, which included codes referring to inner strength, inner drive, struggle, perseverance, and resilience. It should be noted that coping through the themes of Cultural Identity Commitment, Cultural Identity Exploration, Private Religiosity, and Social Support greatly contributed to participants' *fortaleza* or inner strength. The subtheme of *Fortaleza* was differentiated from Positive Thinking and Acceptance because it involved the quality of being resilient or persevering versus simply being hopeful or accepting of one's struggles. For example, Estela, a 20-year-old female from El Salvador, shared: "Work for what you want. If you really want something, you're gonna do it regardless of the obstacles that are put in front of you." Participants endorsing *fortaleza* thus took pride in their hardworking, mature, resourceful, and enduring nature. Others – including Jose, María, and Daniela – described themselves as fighters and felt motivated to keep moving forward.

Participants also noted the individual strengths gained from their cultural identities, such as problem-solving skills, people skills, open-mindedness, and bilingual skills. For instance, Vanessa outlines the skills she felt she gained from her experiences as a first-generation immigrant in her quote:

I developed skills to connect with people from different races and ages... [I'm] able to solve problems, like troubleshoot or come up with ideas and problem solve. That has helped me in my personal life and my professional life. I feel like as a first generation [immigrant] I became resourceful and resilient... [and] very driven, focused on goals.

Vanessa's immigrant culture was a source of inner strength and resilience that informed her ability to cope with adversity. Other participants drew *fortaleza*, a desire to persist, and individual strengths from their religious beliefs and practices. Overall, participants' experiences with AISP often led participants to identify with being resilient and illuminated their unique strengths.

Acceptance. The second subtheme of Acceptance emerged as participants described coping with their experiences of AISP by referencing fate and the inescapability of struggle. This subtheme included codes related to learning to live with AISP, keeping moving forward, feeling like there is nothing they can do, believing hardships happen for a reason, and having no choice but to move on. Acceptance differed from Denial/Avoidance because it had themes of *fatalismo*, or fatalism, through participants' insinuation that AISP-related stress was an inevitable part of their life course. For example, Evelyn shared her reaction to the news that DACA may be terminated: "If it happens, then it happens for a reason, and then, of course, it's affecting your life and it [creates] fear. [You] hope that it works out, but sometimes you can't do anything about it. I think it's a little bit hopeless." Multiple participants, including Evelyn, expressed feeling as though experiences of AISP are out of their control and therefore accept them. Some participants turned to their religious beliefs for strength, motivation, and purpose, as said beliefs were often compatible with a fatalistic outlook on life. Others described learning to live with or through experiences of AISP as a way to avoid feeling worried, anxious, stressed, or stuck about experiences they perceive as unavoidable.

Positive Thinking. Lastly, participants also coped with AISP-related stress by thinking positively. As previously mentioned, family members often provided their emotional support by encouraging participants to cope through positive reframing techniques. However, this subtheme did not include codes related to collectively coping with family through positive reframing, only codes about participants' private use of this coping technique. Positive Thinking also differed from Acceptance in that participants made an active choice to face AISP with optimism and hope versus acceptance. The subtheme of Positive Thinking included codes related to thinking about or focusing on positivity, hope, goals, and individual agency. For example, Sergio, a 21-year-old male from Mexico, demonstrated this reframing subtheme in his quote:

Sometimes I feel like I don't [know how to cope], but the majority of the time, I just try to focus on the good and try to see the people who are for us rather – I'm not saying I'm not paying attention to the points anti-immigrants are bringing up – but I just try to focus on the people who are standing with us.

When faced with AISP and its negative effects on their well-being, many participants actively chose to remain optimistic and hopeful. Others described choosing to focus on what they felt they had control over, using their agency as a way to think positively and cope with AISP. Even in the face of political attacks on DACA, many cited remaining hopeful that a favorable DACA policy ruling was incoming. Thinking positively, therefore, became a way for participants to view their struggle as something with an end in sight or a positive outcome.

Discussion

The present qualitative study sought to understand how bicultural Latine college students with liminal documentation status (i.e., DACA or TPS) understand their cultural identity and engage culturally relevant coping strategies in the face of anti-immigrant sentiment and policy. Previous studies have highlighted the role that culturally informed coping has played in Latine individuals' psychological well-being and resilience, mainly through *familismo*, *religiosidad*, and *fatalismo* (Gloria et al., 2017; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Moreno & Cardemil, 2013; Santiago et al., 2016). Emerging literature has also highlighted the advocacy-catalyzing impact of sociopolitical identity development within Latine DACA college students (Flores, 2016; Kiehne & Cadenas, 2021; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015) and its protective effects on agency, hopefulness, and empowerment (Cadenas et al., 2018; Siemons et al., 2017). Lastly, upcoming research on bicultural identity development, particularly the processes of cultural identity exploration and commitment, has illuminated ways bicultural individuals learn to manage and adapt to changing social, political, and cultural contexts (Meca et al., 2019; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). The present study offers promising links between this literature by describing the ways

bicultural Latine liminally-documented college students understand their unique cultural identities and engage culturally relevant coping strategies in the face of AISP.

After experiences of AISP, bicultural Latine college students with temporary documentation coped by participating in activism, seeking social support, exploring and feeling committed to their cultural identity, engaging in private religiosity, avoiding/denying AISP, and reframing their struggles. Social support seeking to cope with DACA uncertainty (Langley et al., 2019; Moreno, Fuentes, et al., 2021) and the higher education journey as Latine students (Gloria et al., 2017) have long been supported in the literature. The majority of participants describe coping with experiences of AISP by seeking family support. Research shows that family support may serve as a resource for Latine individuals responding to stress as a shared cultural value (i.e., as *familismo*; Santiago et al., 2016) and a source of strength, motivation, and persistence (Gloria et al., 2017). The present study found that family support was one source of participants' *fortaleza*, or inner strength, consistent with Gloria and colleagues' (2017) findings above. The current study supports existing literature on individual and family-level reframing (Kam et al., 2018), as findings show that family members often encouraged bicultural Latine DACA students to reframe their struggles with AISP by thinking positively. Participants also turned to religion when choosing to think positively or accept their AISP-related stress, which is also supported in Latine coping research (Sanchez et al., 2012).

The present study found support for the emergence of spirituality as an essential cultural coping mechanism among college-aged Latine individuals (Castellanos & Gloria, 2008; Gloria et al., 2017) and DACA students (Moreno, Fuentes, et al., 2021). Religious coping consisted of cognitive/individual (e.g., private prayer) and behavioral/communal (e.g., attending church) coping strategies that elicited safety, comfort, trust, and encouragement. The present study's characterization of religious coping into individual and communal subcategories reflects recent research on private and social religiosity among Latine immigrants (Moreno, Willis, et al., 2021). Participants reported that their relationships with God were just as valuable as their other social

supports, lending support to research suggesting that religion and spirituality are active versus passive coping mechanisms (Abraído-Lanza et al., 2004).

Moreover, the theme of *fatalismo* appeared in social and private religiosity and acceptance, as participants often found a sense of reassurance and comfort in their belief that experiences of AISP are out of their control. The role of *fatalismo* in Latine individuals' culturally relevant coping should be further explored as it seemed to inform multiple participants' outlook on experiences of AISP, their goals, and their ways of coping with AISP. Although previous studies have suggested that Latine undocumented youth do not cope by accepting or resigning themselves to their struggles (Kam et al., 2018), the emergence of this theme suggests future research should consider the adaptive role that acceptance and/or *fatalismo* may play in Latine liminally-documented students' culturally relevant coping strategies.

Participants named participating in activism on multiple levels, from the interpersonal level (i.e., serving as mentors, reaching out to undocumented peers) to the institutional level (i.e., organizing teach-ins and workshops, reaching out to their congress representatives, and speaking at their city halls). Thus, participants' understanding and navigation of anti-immigrant sentiment's systemic and structural causes encompass multiple domains of critical action against unjust policy changes. This finding aligns with research supporting the notion that critical reflection and critical action may serve as sources of political efficacy for DACA students (Cadenas et al., 2018).

Furthermore, participants' understanding of and commitment to their cultural identity seemed to inform their activism. Participants often engaged in activism to protect a form of shared identity, often tied to their documentation and immigrant statuses. Their multiple intersecting identities served as a call to action. As a result of coping with AISP through activism efforts, interviewees found community, hope, collective strength, and collective identity. This finding is in line with research suggesting that activism catalyzed by sociopolitical development among Latine undocumented students is linked to hopefulness and empowerment (Cadenas et

al., 2018; Moreno, Fuentes, et al., 2021; Siemons et al., 2017). However, the present study builds upon this research by proposing a bridge between the literature on sociopolitical identity development in DACA youth and bicultural identity development; participation in activism often elicited and reinforced interviewees' feelings of pride or commitment to their shared cultural identity as Latine undocumented immigrant students.

Indeed, the present study found support for research suggesting that bicultural identity development occurs at the individual level through ethnic identity commitment and ethnic identity exploration (Umana-Taylor, 2014). Given that literature depicts bicultural identity development as occurring within individuals as they navigate their contexts and within society as it recognizes and affirms individuals' choices (Meca et al., 2019), our finding that bicultural Latine liminally-documented students cope in individual and communal ways was expected. The interviewee's processes of exploring their cultural background, captured by the individual-level coping mechanism of Cultural Identity Exploration, illustrated the ways participants coped by piecing together aspects of their U.S. and heritage identities. Participants' endorsement of "accepted alien" and "Americanized" identities is in line with research suggesting that bicultural individuals may embrace a distinct "third culture" or hybrid experience of their cultural identity (Meca et al., 2019; West et al., 2017).

Similarly, participants' transition to liminal legality led many to identify more strongly with their heritage cultural identity or feel closer to their American identity. Research on bicultural identity development suggests that participants may be engaging in frame switching or a shift in cultural identity in response to contextual and situational cues (Meca et al., 2019; West et al., 2017), which may be DACA policy changes. In this way, the present study supports research on the bicultural negotiation processes (i.e., hybridizing, integrating, and frame switching) that are hypothesized to promote individuals' cultural identity development (Meca et al., 2019; West et al., 2017). The present study contextualizes these development processes by illuminating the

crucial role of documentation status, family, activism, and organizations and institutions in individuals' cultural identity exploration and commitment.

Expanding upon Eichas and colleagues' (2015) research, participants' exploration of their bicultural identity shaped the self-system that allowed them to adapt to DACA policy changes, and subsequently shaped their coping strategies against AISP. Individuals' bicultural identity impacted multiple forms of coping, both communal and individual. Overall, the current study supports the person-by-situation analytic framework of (West et al., 2017) and (Meca et al., 2019). The influence of bicultural identity cannot be reduced to the direct influence of either culture on self-regulation and coping. Even in individual-based coping strategies, the presence of cultural exploration and understanding is undeniable and adaptive. Overall, the present study's findings that bicultural Latine individuals cope with experiences of AISP by engaging in cultural identity exploration and commitment add to growing research positioning these constructs as culturally relevant coping strategies (Santiago et al., 2016).

Finally, participants coped with experiences of AISP by seeking support through organizations and institutions that offered formal mentorship and mental health support. Student clubs and organizations were essential sources of friendships, wellness, solidarity, and hope. This finding aligns with research suggesting that clubs and organizations may serve as a form of positive coping for undocumented Latine students as they offer beneficial friendships and emotional support (Borjian, 2018; Pérez et al., 2010). Unfortunately, as few participants endorsed finding support from their university systems (e.g., academic counselors, deans, retention offices, identity-based scholarship programs, multicultural offices, professors, University Counseling Centers or UCCs), the present study was not able to fully describe the role university institutions play in bicultural Latine DACA/TPS students' culturally relevant coping. This finding may be explained by previous research relating the psychosocial barriers Latine undocumented students may face when seeking support from UCCs such as low perceived need, low treatment efficacy, and stigma (Cha et al., 2019).

Limitations and Strengths

While the current study contributes to the literature on culturally relevant coping and bicultural identity development, it must be considered in light of several limitations. First, the present study could not analyze the impact of country-of-origin. Research has shown that, despite similarities across Latine groups' cultural values, there are between-group and within-group differences in said values (Sue et al., 2019). Thus, future research investigating culturally relevant coping strategies among Latine individuals should consider analyzing ethnic/regional Latine subgroups (e.g., Mexicans, Guatemalans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans) as they may provide important information about intergroup sociocultural differences.

Second, the recruitment and inclusion criteria for the parent study may have biased the sample population. This study may be limited by the parent study's inclusion criteria that called for participants that self-identify as Latine/Hispanic. This decision may have excluded Haitian and Trinidadian identified participants who are also Latin American but did not identify explicitly as such. Thus, this study only includes Spanish-speaking nationalities and does not tell the full story of how Latine/Hispanic liminally-documented students understand their unique cultural identities and engage culturally relevant coping strategies in the face of AISP. Generalizability is also limited as nonrandom sampling methods accessed Latine DACA or TPS recipients on a southeast college campus and Latine student organizations. These students may have more robust social support and activism orientations than their peers who were not connected with identity-based student organizations. Therefore, the present study's findings may not be generalizable to the broader liminally-documented immigrant population or DACA and TPS holders who do not self-identify as Latine/Hispanic.

As with all qualitative research, a research team with different positionalities and biases may have uncovered different dimensions of Latine culturally relevant coping through AISP. The present study hoped to address issues of validity and objectivity by incorporating Shenton's (2004) recommendations for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative analyses. Furthermore,

there are clear limitations of using a secondary qualitative analysis approach. The parent study investigated the psychological impact of political action against DACA and other immigration policies, life experiences/stressors, coping strategies, and protective factors among first-generation young immigrants. Pulling participants from this larger research study that asked participants questions such as “Did DACA make you feel more American?” and “What are skills that you have gained as a first-generation young immigrant?” may have influenced the present study’s results. For example, prompting participants to reflect on ways DACA made them feel more American may have increased the salience of some participants’ distancing mechanism, where they found pride in identifying with their heritage culture while distancing themselves from a U.S. or American identity. Similarly, asking participants what skills they feel as though they have gained from their first-generation immigrant identity may have increased the salience of the *Fortaleza* subtheme.

Finally, there are valid criticisms of the Bidimensional Acculturation Scale (BAS; (Marin & Gamba, 1996) that limit our findings’ generalizability. The BAS measures acculturation as it relates to ethnic language proficiency and may not capture immigrants’ orientations to cultural values, beliefs, and knowledge. Research has acknowledged the role that other factors (e.g., cultural knowledge, cultural distance, cultural identity, length of residence in the new culture; Ataca & Berry, 2002; Galchenko & van de Vijver, 2007) play in predicting individuals’ acculturation orientations (Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2011). Therefore, using participants’ BAS scores as an inclusionary criterion may have excluded immigrants who may be bicultural in other domains other than ethnic language proficiency.

Despite these limitations, this study provides an essential glimpse into coping methods Latine liminally-documented college students engaged during the DACA debates of 2017-2019. Therefore, this study may provide useful qualitative data for coping research on proactive (i.e., in preparation for stressors) or reactive (i.e., in response to stressors) response types. Study findings also provide the qualitative research currently needed by literature on bicultural identity

development, supporting emerging theories on cultural identity exploration and commitment, hybridization, and frame switching (Meca et al., 2019; West et al., 2017). Lastly, despite the limitations of a secondary qualitative analysis, the thematic analysis approach and semi structured interviews allowed for a dimensionalized, in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences with AISP.

Practical Implications

The present study's findings have important implications for mental health practitioners, researchers, and institutions. First, the present study may be particularly relevant to mental health practitioners as it highlights the role of culturally-informed coping in Latine liminally-documented students' experiences with AISP. Given that this study finds support for *familismo*, *religiosidad*, and *fatalismo*, clinicians and counselors should tailor their treatment approaches to consider the client's cultural strengths and resources (Cardemil et al., 2011; Tello & Lonn, 2017). Although *fatalismo* appeared to be participants' form of accepting defeat, reframing this cultural value as strength allowed participants to remain hopeful and future-oriented. Clinicians must be conscientious of possible individualistic and negativistic framings of Latine clients' cultural expression and values when conceptualizing clients (Tello & Lonn, 2017).

Latine college students' use of social support, particularly friends and family, is often their first or preferred source of support (Gloria et al., 2017; Langley et al., 2019; Tello & Lonn, 2017). To incorporate the value of familismo, high school and college counselors may design outreach and psychoeducation programs on college preparation and expectations to include students' families and friends. The present study was unable to analyze the supporting roles of UCCs and other university resources. This may offer an opportunity to introduce students and their families to university mental health and community resources. It is also vital for college counselors to support college students outside of the counseling center in outreach, advocacy, and informational campaigns to target the previously mentioned barriers of low perceived need, low treatment efficacy, and stigma (Cha et al., 2019). Participants expressed their

disappointment at learning about free mental health counseling offered by their university much later in their academic journeys, pointing toward a need for college counselors to remain socio-politically informed and proactive about their outreach efforts.

The fact that few participants endorsed finding support from their university systems (e.g., academic counselors, deans, retention offices, identity-based scholarship programs, multicultural offices, professors, University Counseling Centers or UCCs) is disappointing but not surprising (O'Neal et al., 2016; Terriquez, 2015). Higher education institutions' policies and procedures need to ensure adequate support, access, and encouragement for Latine undocumented students within their institutions (i.e., student organizations, Latine counselors, Latine faculty and staff, scholarship programs, mentorship programs, bilingual family outreach programs). Incorporating the present study's findings that family and community are crucial support systems for liminal documented Latine students, universities must take the initiative to equitably include family members and communities in university events and various academic milestones.

Higher education institutions may also benefit from adopting a Culturally Engaging Campus Environment (CECE) Model that aims to "build programs, initiatives, and events that are relevant and responsive to the cultural identities of students are more likely to cultivate an increased sense of belonging among these undergraduates" (Museus & Saelua, 2017). Adopting a CECE model may fulfill students' need for cultural responsiveness, which refers to the university's efforts to provide students with programs and initiatives that are community-oriented, meaningful, and create accessible pathways for student success and support. This support may be especially relevant to first-generation liminally-documented students that otherwise struggle to navigate institutional barriers to academic success. Given that no participants expressed finding support through professors and other faculty members, a CECE model may help create a culturally responsive support network across campus and allow liminally-documented Latine students to find vital mentorship from educators.

Researchers also have an obligation to engage in culturally-mindful intersectional research. When studying minoritized identity groups, researchers must consider the impact of social history, oppressive systems, and trauma on marginalized individuals' psychopathology and/or mental health treatment and access. The present study supports the notion that mental health disparities research is disserving marginalized groups when it describes individual-level factors affecting psychopathology and mental health treatment use without considering the impact of broader systemic and contextual factors (e.g., family-level, school-level, community-level, policy/systemic-level; Moreno & Corona, 2021).

Finally, future research may expand upon the study's findings on bicultural identity development and culturally relevant coping mechanisms engaged by bicultural Latine college students. The role of *fatalismo* in Latine individuals' culturally relevant coping should be further disaggregated. *Fatalismo's* emergence in social and private religiosity and acceptance, which family often reinforced, suggests that a nuanced understanding of the cultural value is necessary. Although *fatalismo* or the present theme of acceptance may be thought of as a means of passively accepting one's fate, the present study suggests that it may be an adaptive coping mechanism in the face of AISP. This study also found support for the bicultural negotiation processes of hybridizing, integrating, and frame switching. An in-depth exploration of Latine first-generation immigrants' use of these processes in forming their cultural identities is a promising next step for future research on bicultural identity development.

Conclusion

The findings contribute to the current understanding of bicultural identity development and culturally relevant coping strategies among Latine liminally-documented college students facing AISP. Specifically, bicultural Latine college students with temporary documentation coped by participating in activism, seeking social support, exploring and feeling committed to their cultural identity, engaging in private religiosity, avoiding/denying AISP, and reframing their struggles. The present study found support for research suggesting that the process of bicultural

identity development occurs through ethnic identity commitment and ethnic identity exploration. The crucial roles that documentation status, family, organizations and institutions, and activism play in these developmental processes are illustrated. Mental health practitioners seeking to incorporate the present study's findings should tailor their treatment approaches to consider the cultural values of *familismo*, *religiosidad*, and *fatalismo*. College counselors also have a responsibility to remain socio-politically informed and proactive about their outreach efforts extending beyond the UCC. Higher education institutions' policies and procedures should likewise ensure adequate support, encouragement, and access for Latine undocumented students navigating their institutions. Finally, future research may expand upon the adaptive role that *fatalismo*, and the bicultural negotiation processes may play in Latine individuals' culturally relevant coping.

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Appendix A

Early Immigration, Policies, and Psychological Well Being Study: Interview Questions

I. Experiences of Immigration

1. When did your family immigrate to the United States?
2. What were the reasons that your family immigrated to the United States?
3. Tell me about your family's experience of immigrating to the U.S.?
4. Were there any challenges that your family experienced when immigrating to the United States?
5. Were there any benefits that your family experienced when immigrating to the United States?
6. How has it been living in the United States as a first-generation immigrant?
7. Have your religious and/or spiritual practices played a role in some of these challenges or benefits? If so, how?

II. Experiences with immigration policies

8. Why did you apply to DACA?
9. What role did DACA play in your life?
10. When did you realize DACA was important?
11. Did DACA make you feel more American?
12. What have the challenges been (if any) on these policies experienced in the United States?
13. What have the benefits been with these policies to the United States?
14. How have you handled the challenges in difficult times?
15. What are things that you can do as a first-generation young immigrant?
16. What are things that you are limited to do as a first-generation young immigrant?
17. What are skills that you have gained as a first-generation young immigrant?
18. Are you proud to be a first-generation immigrant?
19. How have your living conditions been affected your immigration status?
20. How has your overall well-being been affected by this?
21. How do you cope with everything that is happening at the policy level?
22. Tell me how your Hispanic heritage helped with this experience?
23. What role does culture play in these experiences?
24. What role does your family play in these experiences?
25. What role does your native country play in these experiences?
26. What role does your gender play in these experiences?

III. Descriptions and reactions after policy actions

27. How did you react?
28. What were you thinking?
29. What were you feeling?
30. How did you behave?
31. Who was there to assist you during this time?
32. How did you seek support?
33. What did your community/support do about this?
34. What means have you taken after this political action?

35. How have you protected yourself from risky behaviors (or laws)?
36. What will happen even if you (or someone you know) are not granted DACA again?
37. How do you seek professional care (such as going to a PCP, mental health?)
38. What are the barriers (if any) to seeking care as a result of this policy change?
39. Why do you think Latina/o college students (like yourself) underutilize health services?

IV. Conclusion:

40. What do you strive to be in life?
41. What legacy do you want to leave behind?
41. How do you want society to see you?

Appendix B

Table 1

Participant Demographic Data

Name	Age (yrs)	Gender Identity	Country of Origin	Doc. Status	SES	Sexual Orientation	Education Level	Religious or Spiritual Identity
María	20	Female	Mexico	DACA	Low Income	Queer	Junior	Catholic
Ceasar	19	Male	Mexico	DACA	Working Class	Heterosexual	Sophomore	Seventh Day Adventist
Jose	20	Male	Mexico	DACA	Middle Class	Heterosexual	N/A	Christian
Sergio	21	Male	Mexico	DACA	Working Class	Heterosexual	Some college	Christian
Valeria	20	Female	El Salvador	TPS	Middle Class	Heterosexual	Junior	Catholic, non-practicing
Alejandra	19	Female	Mexico	DACA	Middle Class	Heterosexual	Sophomore	Christian, non-denomination
Arlene	21	Female	Uruguay	DACA	Middle Class	Heterosexual	Senior	Catholic
Daniela	19	Female	Mexico	DACA	Lower Middle Class	Unsure	Freshman	Catholic
Sofía	22	Female	El Salvador	TPS	Low Income	Bisexual	Junior	Catholic
Amalia	21	Female	Venezuela	DACA	Middle Class	Heterosexual	Sophomore	Christian, Pentecostal

Carlos	18	Male	Peru	DACA	Between Working/ Middle Class	Heterosexual	Freshman	Catholic
Ines	21	Female	Bolivia	DACA	Middle Class	Heterosexual	Junior	Baptist
Karen	23	Female	El Salvador	DACA	Middle Class	Heterosexual	Sophomore	Christian-Catholic
Vanessa	32	Female	Mexico	DACA	Middle Class	Heterosexual	Master's	Christian
Estela	20	Female	El Salvador	DACA	Middle Class	Heterosexual	Associate's	Agnostic
Evelyn	23	Female	Guatemala	DACA	Middle Class	Heterosexual	Junior	Catholic

Note. Participants' names are pseudonyms.

Table 2*Research Team Positionalities*

Name	Age	Racial/Ethnic Identity	Nationality	Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation	Ability Status	Religious Identity	Other Identities
Cindy Hernandez (She/They)	24	Light-skinned Latina	Nicaraguan-American	Cisgender Woman	Queer	Able-Bodied	Agnostic	First-generation student and immigrant who identifies as bicultural; comes from a mixed-status family; U.S. citizen; Doctoral student
Geovani Muñoz (He/Him)	27	Latino	Mexican-American	Cisgender Man	Heterosexual /Straight	Able-Bodied	Agnostic	First-generation student with immigrant parents; U.S. citizen; Doctoral student
Abigail Andrade (She/Her)	21	Asian/Indian	Indian-American	Cisgender Woman	Bisexual	Able-Bodied	Agnostic	First-generation student and immigrant who identifies as bicultural; U.S. citizen; Undergraduate student

Vita

Cindy Hernandez was born on June 4th, 1997, in Miami Beach, Florida. She is a U.S. citizen, first-generation college student, and child of Nicaraguan-born parents. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology, with a minor in Communication Studies, in May 2019 from the University of Florida. While at Virginia Commonwealth University, Cindy has authored an encyclopedia chapter on family acculturation for the Encyclopedia of Child and Adolescent Health and published a paper on the Hispanic paradox for the Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine journal. She has served as the treasurer for the Latinx Graduate Student Association at VCU and has presented her work at the Columbia University 39th Annual Winter Roundtable, 2021 National Latinx Psychological Association Conference, 2020 and 2021 American Psychological Association Conference, and the 2021 American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education National Conference.