DEGREE AND IN THE SHADOWS: 
JOURNEYS AND TESTIMONIOS FROM 
MEXICAN UNDOCUMENTED COLLEGE 
GRADUATES IN TEXAS

Dr. Enrique Romo
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The University of Texas at San Antonio
OVERVIEW

- As more Mexican undocumented students graduate from four-year institutions, there is a need to understand their experiences and to capture their outcomes.

- Limited empirical studies on undocumented college graduates in general.

- Investigate and identify challenges and/or opportunities Mexican undocumented students encounter after graduating with a degree from a Texas university.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• How do Mexican undocumented college graduates choose and enroll into a particular college?
  • How did their selection affect their outcomes upon graduation?

• How do Mexican undocumented college graduates deal with obstacles and/or experiences after obtaining their four-year degree?
  • How do Mexican undocumented college graduates perceive their options after college graduation (Graduate/professional school, careers, leave the country, join the informal economy)?

• How do Mexican undocumented students use and understand their social capital during their college experiences and after college graduation?
Figure 1. Diagram representation for the study of undocumented college graduates and their post-college outcomes.
METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative Study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000)

- Phenomenological approach (Caswell, 1998)
  - Addresses the lived experiences of a group of people in a particular situation as well as the essence of that experience

- Personal in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Glesne 2006; Ritchie & Lewis, 2007)
  - 8 participants – testimonies collected at this stage

- Site Selection (UT Austin, TSU, St. Edward’s, Southwestern, HTU, Concordia)
DATA COLLECTION/ANALYSIS

- Snowballing (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 1990)
- Confidential and anonymous
- Interviews were recorded and transcribed
- Qualitative software (Atlas.Ti)
- Inductive analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Patton, 1999, 2002)
  - Open Coding or identifying emerging themes
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>6 Women</th>
<th>2 Men</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD in Pharmacy</td>
<td>Government and Political Science (Business Foundations Certification)</td>
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KEY FINDINGS

- Blindfolded to College
- Paradoxical College Degree
- Friends in All Places
- Knowledge is Power
- La Familia
- Challenge Misconceptions
- Empowerment
- Being American
THANK YOU

QUESTIONS

Contact Information
Enrique Romo
eromo@austin.utexas.edu