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# **Coping With Fear: Graduate Students and New Counselors' Experiences Working with DACA, DREAMers, and Refugees.**



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# DACA, DREAMers, and Refugees



- In 2010, The DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Minors) failed to pass the United States House of Representatives, which specified a six-year path for illegal immigrants to eventually become citizens if: they were brought to the U. S. before the age of 16, were pursuing education or military service; had been in the country 5 years continuously, had no criminal record, and would be between the ages of 12 and 35 at the time of the bill's enactment.
- While the DREAM Act failed, the name stuck, and the term now generally applies to immigrants under age 35 seeking legalization/amnesty, and/or taxpayer subsidized tuition.
- In 2012, President Obama implemented a new program called DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals); the Migration Policy Institute estimates there are 1.2 million DREAMers, who have been offered two years of amnesty (stay of deportation), given a social security number, and allowed to apply for a work permit or college.
- There are approximately 1.8 million immigrants currently in the U.S. who might meet the requirements of DACA when they are older.

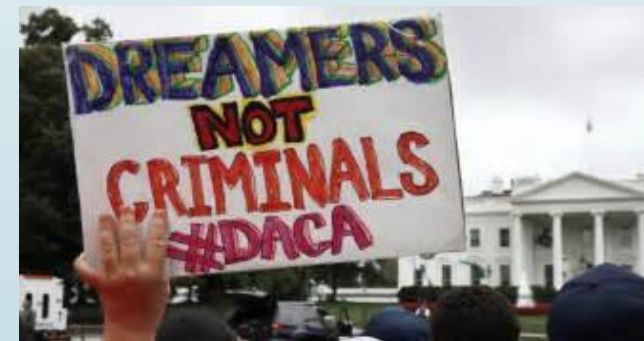
# Statistics



- Mexico is the biggest country of accepted applicants, followed by El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. DACA recipients have been able to come out of the shadows and obtain valid driver's licenses, enroll in college, and legally secure jobs. They also [pay income taxes](#).
- Immigrant rights' advocates criticize the program, stating it leaves people in limbo.
- Under DACA, Dreamers were able to apply to defer deportation and legally reside in the US for two years. After that, they could apply for renewal.
- DACA applicants had to provide: evidence they were living in the United States at the prescribed times, proof of education, and confirmation of their identities. They also had to pass background, fingerprint, and other checks that look at identifying biological features.
- According to the latest government figures, about 690,000 young adults are currently protected under the DACA program and officials were processing more than 34,000 additional first-time applications in Fall, 2017.

# DACA Rescinded

- In September, 2017, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the current administration was rescinding the DACA program, and only accepted new applicants until October.
- The Trump administration gave Congress a window to act before any currently protected individuals lose their ability to work, study, and live without fear in the US.
- If Congress doesn't act, starting March 6, 2018, as many as 983 undocumented people could lose their protected status every day -- nearly **30,000 people a month**, on average, for two years -- as DACA recipients' permits start to expire.
- The federal government spends billions of dollars each year to arrest, detain, and deport immigrants, - many are parents.
- In the last 10 years, over 100,000 immigrant parents of U.S. citizen children have been deported.
- As of December 23, 2017, 13,130 young people have already lost their DACA status since September! (Senator Kamala Harris, [D] CA)



# The Plight of Refugees



- The number of refugees admitted from foreign countries have also been severely diminished under the new administration. As of 2013, war and persecution have created the highest number of global refugees since World War II (51.2 million people).
- Most refugees are from Syria, Central Africa, and South Sudan. Fearing persecution, they flee to escape intolerable conditions.
- The U.S. immigrant population stood at more than 43.3 million, or 13.5 percent of our 321.4 million population in 2015. Between 2014 and 2015, the foreign-born population increased by 899,000, or 2.1 percent. (American Community Survey data)
- “Displacement and premigration situations of war and conflict may involve witnessing or being subjected to torture, killings, atrocities, incarceration, starvation/deprivation (e.g., food, shelter), rape, sexual assault, and physical beatings” (Bemak & Chung, 2017, p. 299).
- August 2016: 85,000 refugees resettled in U.S.; August 2017: 913 refugees settled in U.S.! Those from predominantly Muslim countries are the most limited [6,059 admitted August, 2016 down to 220 admitted August, 2017] (Human Rights Watch, 2017)

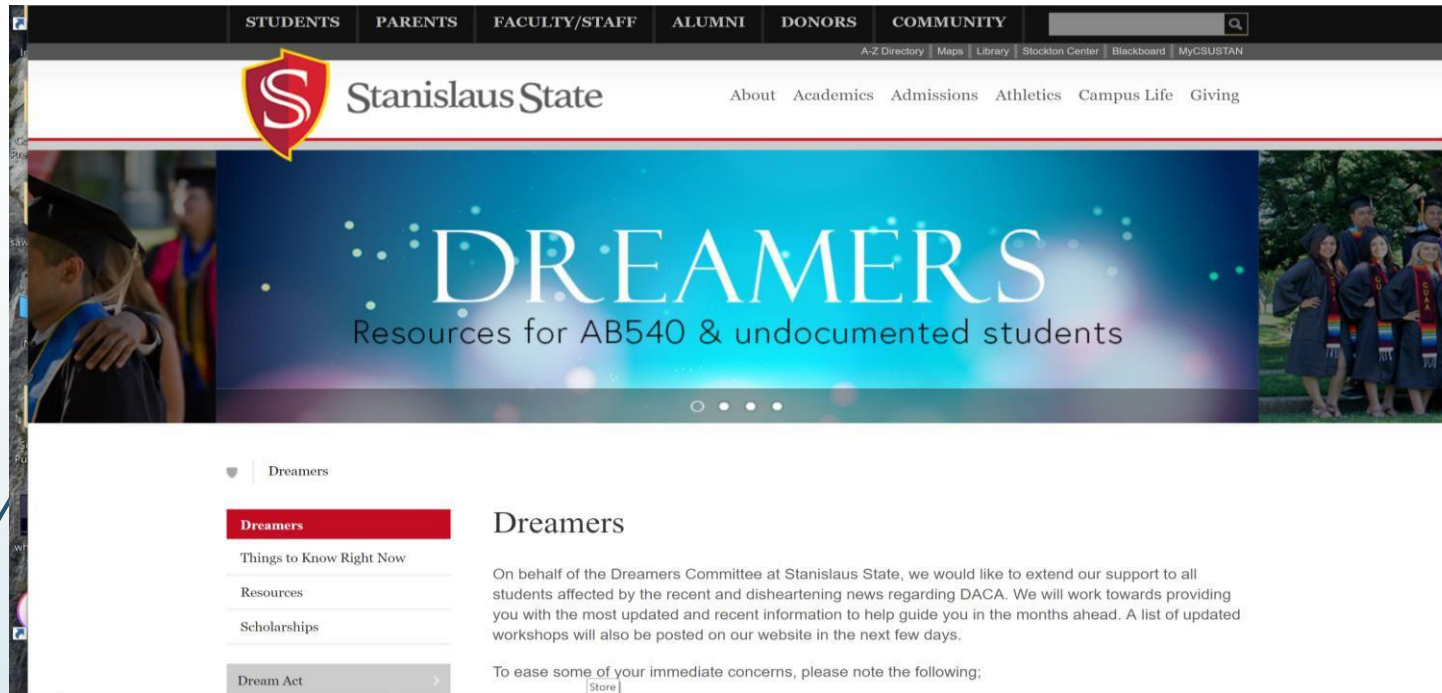


# Study Inception: Demographics of Cal. State University, Stanislaus

- California State University, Stanislaus is located in the San Joaquin Valley, in the central portion of California.
- Enrollment is approximately 10,000 students, and is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) – Federal program designed to assist colleges/universities that assist first generation, majority low income Hispanic students (grant money)
- There are four colleges, offering 43 undergraduate programs, 15 master's programs, 7 credential programs, and 1 doctoral program
- The Counselor Education program has approximately 125 students, offering three tracks: School Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and College/Agency Counseling
- Over 220 (identified) DACA students enrolled
- CA has more immigrants and sanctuary cities per capita than any other state



# Stanislaus: Dreamer Website & New Diversity Center



# Why Conduct a Study?

- Transition to new national administration occurred, January, 2017
- Spring semester began late January
- There was a distinct, noticeable change in students when classes began
- It soon became evident our counseling students were experiencing personal concerns for their own families, friends, and clients
- Approximately 75% of our counseling students are of Hispanic origin
- The change in classroom atmospheres was palpable
- Discussion started spontaneously regarding our students' concerns for their own family members, employees on their families' farms, and for the clients they serve
- Fear, anxiety, distress, and anguish surfaced as students shared stories of deportations
- The Central Valley of CA produces over 8 percent of nation's produce; CA produces over half of nation's fruits, nuts, vegetables





# Study Designed



- When so many fears of our graduate students surfaced, a study was conceived to assess these concerns.
- In our counseling, Field Experience courses, one of our responsibilities is to conduct site placement observations of our students' while counseling
- Site visitations included observing many children crying and discussing fears about suddenly having their parents being taken away
- Schools reported a large drop in attendance during the months of January and February
- Discussions occurred with our peers in our College of Education, Kinesiology, and Social Work – experiencing the same concerns
- Concerns arose in all classes and disciplines as tensions mounted
- A qualitative study was initially designed and disseminated to counseling graduate students in Spring, 2017
- A further study of the entire College of Education will be conducted with focus groups in Spring, 2018

# Study Disseminated

- Study was disseminated in April and May, 2017 to our counseling education students and recent graduates
- 391 online surveys were sent out with n = 36 Returned (Approx. 10%), (which is a limitation of this study, as well as being disseminated near finals week, and numerous email addresses had expired)
- Responses were very telling about personal experiences of counselors and how they have been dealing with the stress and anxiety
- **Some of the 12. significant study questions and responses are:**
- **Q. 8: What has been your experience, personally, and/or professionally, interacting with undocumented immigrants and/or refugees?**
- “At the junior high level, I’ve had students come to my office to voice concerns regarding their undocumented parents being deported, and students being absent from class instruction due to parents fear of their children being targeted for deportation.”
- “I’ve had a wonderful experience working with undocumented immigrants from Mexico and other parts of Latin America, Syria, Iran, Armenia, Turkey, Yemen, and India, to name a few... I typically assist these students in ELD and mentor and tutor them in their personal lives and schoolwork, respectively.”



**Q. 8: What has been your experience, personally, and/or professionally, interacting with undocumented immigrants and/or refugees? (Continued)**

- “Students and families I come in contact with are scared and hesitant to provide any personal information.”
- “Most of my experience has been on a personal level; however, I have also witnessed local church cases of students who are afraid they will be deported and their families separated. I have family members, as well as friends (age range 7-30), who have been greatly affected by the new administration where their rights under DACA may be jeopardized. It is heartbreaking to see young children worrying about themselves, their families, or even their friends...”
- “My experience with undocumented immigrants has been that there are many barriers for them. I feel like it is harder for them to get access to financial aid and healthcare.... On top of that, they have to deal with the emotional issues of, are they going to be arrested, or are the family members going to be arrested and sent back to Mexico? I have students that their family already has a plan in place in case they get deported, and it is hard for them to focus on school if they do not feel safe.”



**Q. 10: What feelings may have arisen for you in regards to assisting/counseling undocumented immigrants and/or refugees, and how have these feelings affected your professional and personal life?**



- “Being a child of undocumented parents, but are now citizens of the U.S., this has brought about my empathy for these students.”
- “I have learned the undocumented immigrants come to this country for the American dream. They come from places with NO OPPORTUNITY, so coming to the United States allows them the chance to work and support their family... they are willing to work in hard labor jobs for little money...”
- “I find a profound interest in assisting/counseling undocumented immigrants and/or refugees as it reminds me of the immense difficulty I too experienced when I lived in a foreign country and was undocumented...”
- “Many of the students I have assisted have been our top students!...”
- “For me, the main emotional feeling has been frustration and weariness for people who may be in jeopardy to losing everything. It is heartbreaking to know that many people’s (children and adults) lives can be drastically affected negatively by a simple change in the legislature. I have family and friends who came to this country in hopes of finding a better life. They are good people, who have never been involved in the criminal justice system, pay their taxes, and are great role models to others. However, just because they were not born here and have not been legalized, their entire future is at stake...”

***Q. 11: What have been the most successful strategies that you have utilized to help you cope with the stressors/challenges in assisting/counseling undocumented immigrants and/or refugees?***

- “My ability to be an advocate and be a source of information for these students helps me cope.”
- “Doing my research and keeping up with the new laws has been helpful. Also, providing any undocumented immigrants with resources and giving them hope is an excellent way to assist them.”
- “I have attended trainings to gather information and resources to use with DREAMers. Joining listserv’s and consulting with others has also been helpful.”
- “Thinking therapeutically, and not moralistically.”
- “I am sensitive and understanding to the students and families. I am also a first generation graduate, therefore, I can relate to many students and families on a personal level...”
- “Using kindnesses, and obtaining information on the UN human rights.”





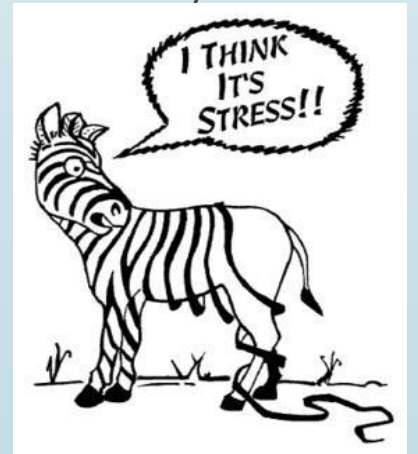
**Q. 12: Kindly describe three specific suggestions you could share with other counselors/trainees in assisting/counseling undocumented immigrants and/or refugees.**



- “Advocate, read up on DACA/DREAMer laws, and empathize.”
- “Be compassionate, because you never know what a person has faced. Be kind, because everyone deserves to be treated with kindness and respect. Be helpful, because everyone deserves to have services.”
- “Attend trainings or webinars so that you are prepared, gather info. and resources, consult with others to make sure you are giving accurate information, and make them feel welcomed and that they can count on you!”
- “Three specific suggestions I could share with other counselors or trainees is to have patience, to make sure to ask students, especially seniors, about their status to be able to best serve them toward their future goals, and not limit the student because of their immigration status.”
- ... Do your best to understand what they are going through; it has not been easy for them to leave their home country, friends, and family. Remember that this is the country that opens its doors to immigrants and those in need, so open your heart to them and help them, knowing that you have been trained in the best college in our nation. Help them the same way you would have wished you could have gotten help if you were in another country...”

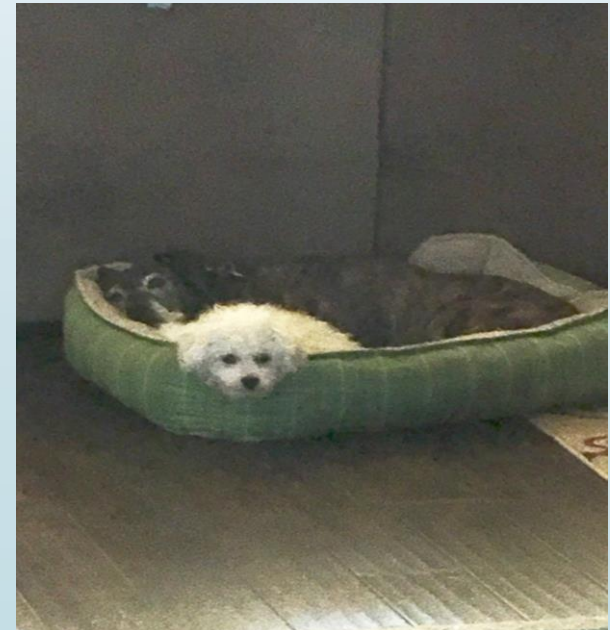
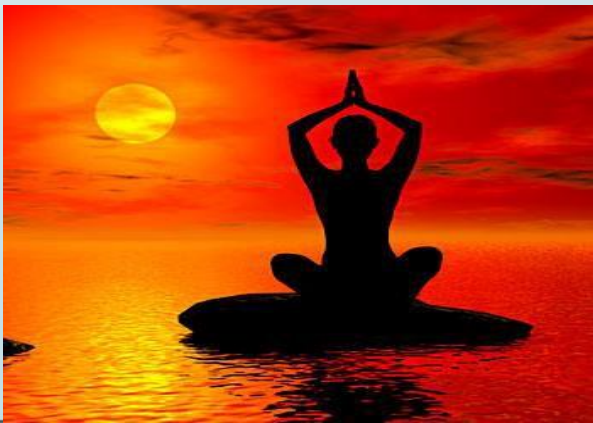
# Effects of Negative Distress Accumulation

- “People in the United States are not dying of infection-related diseases, but instead of chronic lifestyle-related diseases” (Granello, 2013, p.3).
- What we really need is education and assistance regarding avoiding and managing chronic illnesses, yet our healthcare systems are still focused on the treatment of sickness and dysfunction.
- We spend an inordinate amount of time and money in remedying problems, instead of preventing their occurrence in the first place.
- Forty-five percent of Americans suffer from at least one chronic disease, such as heart disease, diabetes, pulmonary disease, and cancer (which are higher than in any other country), and are among the most costly and preventable diseases in the U.S.
- “We do not have a healthcare system, we have a disease management system” (Dr. Andrew Weil, MD, as noted in Granello, 2013, p.4).



# Negative Distress Effects Continued...

- ▶ When the body experiences stress, its ancient programmed response is to rev up the autonomic sympathetic response by excreting the stress hormones of norepinephrine, adrenaline, ephedrine, and cortisol.
- ▶ They are the body's 'flight or fight' response, required in extreme danger or when under considerable stress, signaling the body to prepare itself for what lies ahead. However, in our over-stressed, anxiety-driven world, the body is often thrown into this type of reaction far too often, which over time becomes toxic to the 'bodymind' and spirit.
- ▶ The 'bodymind' seeks to enhance the parasympathetic system of the body to restore it to homeostasis and balance



# Evidence-Based Wellness Practices

- For centuries, Eastern medicine has focused on the holistic paradigm of wellness, in preventing illness, and looking at the entire person as a system and unique entity with interwoven parts.
- “The World Health Organization as early as 1947 defined health as being more than the absence of disease, and in 1964 emphasized the well-being aspect with its definition of health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’” (World Health Organization [WHO], 1964).
- Myers, Sweeney, and Witmer (2000), famous authors of the ‘Wheel of Wellness’ and ‘Indivisible Self’ evidenced-based models (derived from numerous factor-analysis studies), discussed wellness as being “a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being, in which body, mind, and spirit are integrated by the individual to live life more fully within the human and natural community. Ideally, it is the optimum state of health and well-being that each individual is capable of achieving” (p. 252).



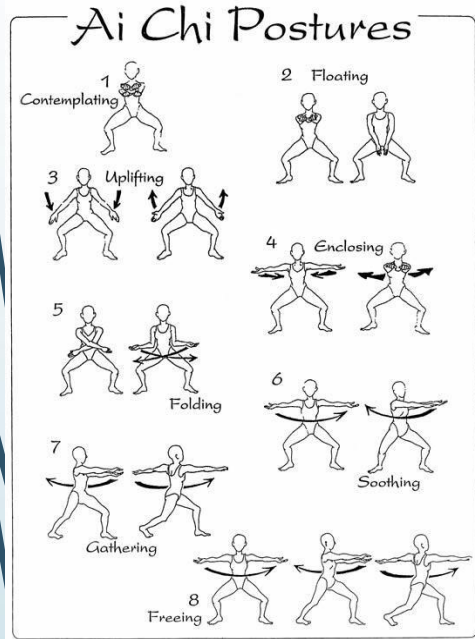
# Wellness Practices, Continued...

- “The traditional medical model has a pathogenic, reductionist, and disease focus, while in contrast the wellness model has a salutogenic (health enhancing) focus that is related to constant striving for optimal functioning” (Granello, 1995, as cited in Granello, 2013, p.8).
- It is only in recent years that counselors and theorists have accepted the notion of a mind-body connection, or as is often referred to now as one word: ‘bodymind.’
- “Bodymind work, mindfulness, contemplation...whatever you call it, is true integration...Optimal health, then, is the integration and harmony of mind, body, spirit, and emotions. Yet for many health professionals, virtually all attention is being placed on the physical well-being because it is the most tangible aspect of health” (Sova, 2003, p. 19).
- SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) recommends their Eight Dimensions of Wellness to be part of daily life
- They include: 1. Emotional (coping effectively); 2. Environmental (stimulating good health); 3. Financial (satisfaction with); 4. Intellectual (creative abilities); 5. Occupational (personal satisfaction); 6. Physical (activity, healthy foods, sleep); 7. Social (sense of connections/belonging); and 8. Spiritual (expanding a sense of purpose)





# Wellness Practices Continued...



- The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) is part of the National Institutes of Health.
- A large part of NCCAM's mission is to organize and define the world of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM).
- The most commonly cited CAM therapies listed in order from most to least utilized are: natural products, deep breathing, meditation, chiropractic and osteopathic treatments, massage, yoga, diet-based therapies, progressive relaxation, guided imagery, and homeopathic treatment.
- A common Japanese proverb states: "Willow does not break under weight of snow" ([as cited in Sova, 1999, p. 16], original author unknown).
- The implied meaning is that stiff branches, bones, and inflexible psyches may break: however, pliant bones, connective tissues, and psyches will not.
- It is said that roundness, continuity, and softness are all a part of life, which don't inherently cause strain. The Japanese believe that if you don't go against nature, you will last long.



## Outcomes of the Study

- One participant summed up the feelings of the study succinctly by stating: **"Be open, stay current on the laws, stay empathic, and remember: we were all immigrants once in our heritage."**
- This is an on-going issue, fraught with much emotion, inconsistencies, mixed information, heartache, pain, distress, and fear.
- We must be sensitive to the concerns of undocumented immigrants and refugees, as well as for those who are trying to help and counsel them.
- It is incumbent upon ourselves as educators to assess the toll that our students are going through, both personally and professionally, in working with these issues.
- Further research must be conducted regarding best practices in working with our students, be they counselors, teachers, or what ever discipline, to increase their knowledge base, multicultural competencies, and compassion in working with those in need.
- Additionally, further research must also be conducted for faculty members to be able to address these difficult conversations in our classrooms with our students, understanding that we too have much duress and concern regarding preserving the fairness, equity, human rights, social justice, and equality for every person, no matter their heritage.



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