**Preparing Inquiry #1**

This will be an inquiry related to your anticipated liberal arts major and to teaching adolescents. Course participants will have a Duggan work session to tap professional literature on your topic of choice. The rubric is also in this syllabus.

Organize the written inquiry as follows:

* 1. Title, date, author, course
  2. Introduction: Inquiry question, why you are interested, and what you did to get to results. Include charts, forms, etc.
  3. Findings in regard to an analysis and synthesis of what you read and wrote.
  4. Conclusions: What you learned, limitations to this inquiry, and what this means for you as a possible future teacher.
  5. Reference list of at least three professional sources including Sadowski

Ideas for the Inquiry

1. Survey how adolescents are portrayed in the media. Use Sadowski’s five aspects of identity to describe your findings. (Media could include adolescent books such as “Twilight” or “Hunger Games.”)
2. Visit a high school cafeteria (this course instructor will get you permission) during at least three student lunch hours and observe the social behavior that seems relevant to Sadowski’s five aspects of identity. Report your observations and analyze for patterns, contrasts or similarities with Sadowski’s text.
3. Eating disorders: What are the signs and what can teachers do?
4. Textbook examination: How are males and females portrayed? How are people of different cultures, races, ages, or ability portrayed?
5. How is school dropout related to grade retention? (see American Educational Research Journal, 1994)
6. Cyber-bullying
7. What are resources for LGBT support?
8. Adolescents and social media (cell phone, I-phone, Facebook, etc.)

Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**EDU 101 Inquiry**

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Score: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Scoring: 1 = incomplete 2 = basic 3 = satisfactory 4 = skilled

Is the inquiry authentic (original, convincing)? 1 2 3 4

Does the inquiry address the question? 1 2 3 4

\_\_\_ producing something that did not exist

\_\_\_ appropriate references

\_\_\_ clear thesis, question

\_\_\_ evidence is specific

\_\_\_ conclusion is the result of analysis

\_\_\_ clear indication of if the question was answered, unanswerable, or poorly

Stated.

Does the inquiry indicate applications of course text, 1 2 3 4

References and bibliography?

Is the inquiry professionally prepared? 1 2 3 4

Was the inquiry/essay submitted on time? No Yes

*Dreamers in the Shadows*

March 15, 2013

Education 101

**Introduction**:

Hispanic-American identities, stereotypes, and aspirations interest me greatly. Throughout high school I completed five Spanish classes in which I learned Spanish language and culture. I also viewed a stirring documentary *Which Way Home* that disclosed the intense desire of many impoverished Latin American children to enter the United States by any means in hopes for a better future. Furthering this curiosity and interest in Hispanic life, Dr. Reyes’s *“Hispanics” in the U.S.* course continues to indulge this passion while also revealing the negative stereotypes and stigmas associated with immigrants and especially those who are undocumented. Another documentary, *30 Days: Immigration,* revealed the desires of undocumented youth to achieve the American Dream despite their legal circumstances. Finally, Michael Sadowski’s compilation, *Adolescents at School,* drove this passion home when in chapter three it discusses the emerging identities of immigrant students in the U.S. I narrow in on a social justice issue, and I focus my inquiry on the issue of lack of documentation. Fusing these passions together I inquire: how does lack of documentation affect Latin American immigrant students’ identities?

In order to answer this question I looked to professional sources that have taken statistics, done research, and conducted interviews with Latin American immigrant students. Their findings, my analysis for common themes, and synthesis of an answer make up this inquiry.

**Findings**:

One key influence to an undocumented Latin American student’s identity derives from context. Within context I found two major forces. First, I noticed that the school context plays a significant role in developing youth’s identities. As Michael Sadowski and Leisy Abrego assert school is a safe and protected place for undocumented immigrant youth . This safety and protection offered from the schools offers an escape for students whose home life falls below ideal American standards. These diverse and distinct home lives can overlap with schooling and affect the level of security the student feels at school. Thus, family and home life serve as the second contextual influence on undocumented youth’s identities. Abrego notes that immigrant families are not the typical picture of a nuclear family. Often extended family members live together and contribute. Also, diverse immigration statuses often make up undocumented families. Older siblings may be undocumented while younger siblings are U.S. citizens. These factors affect students’ identities as well. Stemming from family economic status, many undocumented children are expected to work at certain times of the year for wages in order to help their families make ends meet. Again, home life overlaps schooling as students’ high mobility due to work leads to them falling behind academically. The majority of undocumented immigrants are considered working class or working poor. They toil at manual labor jobs that no American wants. These conditions further shape students’ self-perceptions, hopes, and dreams. Ultimately context significantly influences students’ attitude; at school they are safe, protected, and taught to dream, whereas at home they are often faced with the harsh realities of an immigrant’s life (Gildersleeve).

Following the major importance of school in undocumented youth’s identity development, Abrego also found that the 1.5 generation (those in school), “are legitimated in educational settings and are able to learn the language, absorb the customs, and make the culture their own in ways that are not available to those who migrate as adults” (Abrego). This generational difference flows from the security offered in public school settings. Students’ legal consciousness varies greatly from those of their parents and greatly affects their identities. Because undocumented youth often only vaguely remember the migration experience, they do not claim responsibility for immigration. This claim in not choosing to migrate leads them to identify with stigma rather than fear at their presence in America. They feel they are being treated unfairly. As Sadowski reiterates throughout his compilation, youth just want to feel accepted. Undocumented students are no different. One of Abrego’s interviewees remembered feeling uncomfortable in school when discussing immigration revealing: “I hate how they call us ‘illegal aliens.’ I feel like telling them that I don’t have antennae, I’m not a weirdo like they think” (Abrego). This student did not feel accepted because of their status which can lead to a negative self-perception.

Age of discovering illegality largely affects identity as well. It shocked me to learn the majority of immigrant students do not know of their lack of documentation until they reach 16 years of age and begin typical American rites of passage. Robert Gonzales calls the interim until they receive knowledge of their lack of documentation “suspended illegality”. Gonzales has also made remarkable findings. His data reveals that immigrants “in the dark” of their undocumented status have much higher chances of attending college. It can be deduced that students who know when they are children of their legal status develop a consciousness of illegality and set the bar lower for themselves. Youth that do not realize their conditions until they are applying for college have often dreamed big, and although many feel frustration and anger at the new chains they discover shackling them, they also feel empowered and unafraid ready to fight for education and citizenship.

Focusing on the schools once more, Marisol, one of Gonzales’s interviewees explained: “School was an escape from home. I felt happy, calm… I could be myself. I could be recognized at school. My teachers encouraged me to keep going. And my friends, we believed in education and pushed each other. We helped each other with homework and talked about college” (Gonzales). Ultimately schools play a huge part in developing students’ identities. Undocumented students especially rely on schools for positive reinforcement, development, and support to reach for their dreams. Gonzales concluded finding a common thread among those who go to college: a significant adult figure, often a teacher or counselor, helped and supported them along the way. Positive mentors and trust are key for students who find out their status during high school. Many often feel embarrassed, ashamed, frustrated and angry fueling their desire for change and their readiness to make a stand.

**Conclusions**:

Infinite factors play into one’s identity. Researching undocumented Latin American youth’s identities I find there are multiple influences to their self-perceptions and esteems. Age at migration, age at discovering lack of documentation, community, family life, the attitudes received at school, and having or not having a significant mentor play key roles in youth development and identity. Like any child, undocumented youth just want to feel accepted and search for a sense of belonging.

Public school systems (K-12) often offer this acceptance to undocumented immigrant students while also providing an escape from the realities of an abnormal home life. Because multiple factors influence identity development and students view school as a “safe place”, supportive school relationships are often key to a positive self-perception. In the same manner, students with a significant school mentor preserve their belief in the American Dream and have greater chances of completing high school and attending college.

If I had more time to research for this inquiry I would further explore the effects of economic status on undocumented students’ identities and research the correlation between child labor and age of attainment of knowledge of undocumented status. I would also like to read more student autobiographies. Possible limitations for this inquiry are the lack of information available as youth reach adulthood and develop fear of their status and may be unwilling to share their experiences. Also, because this is a recent issue, there was a lack of data and sources. I would also like to see how students maintain their identities as time passes and if and how they change.

As a possible future teacher these findings illustrate the opportunity for me to take my passion for making a difference beyond educating future generations. These results find that teachers play a large role in the development of students’ identities and that teachers have the chance to help construct a positive self-perception in their pupils. If I become a teacher, I will have this special opportunity to inspire and motivate a group of students I am enthusiastic about.

**Reference** **List**:

Abrego, Leisy J. "Legal Consciousness Of Undocumented Latinos: Fear And Stigma As Barriers To Claims-Making For First- And 1.5-Generation Immigrants." *Law & Society Review* 45.2 (2011): 337-370. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 10 Mar. 2013.

Gildersleeve, Ryan Evely, and Jessica J. Ranero. "Precollege Contexts Of Undocumented Students: Implications For Student Affairs Professionals." *New Directions For Student Services* 131 (2010): 19-33. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 10 Mar. 2013.

Gonzales, Roberto G. "Learning To Be Illegal: Undocumented Youth And Shifting Legal Contexts In The Transition To Adulthood." *American Sociological Review* 76.4 (2011): 602-619. *SocINDEX with Full Text*. Web. 10 Mar. 2013.

Suarez-Orozco, Carola, Desiree Qin, and Ramona Amthor. "Adolescents from Immigrant Families." Trans. Array *Adolescents At School*. Michael Sadowski. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2008. 51-69. Print.