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Intra-participant and inter-analyst cacophony: working the hyphen between modalities using provocative reflexivity

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ABSTRACT

Multimodal psychological research highlights the benefit of using complementary approaches to the phenomenological study of lived experience. Rather than focus on any individual method, this study attempts to concentrate on the transition, or hyphen, between them, as a place for reflexivity, ethics, and theory. Participants were 14 adults, recruited from 'New York Community College' and 'New Jersey Community College' in the U.S., who engaged in focus groups where they completed two activities: drawing a map of their personal journey to the college or of their self-identity, and their definitions for the immigration-related terms *illegal* and *undocumented*. Results demonstrated that journey and identity maps contained obstructive and supportive elements, and that the definitions reflected differential cognitive and emotional elements. However, focusing on the transition between these two activities revealed that whereas most participants viewed *illegal* and *undocumented* as different, participants who noted many more obstacles reported that the terms had both different but also similar qualities. Implications are discussed with a pivot towards the psychological link between methods as a generative space for future theoretical and conceptual work.

KEYWORDS

Reflexivity; mapping; multimodality; decolonial; feminist

Introduction

Visual data methodology and analysis has steadily grown in usage and popularity as more researchers consider how 'the visual' is demonstrably different than 'the verbal' as both topic and resource (Harrison 2002). Apart from difference, scholars have noted the danger to the monologizing of data (Martsin, 2018) resulting in 'text positivism' (James 2007) that ultimately shrinks opportunities to knowledge creation and theory-building. This article extends the work on *resemiotization* (Iedema 2003) and *diffraction* (Barad 2014) by acknowledging the tensions between visual and verbal methodology and analysis, viewing them as inextricably linked and complementary with no

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elevated position between the two, but necessary in order to appreciate changes in phenomenological meaning-making as a shift is made between these modes. Through the use of participant-generated qualitative data and analysis, coupled with researcher interpretation, we argue that both diffractive and reflexive multimodality is better equipped to handle both the epistemic and ethical needs of psychological qualitative work.

While the original research that this project is based on did not begin with this theoretical approach, the first author's individual process of reflexivity prompted a deeper and more critical look at his past work. Through dialogue about the data, research practices, and the importance of looking back to better understand past research, we hope to move ourselves and the reader through a collective process of pluralistic and interdisciplinary analysis where a decolonial turn is made to deprivilege researcher expertise, upend traditional objectivity (Fine 2006), and uplift participants' voices through the rendering of both visual and verbal methodologies and the borderlands in-between. It is, in this spirit, where we attempt to enact Lutrell's (2019) concept of a 'good enough' praxis- one engaged in pragmatic reflexivity.

Mapping and values analysis

The visual approach in social science methodology has long been utilized in the fields of health and illness (Guillemin and Drew 2010; Harrison 2002) and child and developmental studies (Honkanen, Poikolainen, and Karlsson 2017; Hunleth 2011), as visual methodologies have been expanded upon in psychology and education (Esteban-Guitart and Moll 2014; Futch and Fine 2014; Katsiaficas et al. 2011;; Segalo 2018; Segalo, Manoff, and Fine 2015). Prompted by the social psychological work of Milgram and Jodelet (1976), visual data in the form of 'mapping' allows for the phenomenological narrating of journeys, identities, and experiences- replete with peaks and valleys, highs and lows, and successes and struggles (King et al. 2014). Mapping is a participant-generated methodology, whereby the individual both creates and analyzes their visual data, in the form of a drawing, that could reflect a visualized map of their community or city (Bomfim and Pol 2005), or of their self-identity (Sirin and Fine 2007; Zaal, Salah, and Fine 2007). The analysis that follows can be understood as a social representation, where it is argued that the self-other relationship is unconsciously reflected symbolically in visual-spatial ways (De Alba 2011). In other words, the visual data that stems from a mapping activity need not solely be a reflection of personal and private emotions and thoughts on the topic, but could also be a reflection of societal influence on the same topic- for instance, in the form of legal policy and social discourse.

Decolonial and feminist scholars have illustrated the importance and necessity of arts-based approaches like journey and identity art map-making by participants, as a means to elicit counternarratives or counter-storytelling in

order to disrupt deficit-based or single-lens theorizing about people, and in particular, marginalized communities (Anzaldua, 1987; Bernal 1998; Solorzano and Yosso 2002). Segalo, Manoff, and Fine (2015) also remind us of the dangers of speaking for others through analysis. A 'softer colonization' prevails even when we do not intend it. They articulate that,

> Yet as many postcolonial researchers have critiqued, augmenting the voices of others is where research often falls into the murky terrain of colonialism. Macleod and Bhatia (2008), for instance, recognize that harvesting and circulating "voices unheard" can reproduce the process of speaking for others. They argue that even under the guise of 'meaning well,' the softer sides of colonialization prevail. (p.2)

To counteract this, participant-generated methodologies help to disrupt the traditional research paradigm of 'participant-as-object', in that as authors of their own organic data, they are in the most ideal position to discuss and analyze it. Counter-storytelling disrupts normalized dominant narratives that distort or erase the experiences of those dominated. Others have noted how inclusion of participants in the data collection and interpretative process contributes to feelings of empowerment, broadens the scope of access and analysis, and brings researcher and research close to 'making sense of meanings' (Leavy 2015). Therefore, we agree with the claim that participant interpretation is most significant, but researcher analysis, against the backdrop of past literature and theory, is also key (Guillemin and Drew 2010).

Human development theory and research posit the mutual development of individuals and societies (Vygotsky, 1978) as occurring via participation, in meaningful activities across diverse contexts, through language. Individuals interact with other figures in public life- government, organizations, media, cultural groups, as well as other individuals- with diverse interests, experiences, and positions in life. Qualitative work serves to establish a knowledge base to further and deepen understanding of lives lived-in-context with each other. As discourse is a cultural tool that probes experiences, the employment of narratives embedded within genres, such as focus groups, allows for a glimpse into the relational space between an individual and society. As such, the use of focus groups is an appropriate tool to use for exploring new research questions centered on the phenomenology of visual and verbal portrayals of lived experience (Wilkinson, 1998a; Wilkinson, 1998b). Utilizing a critical discursive lens to narratives allows for not only interpersonal understanding, but also situates interactions amongst a broader range of interlocutors (Daiute et al. 2020). One such lens is values analysis, which allows for the investigation of explicit and implicit principles and goals that a narrator has learned through lived experiences and in relation to others (such as through sociocultural or situational interactions) that guide perceptions, thoughts, emotions, and actions. Values are not inherently 'positive' or 'negative', but rather are subjective beliefs and principles concerning an individual's understanding of

themselves, society/the world, and/or others. Consequently, values analysis understands meaning as the cognitive, emotional, social, and political import of expressions (Daiute et al. 2020).

Immigration and social labeling

The past decade has seen an increase in negative views, attitudes, and perceptions towards immigrants in the United States. Anti-immigration sentiments and rhetoric are particularly evident through a surge of immigration control policies, increase of deportations, and negative depictions in the media, including social media (Anti-Defamation League 2018; Becerra 2016; Grigorieff, Roth, and Ubfal 2020). Anti-immigration policies seek to penalize and criminalize *undocumented* immigrants for working, grant police the right to enforce immigration laws during 'lawful' encounters, and restrict access to resources (e.g., healthcare, transportation, housing, higher education). Immigration raids and deportations have increased considerably and have reached unprecedented numbers. Over the course of the last 10 years, more than 3 million immigrants have been deported from the US (Pinedo 2020). Additionally, under the previous Trump administration, immigrants had been primary targets of negative rhetoric, harmful immigration policies (e.g., public charge rule, rescission of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, etc.), and increased targeting via immigration raids and deportations. Finally, negative depictions of immigrants are rampant on politically conservative media (e.g., television, radio), as well as social media (Anti-Defamation League 2018; Kteily and Bruneau 2017). Such circumstances serve to depict immigrants in a negative light, often times associating them with images of criminality and unlawfulness, and thus adding credence to the notion of legal violence, as an 'unintended consequence' of the convergence between the state's criminal and immigration laws (Abrego and Menjívar 2011).

During this time, for instance, detentions and deportations of immigrants skyrocketed. Immigrants with criminal backgrounds (e.g., aggravated felonies, drug convictions, domestic violence) were prioritized, as they were perceived as the most threatening to society and public safety. However, in actuality, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) broadly applied the term 'criminal,' which resulted in the majority of immigrants being deported having only migration-related offenses (e.g., being *undocumented*, overstaying a visa). Less than 4% of all immigrants deported were due to aggravated felonies. Media sources also increasingly portrayed immigrants as violent criminals, despite research suggesting that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than citizens. A 2015 national survey (Pew Research Center 2015) found that 37% of Americans perceived immigrants as making society worse and 53% agreed that immigrants were making crime worse in the US. When asked to

use one word to describe immigrants, most commonly used term was *illegal*. Notably, terms such as *illegal* when describing immigrants elicits negative stereotypes, including criminal activity such as violence and drug trafficking.

Positive or negative attributes are associated with specific labels and elicit specific connotations and stereotypes. Persons may be more inclined to identify, or accept, labels that are correlated with positive attributes while rejecting negative labels (Galinsky et al. 2013). Therefore, social labeling need not be a deliberate and motivated selective effort, but rather a cognitive and symbolic delineation of 'good' versus 'bad'. For example, within the context of immigration, the terms *illegal* and *undocumented* migrant both refer to an immigrant who is not authorized to be living in the United States. However, both terms have specific connotations. These mental depictions, when simplistic and negative (in the form of nouns), have historically been tied to the emergence of ethnophaulisms and the exclusion of ethnic immigrant outgroups in the United States (Mullen, 2001).

The attitudinal difference in the social labels used to refer to unauthorized immigrants (as *illegal* or *undocumented*) may stem from exposure to popular and policy discourse, as expressed by news organizations and political parties (Finch, 2014). It may also derive from particular sociopolitical and ideological sets, in that *illegal* (with its legal undertone) might resonate more with those who view the social, political, and economic policies affecting unauthorized immigrants as just and fair, while those who do not share this belief may agree more with *undocumented* (with its circumstantial connotation) (Caicedo and Badaan 2020).

Working the hyphen

While the usage of multimodal research design may be advantageous due to its analytically diverse interpretations of data, our research team pursued a related, but different, objective: If a particular set of visual and verbal data is produced by the same individual within the same time and space, how can we better understand the 'hyphen' between the two modalities?

Working within the field of semiotics, Iedema (2003) argues for *resemiotization* which is understood as the 'why' and the 'how' of meaning-making shifts from context to context, practice to practice, and modality to modality. This is to say that while multimodality provides a critical lens into social processes (as language is de-centered and de-privileged for the sake of other modes such as image and sound), resemiotization takes the 'meaning-maker's perspective' as each modality has its own constraints and affordances, and therefore they each privilege different facts of the human experience. In multimodal qualitative research then, rather than focusing on the

essentializing characteristics of each mode, it is perhaps more telling to uncover the potential social and cognitive process(es) inherent in representational shifts as they mutually transform one another.

Diffraction, or the use of *diffractive methodologies* (Bozalek and Zembylas, 2016), on the other hand, attempts to shift epistemological thinking towards a relational ontology between knower and knowledge production, in that data and meaning are co-constituted. Originating in the work of Harding (1991), Haraway (1992), and Barad (2014), diffraction is a metaphor for difference when interference, or combination, occurs- whether through disciplines, data, or methodologies. Diffraction, then, breeds creative insights through active provocations in meaning or sense-making, with important ethical, ontological, and methodological consequences- rather than solely a dichotomous juxtaposition of methods. Feminist science studies and research propel us to critique scientific universal views of the world, and question how our positionality as researchers influence the knowledge we produce.

Fine's (1994) notion of *working the hyphen* referred to the multiplicity (and complicity) of relationships that researchers have with participants, sites of research, and the understanding gathered from both. She argues that whether deliberate and self-conscious or not, qualitative researchers are always implicated at the hyphen. Other scholars (Cunliffe and Karunanayake 2013; Wagle and Cantaffa 2008) have utilized this metaphor of 'between-spaces' to refer to the identity and positionality of researcher and their relevance to *Others*, embedded within power relations often imposed by the research itself. We, too, borrow the metaphor of *working the hyphen*, but reimagine the same processes as methodological 'blurred boundaries', akin to what Cunliffe and Karunanayake (2013) refer to as a 'linking hyphen'. Thus we approach 'the struggle "between"' (Fine 1994, 75) research design, data, and analysis by understanding that the conversations and negotiations that occur in *hyphen spaces* are predicated on researcher reflexivity (Cunliffe and Karunanayake 2013).

Prevailing notions of academic neutrality suggest that research is not, and should not, be personal or political. Critical, decolonial, and feminist scholars (Anzaldua, 1987; Collins 2002; Haraway 1988; Lorde 1984; Lugones 2010; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; River 1983; Smith 2013) argue that relationality and reflexivity are necessary components of doing critical work. With this in mind, we believe it is an important and required part of any research practice to consider reflexivity as an ongoing practice beyond the technical end of research (Harrison 2002). Rupturing linear notions of progress and method by returning to former research is a decolonial and feminist move that allows new knowledge to surface from past data. In thinking about reflexive approaches in qualitative research, we turn to Luttrell (2019) who writes, 'Reflexivity is not a solitary process limited to critical self-awareness but derives from a collective ethos and humanizes rather than objectifies research relationships and the

knowledge that is created', highlighting 'looking back' and 'collaborative and creative reflexivity' (13) as considerations necessary for pragmatic reflexivity. To that end, we use this opportunity to engage in a process of post-research reflexivity that involves returning to former research from years past through collaborative analysis in an effort to reach new conclusions due to historical and personal changes (Lutrell, 2019).

Objective

Our collaborative, decolonizing, and reflexive objective with this work is to invoke past discussion on the utility of multimodal research in qualitative psychology, but with a specific focus on the theoretical consequences of multimodality shift, as interpreted by a team of interdisciplinary scholars. As such, this exploratory study seeks to not only investigate the psychological components of both visual and verbal data (in the form of 'maps' and 'definitions', respectively), but to theorize as to the meaning-making shift embedded within the hyphen, with the shadow of the U.S. immigration debate in 2014 in the background. More specifically, we probe these issues amongst a group of U.S. community college students from two different institutions but in neighboring U.S. states, in order to highlight demographic and political differences, yet also phenomenological similarities.

Methods

Research sites and participants

New York Community College ('NYCC'; pseudonym) is located in New York City, which is home to 8.4 million inhabitants, 6.4% (535,000) of whom were reported to be *undocumented* in 2005 (Moradian, 2014). At NYCC, enrollment before the Fall 2014 semester reflected a total of 25,849 students. While NYCC is located in one of the world's largest cities, New Jersey Community College ('NJCC'; pseudonym) is located in suburban New Jersey, approximately 30 miles west of NYCC. The county where NJCC is located is home to 499,397 residents, 3.4% (22,000) of whom were reported to be *undocumented* in 2013. At NJCC, enrollment before the Fall 2014 semester reflected a total of 8,096 students. The respective colleges' institutional data for the Fall 2014 semester (see Table 1) reflects the heterogenous nature of urban and metropolitan demographics, and the homogeneous nature of suburban and provincial environments (Williamson, 2008), and the saliency of both immigrants and the immigration debate in these environments (Thompson, 2012). The 'minority majority' student population of NYCC serves as a contrast to the slightly younger and White/Caucasian student population of NJCC.

Table 1. Fall 2014 student demographic data.

	NYCC	NJCC
Total Enrollment	25,849	8,096
Gender		
Male	43.2%	50.3%
Female	56.8%	49.5%
Age		
≤ 20 years old	40.8%	48.9%
Race/Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	12.1%	59.1%
Black/African-American	31.5%	4.8%
Hispanic/Latino	41.6%	19.5%
Asian	14.6%	5.6%

Participants were recruited from a previous study (Caicedo and Badaan 2020), where several classrooms at NYCC and NJCC were visited in order to invite students to participate in an experimental questionnaire study on topics such as immigration. Upon completion of the experimental questionnaire, students were invited to participate in a focus group, where the investigator would invite 3–4 students to discuss similar topics on immigration, on a later date at the college. A contact sheet was circulated around the classroom, where a student could list their email address and/or phone number, and the investigator would contact them. Therefore, the sample for the focus groups was derived from the questionnaire sample, as all students were invited to participate. Of the 467 students at NYCC who completed the questionnaire, 133 wished to be contacted for the focus groups. Of the 200 students at NJCC who completed the questionnaire, 60 offered their contact information. The investigator then scheduled the focus group sessions in a departmental or institutional conference room based on participant availability.

In total, there were three (3) NYCC and two (2) NJCC focus group sessions, consisting of seven (7) students from each institution, for a total of 14 students. Of the NYCC students, two (2) were immigrants (Japan and Israel), and of the NJCC students, three (3) were immigrants (England, India, and Colombia). The remaining students (9) were U.S.-born. Each participant in each focus group received a raffle ticket for a $20 Visa gift card upon completion of the activity.

Materials and procedure

All materials and procedures in this study were approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York (475 901–2), and discussed with the participants prior to the start of each focus group session.

Once the scheduled students arrived at the meeting room, the investigator introduced himself and reminded the students of the previous questionnaire study on immigration-related topics. Now, however, he wanted to know what

they thought of immigration through pictures and/or words. Students were given sketch paper and markers, and given the option of completing one of two activities (see Appendix).

The first was drawing the journey from their home country or neighborhood to the college. This mapping activity was meant to probe the participant's mental representation of their academic trajectory, as they were encouraged to include the opportunities, support, and obstacles encountered along their path. Students were also advised to utilize different colors to symbolize these elements, such as red for 'obstacles', blue for 'support', and green for 'motivation' encountered along their journey. The choice to draw their journey from their home country or neighborhood to the college originated in the understanding that while some students could be immigrants, others would be native-born. In order to encapsulate both types of experiences, an a priori decision was made to broaden the activity prompts.

The second option consisted of creating a map of their identity, as it related to their self-perception as a community college student. Students were again advised to use colors and/or symbols to draw their identity maps, including stereotypes others may have of their identity (or identities), and what they wish to say back. The option to draw an identity map originated with the belief that providing participants with choices could lead to unforeseen results that may have been missed had only one modality been used.

Finally, all student participants were asked to create an entry for an internet-based dictionary, such as urbandictionary.com, for the terms *illegal* and *undocumented*. Students were asked for their definitions of these terms, along with usage examples (for instance, in a phrase or sentence). While they are different in their focus, and presumably capture a different psychological experience for the participant, the main objective remained the same – to investigate how the 'visual' connects with the 'verbal'.

A consent form was distributed to the participants who were then asked to complete the drawing activity, followed by their term definitions. The investigator exited the room for approximately 30 minutes while the participants completed this activity. Upon his return, he audio recorded their verbal descriptions of the maps and definitions. The focus group discussions were recorded by the investigator but subsequently transcribed by an outside professional transcriber with no known knowledge of the aims or purpose of the study.

Analysis plan

Following the work of Frost (2009) and Katsiaficas et al. (2011), we too sought a within-method triangulation that aimed to complicate single-lens qualitative analysis. Whereas quantitative research relies on statistical triangulation to seek a 'truth' or validation, qualitative inquiry uses approaches aimed at

capturing the multi-dimensionality of qualitative data (Frost 2009). In this study we draw from the concept of pluralistic analysis in a collaborative process by which three scholars engage with the data through analytic lenses from their academic disciplines (Luttrell 2019). In this case, analytical disagreements were not approached in a linear 'right-wrong' dichotomy but rather as invitations to expand our theoretical lenses by remaining open to revisiting the past and looking from different angles with the intention to 'see more' rather than to 'see correctly.' Gathering a group of interdisciplinary scholars from various fields (social psychology, urban education, and public health) allowed for conversations to begin at different entrypoints thus making room for nuance and complexity in analysis. Using a grounded approach (Strauss and Corbin 1998) to uncover the patterns and connections between the visual and verbal data, we believe our chosen approach adds to the theoretical generalizability (Fine 2006) of using visual and verbal methods in combination with each other for purposes of representing the social, ideological, educational, and linguistic landscapes individuals inhabit (Katsiaficas et al. 2011).

Initial analysis involved identification of the maps as 'journey' or 'identity'. Following the instructional prompts regarding the use of differential colors to mark the motivational (green), supportive (blue), and obstructive (red) factors in one's journey or identity, visual analysis consisted of coding these instances in the drawings, resulting in a spreadsheet tabulation of code counts (see Table 2).

In order to illustrate the interplay between self and society through language, secondary analysis consisted of the definitions the student participants gave for the labels *illegal* and *undocumented* as often (but not always) related to the immigration topic and debate. These definitions are seen not only as interactions between one's thinking and language to refer to those labels (and the prevailing societal discourse on those very labels), but also as tools (in the form of social representations) used to navigate their social understanding.

A values analysis was conducted on the focus group transcripts of NYCC and NJCC students' definitions of the terms illegal and undocumented, using Atlas Ti software. As values are 'culturally-specific goals, ways of knowing, experiencing, and acting in response to environmental, cultural, economic, political, and social circumstances – a definition based in socio-cultural theory' (Daiute, Stern, and Lelutiu-Weinberger 2003, 85), a careful reading was done initially to identify any beliefs implicitly inherent in the students' definitions across the two colleges. Codes were then generated based on these values. Higher or lower counts, or frequencies, of values would indicate more (or less) popular representative thought, or discourse, regarding *Illegal, Undocumented*, and *Social Labels*. Higher or lower frequencies of enacted values should also then represent accepted or rejected meaning-making

Table 2. Frequency of code applications.

	Different	Identity map	Journey map	Motivation	Obstacle	Same	Support	immigrant	Totals
NYCC_AF_map.pdf	0	1	0	1	3	0	1	0	6
NYCC_AF_def.pdf	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
NYCC_FV_map.pdf	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	5
NYCC_FV_def.pdf	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
NYCC_IA_map.pdf	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
NYCC_IA_def.pdf	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
NYCC_KI_map.pdf	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
NYCC_KI_def.pdf	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
NYCC_RA_map.pdf	0	0	1	1	5	0	2	0	9
NYCC_RA_def.pdf	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
NYCC_RH_mapdef.pdf	1	0	1	4	9	0	5	0	20
NYCC_YT_map.pdf	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	5
NYCC_YT_def.pdf	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
NJCC_AG_mapdef.pdf	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
NJCC_DP_map.pdf	0	0	1	3	5	0	3	1	13
NJCC_DP_map1.pdf	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
NJCC_DP_def.pdf	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
NJCC_JL_map.pdf	0	0	1	6	6	0	8	0	21
NJCC_JL_def.pdf	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
NJCC_JM_map.pdf	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
NJCC_JM_def.pdf	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
NJCC_JS_mapdef.pdf	1	0	1	4	6	0	5	0	17
NJCC_MK_mapdef.pdf	1	0	0	6	5	0	0	0	12
NJCC_unknown_map.pdf	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	4
NJCC_unknown_def.pdf	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	14	3	10	29	42	5	28	5	0

cultural tools used by individuals in particular social contexts (Daiute 2014). If values were shared across the two college campuses, then an observation can be made regarding the inherent definition(s) and social representation(s) of these labels. If values were unshared, then an observation can be made regarding the potential influence of the social environment of the two colleges.

As noted earlier in the Introduction, the original research objective that this project is based on was focused on the social representation of *illegal* and *undocumented* in the context of the U.S. immigration debate in 2014. In order to capture popular and representative thought and speech, a quantitative measure was used to tally underlying values surrounding the two terms both within and between the college groups. However, because this project involved both visual and verbal data, participant engagement was critical as they ' . . . are the most relevant and appropriate persons to give meaning to the image they have generated' (Guillemin and Drew 2010, 184). Therefore, quantification plays an introductory, but not principal, role in our analysis.

Rather than conclude and potentially essentialize either the visual or verbal modalities, we highlight 'working the hyphen' between the visual and verbal data not to assume that these methods are mutually exclusive, but to suggest the intentionality of seeing both as distinct and interrelated processes of understanding the social world. As both expressions of an inner dialogue, one symbolic (mapping) and the other linguistic (values), the choice to name the dynamic between the two offered our analysis a grounded place from which to consider the multidimensionality of social labels as expressed in two forms.

Results

Visual analysis

Most participants (11) chose to depict their journeys from their home countries or U.S. neighborhoods to the particular college, while only three (3) chose to draw identity maps reflecting self-perceptions and self-evaluations. In some cases, the distinction between a journey map and an identity map was neither exclusive nor clear, as these specific cases represented a 'journey to identity', in that the individual graphically showed how they came to their current and present self-perception. As prompted by the instructions, almost all participants adopted a flow-chart style of drawing, with the utilization of arrows representing a sequential order of personal events, while also delineating the numerous positive (e.g. motivation, and support) and negative (e.g. obstacle) elements in their journey and identity maps.

The majority of the student participants drew images of their journeys and identities that consisted of positive events (e.g. meeting certain individuals like teachers who supported them, or moving to a new community or school where

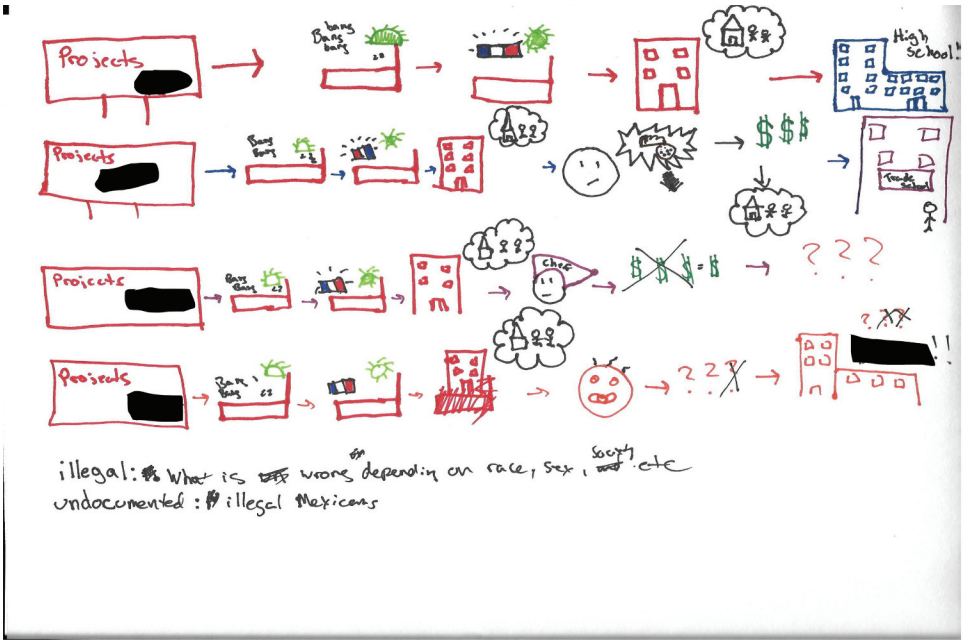


Figure 1.

they were able to excel), and motivating elements (e.g. aspirations of attending a new college). Yet, their images also included the obstacles endured, such as leaving their home country, or interacting with the 'wrong' group of people). Attesting to our belief in deprivileging researcher expertise, and elevating participants' voices while maintaining fidelity, below is an excerpt from 'RH', an NYCC student, regarding his image (see Figure 1):

> *I guess, the first stage where I started, you know, growing up is high school, so I made that blue. And then I started from, you know, from there on and, see, I'm still in the projects, still sleeping with the sirens and the gunshots, still have a dream of getting out of the ghetto. And then I decide that – I decided to do culinary to kind of make money, to make money and to get out of the ghetto. So then I went to trade school, which is I guess the second part.*

RH chose to visually depict his experience of hardship due to poverty and community crime, but also chose to verbally express his dream that despite these obstacles, he sought further education and training to overcome them. Segalo, Manoff, and Fine (2015) concept of counter-mapping is applicable here, since it is used as a decolonizing tool used to imagine 'what could be', through the documenting of space and the visualization of geographic imaginaries.

Verbal analysis

A values analysis of the focus group transcripts on the students' definitions of *illegal* and *undocumented* resulted in narratives organized around three categories: '*Illegal*', '*Undocumented*', and '*Social Labels*' (see Table 3). The 'Social Labels' category was created, after observation that the students had beliefs and emotions regarding not only the terms given to them in the exercise, but also about the place and significance of social labels as a whole.

Illegal

The highest frequency count under the *Illegal* category came with the value, 'If it is *illegal*, it is against the law'. Offered as a strict definition of the nature of *illegal*, it is also interpreted as the prevailing general thought of *illegality* synonymous with criminality. Through the same logic, should something be

Table 3. Frequency of values enacted in focus groups by college.

VALUE	NYCC	NJCC	TOTALS
ILLEGAL			
If it is illegal, it is against the law.	4	5	9
If it is illegal, it is unethical/immoral.	2	1	3
Legality is socially-constructed.	1	2	3
Illegal is dangerous.	2	0	2
Illegal is entering the country without permission.	1	1	2
Illegal is negative.	1	1	2
Illegal is used when there is no proof of citizenship, and to criminalize activities that immigrants do.	1	0	1
Activities are labeled 'illegal' to help protect the population.	1	0	1
Illegal is not precise or clear because it is overused.	0	1	1
Illegal is related to narrow-mindedness.	0	1	1
UNDOCUMENTED			
Undocumented refers to an individual's particular situation.	2	1	3
Undocumented is staying in a foreign country longer than authorized.	2	0	2
Undocumented is used when there is no proof of citizenship.	1	1	2
Being undocumented is like being lost, waiting to get help.	0	2	2
If it is undocumented, it is not official yet.	0	2	2
If it is undocumented, then it should not be allowed because there is no proof.	1	0	1
Undocumented is not dangerous.	1	0	1
Undocumented is less negative.	0	1	1
Undocumented is used to refer to labor.	0	1	1
Acknowledgement that we are all immigrants is important.	0	1	1
SOCIAL LABELS			
Labels are applied to particular immigrant groups.	3	2	5
The labels may seem different, but they are actually the same.	2	2	4
Labels can be verbs, adjectives, or nouns.	1	1	2
The labels are different.	2	0	2
Understanding the history of the labels is important.	0	2	2
Label use depends on ingroup/outgroup membership.	1	0	1
Labels are seen and heard in the media.	1	0	1
Labels serve a political purpose.	1	0	1
Labels serve to 'Other' individuals.	1	0	1
Labels are part of the social environment.	0	1	1
Labels target people.	0	1	1
Other labels should be introduced.	0	1	1

'legal', then it would be in compliance with the law. Therefore, one value of the label *illegal* was in its precision of the law- in other words, that it is important to be precise in legal matters:

> *I don't know if I explain it well, but 'illegal', I put an activity that's – that is against the law . . . And, for example, like smoking in the building in New York is illegal.*('YT', NYCC)

Students, such as YT, tended to view *illegal* in a very linear and dichotomous sense. They interpreted the word *illegal* as the literal opposite of *legal*, in other words- criminal, as evidenced by the strict and concrete applications in their usage examples.

Another value of *illegal* that arose, expressed that, 'The value of *illegal* lies in its protection of the population.' As a sequelae to the previous value, for example, activities and actions marked as *illegal* by lawful authorities are done so in order to keep the bad from the good, the unethical from the ethical, and the immoral from the moral, as 'RA' marks an example regarding underage smoking:

> *And I also drew, for 'illegal', like a little list. I wrote, 'prohibited, against the law, unethical', and also an attempt to help people to be morally right and stay safe, such as how they increased the age for cigarettes, and now it's 21.* ('RA', NYCC)

Students also expressed the value that '*illegal* is inflated because it criminalizes daily normal activity and existence in its overuse'. Expressing this value, students viewed the label as vague, but also harmful, and stated that the label is applied to certain groups but not others. Both 'JS' and 'AF' below provide their definitions coupled with sarcastic questioning of the true meaning of the word, as seen in their excerpts:

> *for 'illegal', I put a circle around it and crossed it out, because I just don't like that word. I think it's negative, mean. I think it represents the past. And because I'm a history major, I don't think that being in the past is good. And what I mean is, like, the past of the word 'illegal' and how it was used toward certain individuals. I also said 'tunnel visioning'. I feel that that word is just very, like, narrow-minded and, like, just . . . I just don't like it. And then I put 'what?' with a question mark and three dots, because what is it – like, it's so vague, the word 'illegal'. Murdering someone's illegal. Jaywalking is illegal. Illegal U-turns are illegal, so what does the word even mean?"* ('JS', NJCC)
>
> *'Illegal', in parentheses, '(immigrant)', I wrote, 'A person who exists in a country without documentation of citizenship, who is unlawfully breathing that country's air and unlawfully trying to survive in their world.' In parentheses, '(Shame on them.)* ('AF', NYCC)

Focus groups at both colleges reflected the belief that the definition of *illegal* has become diluted to such a degree that it is used to define a wide and vague range of behaviors, while also potentially criminalizing existence (Teo 2020).

Undocumented

One value surrounding the label *undocumented* was that 'The value of *undocumented* is in its prohibition without proof or evidence.' This value was expressed by 'MK', a NJCC student who stated that:

> *And 'undocumented', it's a word – 'word, phrases, beliefs, or laws with no physical paper or digital existence; it's said, not placed.' And there is no proof of it physically preceding it. And my example is the testimony in court was useless, because the proof was undocumented. It's just hearsay.*
>
> In the above example, 'MK' adopts a linear argument to the definition of *undocumented* in that if some thing is undocumented, then there is no physical document (or paper) to validate its existence. Importantly, there is a lack of criminality or legal transgression inherent in this definition, even within an example involving a courtroom.
>
> While not directly related to immigration, this value corresponds to another value, '*Undocumented* refers to an individual's particular situation'. While vague and general, when applied to the immigration topic, this value suggests the belief that *undocumented* concerns the particular circumstances and conditions in an individual's life, such as when there is no proof of citizenship. *Undocumented* is not the same as *illegal* given that *undocumented* contains an implicit and perhaps more positive/emotional connotation that does not criminalize, or 'Other' the individual- it describes a particular set of circumstances befallen on the person:
>
> *And undocumented is more like – it's blue because, you know, you come here. You're legal and then, you know, there's really no danger.* ('KI', NYCC)

This student's definition reflects the value that *undocumented* represents a liminal, but non-dangerous group. The value of using *undocumented* lies in its power to associate a group of individuals who happen to be in a particular situation that prevents them from being visible in society, but are otherwise ordinary individuals.

Social labels

Values surrounding *Social Labels* were seen when students expressed that 'It is important to acknowledge that social labels can be verbs, adjectives, or nouns.' By acknowledging the linguistic component of labels and their consequences, students here are expressing the value of knowledge and the importance of language in their understanding of society. With this value, students are stating that an acknowledgement of linguistics and grammar is important in understanding how social labels are part of our society. A similar value was seen when students stated that 'It is important to realize that social labels are socially-constructed.' For instance, participants from both colleges interpreted

the term *illegal* as contingent upon the social context where the *illegality* is occurring and thereby socially-constructed by nations, communities, and policies. As it were, these students applied sociocultural variations to the definition of *illegality*.

Given the often indirect purpose of labeling in order to target others, the value that, 'Social labels are applied depending on group membership, which often serve a sociopolitical purpose in "Othering" individuals' was connected to the topic of immigration. 'FV', an NYCC student for example, said this:

> *OK. You asked us to, like, kind of do the dictionary definition of 'illegal'. And at first, I was thinking like, you know, sort of say what illegal is. But then, I was like, no. Illegal to me is like used to refer to a non-naturalized person in the United States for the purpose of, like, dehumanizing them and 'other'-ing them. Because honestly, it's like a very political word. Because illegals aren't a different type of person. They're just people, generally, that come to this country for their own reasons.* ('FV', NYCC)

Interestingly, this student provides their own reflexive contemplation on how they arrived at their definition, speaking back to the researcher' prompts and instructions, and highlighting how *illegal* is a negatively and politically-tinged label applied to ethnic and racial groups. Relatedly, the two highest frequency counts under the *Social Labels* category consisted of the values, 'Labels are applied to particular immigrant groups' and 'The labels may seem different, but they are actually the same'. There seems to be divided opinion on the purpose and nature of the *illegal* and *undocumented* labels- they either mark actual and specific social groups, or there is no difference between them.

Working the hyphen between the visual and verbal

A substantial majority (12) of the participants provided definitions and usage examples that reflected a difference between the two terms. Tertiary analysis then involved coding the term definitions for *illegal* and *undocumented* as consisting of the 'same/similar' or 'different' definition for each, but in a few cases, participants indicated that the terms had both different and similar definitions.

'JL', an NJCC student, mapped his educational journey as following two separate pathways- the formal learning experience (i.e. school), and the informal one (i.e. working with his father) (see Figure 2a). One can appreciate how obstacles, support, and motivation have all affected JL's visualization of a life trajectory. This participant's map is densely woven with not only these features, but also with text and color, reflecting the complexity of a life narrative, that in the context of a focus group, can be contested by others:

> JL: *So then I moved to* [name of town],*which it was actually,*

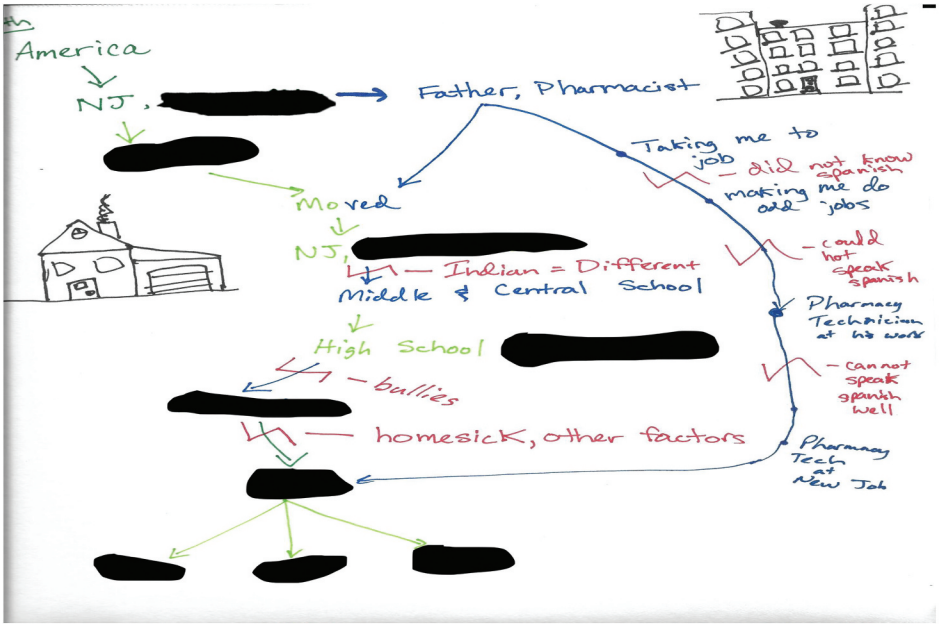
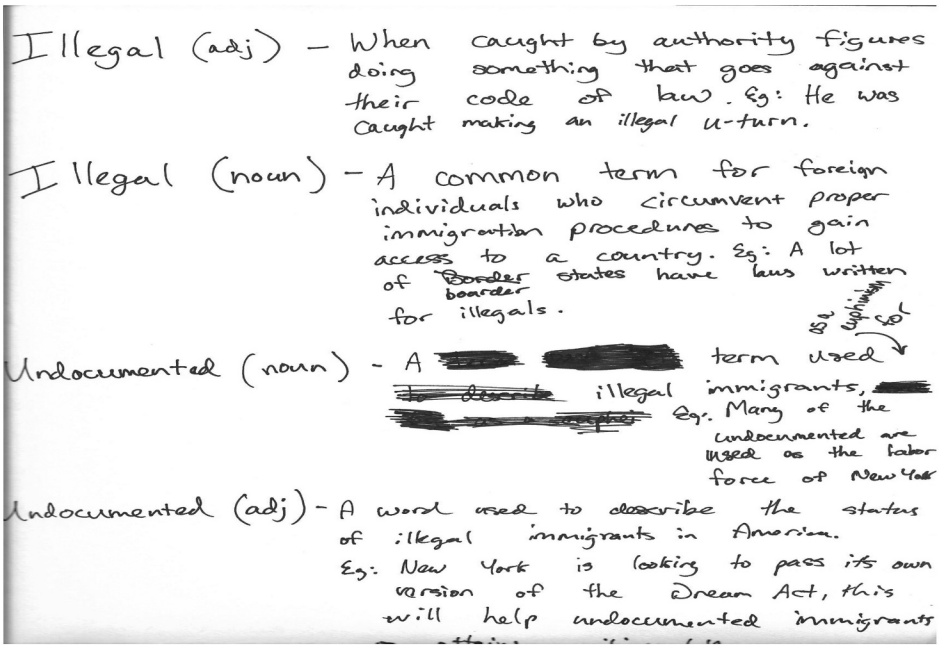


Figure 2. JL's journey map and label definitions A, B.



like, in 2001. And I moved, and then 9/11 happened, which kind of, like, what's going on? Because I didn't really know at the time what was happening. I went to middle and central school, but it was difficult for me, because I was – one, I moved there; two, I

was Indian, which like learning English for me, I learned from cartoons. So . . . But it's kind of – I never really had – grammar and English speaking has always been difficult for me, because of that fact. But pretty – I'd like to say I'm fluent. I definitely worked at it really hard by reading a lot of novels and stuff. I went to high school, [name of school], which – oh, man . . . All right. And I had bullies and stuff, which – I hated high school . . .
OTHER MALE PARTICIPANT: *It wasn't that bad.*
JL: *You didn't have the people that I had. Or you did not perceive them the same way. I did not like them. I went to* [name of University] *for two years, and I got homesick, and the drive was long. And my parents also needed me at home to take over the business. So I was planning on applying to New Jersey schools, but they told me I didn't meet the prerequisites for a lot of – a lot of, like, undergraduate stuff. I guess – because they didn't take the same courses, so they told me to take a semester at NJCC and do summer courses, which I am currently doing now . . .*

In regards to the term definitions, this participant illustrates a combination of two values- the value of understanding how linguistic differences relate to their social understanding, and the value of the social construction of words (see Figure 2b):

Here's two parts to each word. There's the adjective and noun. For 'illegal', the adjective is 'when caught by authority figures doing something that goes against the code of law'. Because what's legal in one country may not be legal in another country. 'He was caught making an illegal U-turn.' Or 'He was caught illegally going over the speed limit.' Where if you're driving in Germany on the Autobahn, there is no speed limit. But there is in America, so there's that. For the noun, it's a common term for foreign individuals who circumvent proper immigration procedures to gain access to a country. In the Fifties and the Sixties, it was the Chinese. Currently, now, it is a lot of younger individuals, according to the media. Younger individuals from South America. For 'undocumented', the noun is 'it's a term used as a euphemism for illegal immigrants'. For example, many of the undocumented are used as a labor force in New York. Or as an adjective, it's 'a way used to describe the status of illegal immigrants in America'.

'JL' illustrates the common usage of *illegal* in legal terms, but with the caveat that the location where the illegality occurs, and whether it was 'caught' or not, matters. While there is no mention of immigration his *illegal*/adjective definition, he proceeds to illustrate how *illegal*/noun, *undocumented*/noun, and *undocumented*/adjective all relate to immigration. His definition of illegal/noun includes not only a reference to individuals and social groups, but his statement that 'illegals' (historically, Chinese but now, South American) get around legal immigration policy in dishonest (or perhaps, *illegal*) fashion. Interestingly, JL uses a word to define another word in the case of

undocumented. He separates the definitions into forms of grammar, but then specifically chooses to acknowledge the pejorative connotation of *illegal* when he states that *undocumented* is the less harsh or blunt form of, essentially, the same word. Nevertheless, as seen before, the temporal status of *undocumented* is indexed as an adjective.

We work the hyphen between JL's visual and verbal data by considering how one modality might transition into the other. In this example, his visual journey map and his verbal description of it, is rife with separation and interruption. His early social difficulties at school (a consequence of immigrating to a new country) is juxtaposed with familial obligations at home. The visual data clearly denotes division, as JL acknowledges the struggle in balancing academic and family life. When he is subsequently asked for his interpretation of *illegal* and *undocumented*, he proceeds to not only differentiate the words, but to further categorize them into grammatical forms – only to present one word's definition as the existence of the other word. This analysis between visual and verbal data would not be feasible if we only considered one modality. By working the hyphen, we are better able to identify how resemiotization and diffraction lead to this interpretative possibility.

Discussion

In summary, the label *illegal* offers an effortless and straightforward definition, while *undocumented* requires more active cognition. It seems to be the case that the term *illegal* generates dichotomous thinking into the areas of morality, legality, and brevity. In other words, something (or someone) is either *legal* or *illegal*, or that an action is either *legal* or *illegal*, and/or 'good' or 'bad'. This contributes to a strict and punitive application of the term to the topic of immigration- not allowing for the existence of a 3rd, or middle, space for describing unauthorized immigrants or immigration- This alternative space might come in the form of *undocumented*, which was seen as affectively different in comparison to *illegal*. There were more creative attempts at describing the term, primarily because the term was difficult to strictly define in the first place.

Pursuant to the objective of this study, final analysis involved triangulation between the type of drawings (journey maps versus identity maps); the presence of motivation, support, and obstacles in those drawings; and whether the terms were different, the same, or both. Upon review of the code tabulation (see Table 2), we noticed two intriguing datapoints: 1) that some drawings contained many more obstacles than average; and 2) that there were a few students who defined the terms as both being similar and different, rather than one or the other. As a team, then, we chose to focus on those participants

whose drawings contained a particular set of supportive, motivational, and obstructive elements, in an effort to understand how they viewed immigrant social labels.

We certainly hesitate to make any generalizable claims, but one explanation that arises would argue that having drawn or visualized many obstacles in one's life leads to a worldview that is not dichotomous, but rather holistic. It may be the case that having endured and, in turn, visually representing several or even diverse difficult moments in one's life contributes to an understanding of the world (and its sociopolitics) that is multifaceted and variegated. We offer this explanation as fodder for the continued work on 'hyphens' between and across qualitative methods.

While reflexivity enabled our analysis to provocatively probe the visual maps and verbal text created by the participants, 'working the hyphen' (Fine 1994) encouraged us to deeply consider the connectivity between the visual and verbal, and unpack the thoughts, beliefs, and emotions taking place as the individual moves from one mode to the next. Therefore, we consider it useful to consider a greater focus on the hyphen – not only for conducting and understanding qualitative research – but also for valuing its complementarity with reflexivity, as both processes work in tandem.

As social scientists, we accept the view that research reflexivity must be a requirement in qualitative investigation of the human psychological condition. This approach speaks to a decolonial perspective in that it disrupts rigid ideas about 'proper' ways of doing research and constructs new ways of seeing and making meaning by creating layers of understanding. Additionally, the approach moves to challenge linear thinking by unpacking old research to better understand it through new lenses. In a way, combining multiple lenses of analysis and a reflexive approach creates several opportunities to travel back to the past – reflexive analysis or analytical time-traveling, or what Segalo, Manoff, and Fine (2015) call, 'space/time travel'.

Limitations

The procedures involved in creating the images should also be contextualized. As Wilkinson (1999) notes, focus group methodology is an enriching source of psychological processes that are inherently social in nature. As such, they are intended to be interactive in nature, with participants engaged in collaborative meaning-making through interruptions, rebuttals, and agreements (Kitzinger and Frith 1999). Proper rapport and trust between participant and researcher then, would be necessary to create the conditions needed for openness (Guillemin and Drew 2010; Hunleth 2011). Given the recruitment and selection procedure, as well as the written and verbal instructions given, participants may have trusted the researcher in sharing their experiences and beliefs, but not have necessarily trusted *each other* in the focus group discussion.

While the consent form addressed the particularities regarding procedure and ownership of the participant-generated visual material, it cannot be denied that control was held by the researcher, which may have also contributed to the weakened rapport. While participants were made aware of these procedures, whether or not they were comfortable under these parameters is a certainly different matter. Thus, equally important is the notion of audience and the perceived (or imagined) relationship between the participant and others.

The presence, absence, and re-emergence of the researcher during the procedure may have also impacted the intra- and interindividual dynamic. After the researcher read the instructions aloud and left the room, participants may have felt a sense of independence while working individually, albeit in a group context, but then asked to share their work collectively when the researcher returned after 30 minutes. It would be speculative to imagine the psychological processes taking place during the enactment of the study procedures (as this was not recorded), but it is worthwhile to consider how researchers view their place (e.g. presence versus absence) and identities (e.g. active facilitator versus neutral administrator) within and across qualitative modes (e.g. focus groups and interviews), and the impact that these carry for the generation and interpretation of data. Namely, the use of individual interviews to both carry out the tasks and discuss them, might have shed light on these psychological dynamics and given a potentially 'safer' context in which to generate data about personal understandings of self-identity and others.

We do not offer facile answers to these important issues, but rather include them as part of this critical analysis of how methodology and procedure informs data and analysis. Likewise, it is difficult to evaluate why individual participants chose either the journey or identity drawing task. We felt it was important to offer a choice – in an attempt to capture some psychological difference as reflected in a social representation of an immigration-related label – but the decision itself to complete one task over another is a prime area for future research. As Martsin (2018)states, the boundaries imposed by the instructions both create and constrain the representation of experience. We see this as a point of reflection for future work, and for other researchers looking to engage participants using a more dialectical and dynamic process.

Implications and future directions

Our collective conversations gave rise to insights about the study, its participants, methodological choice, and reflexivity which shaped the paper from beginning to end. While the discussions were not originally intended to operate as method, they inevitably became so once we realized how the process of inquiry and dialogue helped create a reflexive environment in which we

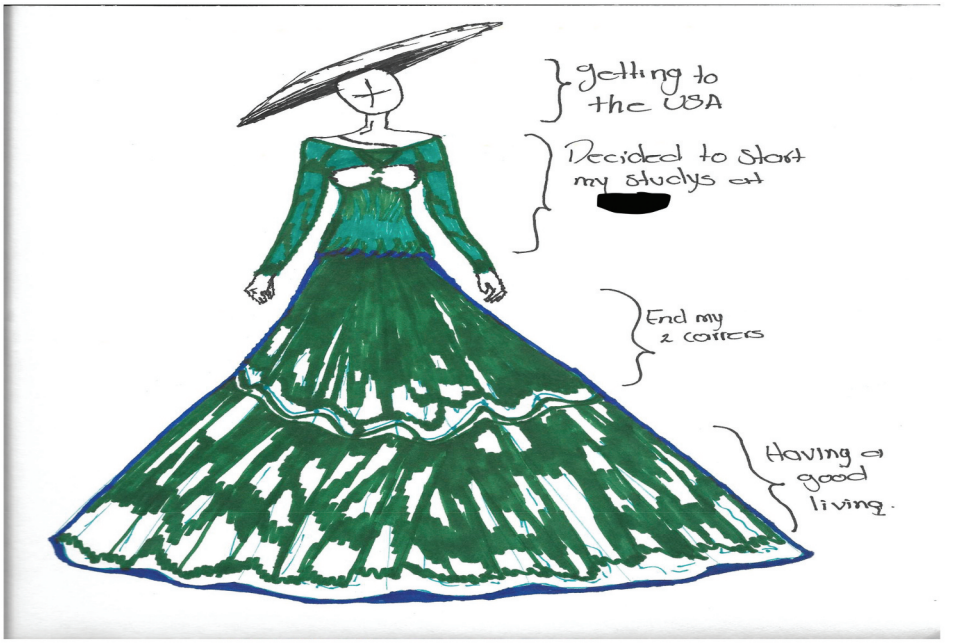
could engage in the 'would haves' and 'should haves' of a prior study. This type of 'looking-back' requires vulnerability and honesty that allow for peeling back the deeper layers of the research process. Doing so as a collaborative process allows for multiple interpretations from a variety of angles, entry points, and positionalities. Luttrell (2019) describes this process as 'not to reach consensus or to determine inter-rater reliability,' but rather to 'pry open and sustain multiple lines of interpretation based on different members' perspectives' (13).

The circumstance of not having been involved from the start of the study allowed for new questions to arise about the project which led the group toward deeper considerations about meaning-making, interpretation, subjectivity and the sociopolitical environment – topics that were not part of the original project's scope. For example, in trying to learn as much as we could about the participants, methods, and the two colleges in the study, we also discussed the political climate of the time and were able to see possible links between what participants showed in their identity/educational journey maps or discussed in their definitions, and the historical context surrounding issues of immigration. Participants were interviewed in 2014, a time period that was marked with intensified anti-immigration sentiment that is evident by increased detentions, deportations, and negative depictions of immigrants in the media. Such circumstances likely shaped perceptions towards immigrant populations during this time. Therefore, this distanced relationship to the project itself contributed to a much deeper and interdisciplinary approach in the interpretation of findings. It is for this reason that we examine the provocations brought on by not simply focusing on the images or words themselves, but rather the images and words as creative but also strategic in terms of reflection. The ambivalence and uncertainty of this qualitative and psychological terrain is a consequence of its inertia- its constant movement leads to ambiguity- even with materials intended to be creative but nevertheless flatten time and space as linear.

What if we as scholars gathered in collectives to 'pry open' our research, not in a search for some objective perspective or to find our errors, but to see what else can emerge by looking at the work through other lenses? What can we learn when we share our work and participate in reflexivity together? Decolonial and feminist frameworks offer insight into these questions as they are grounded in similar ideas about breaking through theoretical borders.

We conclude with our claim that studying the 'hyphen' between multiple modalities contributes to theory building and development, particularly in the field of qualitative psychology. By focusing on the methods and data of one method, even if used in combination with another, we risk essentializing phenomenological processes that are much more fluid and transformative in nature. It is here where we argue for both diffraction (Bozalek and Zembylas 2017) and reflexivity, considering that they each provide their own unique contributions to the ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions of

qualitative research. While diffraction encourages us to view the interconnectedness and relationality between object and language as producing difference, and creating new insights for methodological, ethical, and theoretical transformations, reflexivity allows us to re-visit our agentic role in research as a



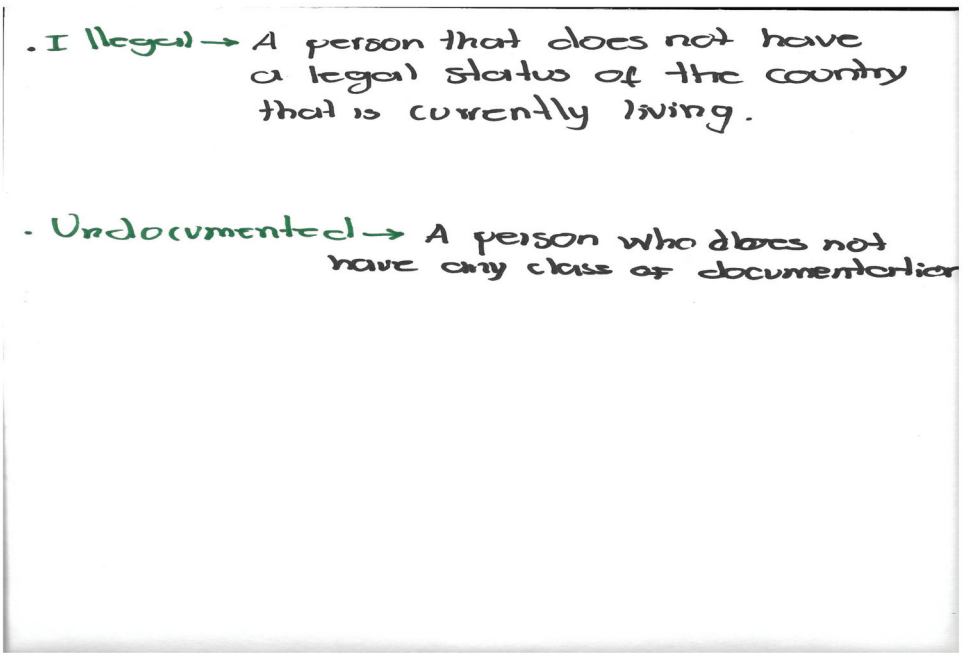


Figure 3. Identity map and label definitions A, B.

means of self-critique (and ultimately, self-transformation). By working the hyphen between visual and verbal data from diverse theoretical angles, we expand the range of meanings, perspectives, and analyses (Wilkinson 1999). As an invitation, we encourage the reader to appreciate this 'provocative reflexivity' (both the participant's and the reader's, and between and across methods) in (Figure 3a,b). We therefore argue, whenever possible, to pay closer attention to the conversation that occurs between qualitative modes, as both a decolonial and feminist move, but also a reflexive endeavor that is boundless in its inquiry.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Dr. Pinedo's research primarily investigates how immigration enforcement and control policies contribute to existing racial/ethnic health disparities related to (1) substance misuse and associated harms (e.g., poor mental health; HIV risk) and (2) substance use treatment utilization among Latinos. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, his research expands the focus from individual-level factors that influence health and underscores the importance of immigration policies in shaping the health behaviors, risk practices, and health outcomes of Latinos, both immigrants and non-immigrants (i.e., US-born). He was awarded the National

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