Abstract: Previous research in the United States focuses on how immigration status disrupts undocumented youths’ educational experiences. Drawing primarily on interviews with 45 undocumented immigrant youth who stopped out of school, I assess whether the current “master status” explanation, that undocumented status overshadows the impact of other social locations, accurately characterizes how immigration status shapes undocumented youths’ pathways out of school in the U.S. Using an intersectional lens, I show how other social locations – including race, class, gender, first-generation to college status – disrupt educational pathways and set the stage for immigration status to emerge as the “final straw” that pushes undocumented youth to leave school. These findings suggest that the impact of undocumented immigration status, shifts over time and may operate differently over the course of one’s educational career. I contend that using an intersectional lens offers an opportunity to enhance understandings of how multiple social locations intersect and interact over time to marginalize immigrants.

Bio: Dr. Laura E. Enriquez holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California-Los Angeles. She earned her undergraduate degree in Sociology and History from Pomona College, where she began working closely with undocumented immigrant students. Building on this work, she has researched, presented, and published on a range of issues related to the educational, economic, political, and social experiences of undocumented young adults who immigrated to the United States as children. Using a sociological lens, she addresses how structural limitations shape the creation of mixed-status families as well as individuals’ agency. She examines how all family members, regardless of their immigration status, are impacted by various immigration-related laws, including the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and policies that sanction undocumented immigrants by imposing deportation threats, an inability to legally obtain employment, an inability to obtain a state-issued driver’s license or identification card, and limited pathways to legalization. Dr. Enriquez is former Ford Foundation Predoctoral (2008) and Dissertation (2013) Fellow, and UCI Chancellor’s ADVANCE Postdoctoral Fellow (2014). Her research and work has been supported by the National Science Foundation, Social Science Research Council, American Sociological Association, UC Institute for Mexico and the United States, UCI ADVANCE Program, UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, and the UCLA Institute for American Cultures.