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# Conciencia bilingüe : the multilingual and academic writing practices of undocumented immigrant activists.

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CONCIENCIA BILINGÜE: THE MULTILINGUAL AND ACADEMIC WRITING  
PRACTICES OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT ACTIVISTS

By

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B.A., Queens College, City University of New York, 2010  
M.A., University of Kentucky, 2014

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

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In English/Rhetoric and Composition

Department of English  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2018

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A Dissertation Approved on

April 16, 2018

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## DEDICATION

Dedicado a mis padres, Gloria Inés Amézquita y Jairo Alirio López, por su valentía y fuerza en construir una nueva vida en un lugar inesperado.

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The writing manifested in this text is the product of careful and supported guidance from the many people and knowledge-makers with whom I have had the pleasure to walk with and by.

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I thank the director of my committee, Bruce Horner, for his generous and invested feedback in my writing and language ideology. I also thank each member of my committee for their continued support and perspective for this project. Susan Griffin for her editorial brilliance and key questions, often pushing me to think harder about how language works in relating the stories of lived experience. Mary P. Sheridan for helping me refine my research methods. And, A. Suresh Canagarajah for offering me a vision of what doing this multilingual and academic writing work looks like.

Le agradezco a mi familia en Bogotá, y Manizales, Colombia por su inmenso cariño y enseñanzas. I also thank my New York Colombian family for the greatest gifts and literacy practices I have ever gained, your immigrant resilience and dynamic bilingualism. Gracias por tanto amor, familia Amézquita hyphenated. In particular, I thank my mother, Gloria, for her criticality and bravery in expressing bold

and pressing ideas. I also thank my father, Jairo, for his humble and strongly rooted philosophies. And I thank Nico, my brother, for his immense cool and powerful sociologist observation of our immigrant lives.

Steven Alvarez, my life partner, thank you for placing your trust and confidence in my wildest dreams and for sharing a sustained commitment to our immigrant and bilingual U.S. communities. La vida es más bonita contigo de mi lado.



## ABSTRACT

### CONCIENCIA BILINGÜE: THE MULTILINGUAL AND ACADEMIC WRITING PRACTICES OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT ACTIVISTS

Sara del Pilar Alvarez

May 12, 2018

This qualitative research and community-based engagement focuses on the critical examination of the texts that 12 U.S. Southern and New York City undocumented young adults have produced in relation to immigrant rights advocacy. Adapting Lillis and Curry's 2010 text-oriented ethnography methods and drawing on a collective framework informed by García and Wei's (2014) theorization of dynamic bilingual practices, translingual theories of language difference in academic writing (Horner et. al, 2011; Lu & Horner, 2016), and Flores's and Rosa's (2015) call for raciolinguistics as a way to interrogate academic writing, this study examines the bilingual stances that these immigrant activists bring to their language and literacy practices, and their production of these texts. The study centers on the perspectives and lived experiences of racialized bilinguals to build on scholarship looking to the writing practices of students broadly characterized as local multilinguals (Canagarajah, 2010; Flores, Kleyn, & Menken, 2015); I argue that the dynamic and embodied language and writing practices of undocumented immigrant activists challenge monolingual assumptions about linguistic legitimacy and citizenship and should be examined in the contexts of their undocumented and immigrant lived experiences. This research offers insight on how minoritized and

racialized young adults can—and do—develop their bilingual potential *with* and *through* their scholarly and professional experiences as well as their political activism. In doing this, I propose “conciencia bilingüe” as a working term for understanding the dynamic and ongoing self-reflective language practices of racialized bilinguals. These practices include rhetorical selections of linguistic and cultural features to signal difference in writing, translocal movements between languages and modalities to produce distinctively bilingual texts, and dissociating language from nationhood and belonging.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION  
BILINGUALISM FROM THE IMMIGRANT AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

“If my daughter had wanted to go to the moon, she would have found a way to do it.”

—Irene Perez, 2012 from “My fearless daughter”

On May 18 of 2007, Tam Ngoc Tran did the inconceivable as an undocumented young adult: Tran “outed” her undocumented status by testifying in front of a U.S. Congressional Immigration Subcommittee. Tran had been born in Germany to Vietnamese refugee parents who had left Vietnam after the fall of Saigon. When Tran was six years-old and under a political asylum petition—which would be denied after many years of waiting—her family had immigrated to the U.S. to reunite with other family members. In the U.S., Tran was undocumented and stateless (Wong & Ramos, 2011). Tran believed in the power of stories, and the power of telling her own story. She believed that if the American people would learn about how complex and broken the immigration system was, they would (re)consider immigration reform. But telling her story in Congress posed a great risk to Tran and her undocumented family, and as Wong and Ramos (2012) describe below, her fears were not unfounded:

Given [Tam’s] own undocumented status, [testifying] was an act of considerable personal courage. Three days later, ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement)

agents staged a predawn raid on her family’s home in Orange County and took her parents and brother into custody. Tam reached out to members of Congress and immigration attorneys and succeeded in getting her family released and stopping their deportation. (p. 5)

Tam Ngoc Tran and Cynthia Felix, whose mother, Irene Perez, is quoted in the epigraph above, were fierce, strategic, and innovative undocumented immigrant activists and leaders in the struggle for immigration reform and the (re)introduction of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which has failed to pass for 17 years now since 2001 (Alcindor & Stolberg, 2017). Tran and Felix were close friends, who had—against all odds—become graduate students at elite universities in the Northeast. They “were killed in a car accident. Their tragic passing has galvanized the movement they left behind” (Wong & Ramos, 2012, p. 3).

There is no doubt that the immigration advocacy movement has only continued to grow, as the number of “self-outed” undocumented young adults and their communities has increased, become more diversified, and their methods for self-advocacy have become more tactical and aware of the planned and implemented extreme national measures that work to criminalize and profit from racialized bodies (Gonzales, 2016; Muñoz, 2015; Truax, 2015). As Felix accurately put it in 2007 in a short documentary she and Tran developed on the undocumented experience of travelling from southern California to Seattle to obtain a driver’s license titled *Seattle Underground Railroad*, “The state wants your money so they let you buy the car, get the tags, register the car, buy insurance, but when it comes to giving you a license, they don’t want to give you one” (Arellano & Ramos, 2010). Undocumented young adults and their allies have

become the voices for contesting, challenging, and shifting many of the debates on citizenship and social justice in the U.S.

In any given week, undocumented young adults “in the movement”<sup>1</sup> are conducting workshops for immigrant communities in various languages, preparing presentations for university officials and faculty members, visiting college classrooms to create awareness about the immigrant experience in the U.S., or occupying legislators’, governors’, and senators’ offices across the nation. Undocumented young adults are engaging multilingualism and academic and professional writing practices on an everyday basis, but how have they learned and engaged these practices? For example, how did Tam Tran navigate national legal boundaries and “documents” in order to have her parents and brother released from deportation proceedings? What might we make of the ways in which students like Felix and Tran “documented” and wrote their undocumented lived experiences?

This qualitative research and community-based engagement study focuses on the critical examination of the texts that 12 U.S. Southern and New York City undocumented (or DACAmented<sup>2</sup>) young adults have produced in relation to immigrant rights advocacy, and who have built on the work of Tran and Felix. Adapting Lillis and Curry’s 2010 text-oriented ethnography methods and drawing on a collective framework informed by García and Wei’s (2014) theorization of dynamic bilingual practices, translingual theories of language difference in academic writing (Horner et al., 2011; Lu & Horner, 2016), and

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<sup>1</sup> This term emerges from my research as a self-reference that undocumented young adults use in their activist discourse to refer to their immigration advocacy work.

<sup>2</sup> DACAmented refers to the youths who have been granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The USCIS states that DACA is a relief granted as of June 15, 2012 to “certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several guidelines [and] may request consideration of deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal.” (*USCIS*). It is important to note that DACA is not a status, it is a relief—so the youths who are granted this relief remain undocumented.

Flores's and Rosa's (2015) call for raciolinguistics as a way to interrogate academic writing, this study examines the bilingual<sup>3</sup> stances that these immigrant activists bring to their language and literacy practices, and their production of these texts. The study centers on the perspectives and lived experiences of racialized bilinguals to build on scholarship looking to the writing practices of students broadly characterized as local multilinguals (Canagarajah, 2010; Flores, Kleyn, & Menken, 2015); I argue that the dynamic and embodied language and writing practices of undocumented immigrant activists challenge monolingual assumptions about linguistic legitimacy and citizenship and should be examined in the contexts of their undocumented and immigrant lived experiences. This research offers insight on how minoritized and racialized young adults can—and do—develop their bilingual potential *with* and *through* their scholarly and professional experiences as well as their political activism. In doing this, I propose “conciencia bilingüe”<sup>4</sup> as a working term for understanding the dynamic and ongoing bilingual self-reflective practices of racialized people. These practices include rhetorical selections of linguistic and cultural features to signal difference in writing, translocal movements between languages and modalities to produce distinctively bilingual texts, and dissociating language from nationhood and belonging. Undocumented young adults engage in diverse and embodied language and academic practices that require a careful understanding of the complexities and lived experiences of their undocumented and

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<sup>3</sup> In using the term “bilingual,” I am aligning with the stance that bilingualism is about the bicultural and embodied ways of knowing that people bring into their everyday lives. In this way, “bilingual” carries a political weight that understands the histories and struggles of communities which have tried to attain and sustain bilingualism in heavily monolingualist contexts (see for example García, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> I introduce and develop this term in Chapter 3.



U.S.-based schooling. This research pursues these complexities and diverse language and literacy connections by posing the following guiding questions:

- What language media are used in undocumented youths' writing on immigrants' rights issues and in what ways (translanguaging, transmodality, translocality)?
- How do these writers understand the rhetorical value and effects of their ways of deploying various languages in their writing on immigrants' rights issues, including what confuses or troubles or excites them about which language(s) to use, and how, in such writing?
- More broadly, what might their language practices in such writing, and their understandings and views on their practices, contribute to current scholars' understanding of the politics of language practices in writing?
- How has the immigrant rights advocacy activism that these young adults participate in influenced their becoming bicultural writers? How has their activism cultivated their bilingualism?<sup>5</sup>

The answers to the questions have implications for how writing studies scholars understand the educational effects of globalization, and how they participate in the discourse on U.S. and global immigration in which undocumented and immigrant communities constantly face the threat of deportation, family separation, and exclusion from higher education and upward mobility.

A study of the plural language and literacy practices of undocumented immigrant activists in two demographically different urban settings in the U.S. South and Northeast helps educators and scholars invested in social justice to better understand and draw connections between the politics and “rhetorical education” (Alexander & Jarratt, 2014) of transnational and immigrant students and their bilingual stances and activism in relatively distinct linguistic landscapes. This ethnographic engagement then forwards a close look into the diverse manifestations of linguistic difference in writing and calls for

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<sup>5</sup> Here, I emphasize that bilingual is to be understood as a dynamic practice that moves beyond language to consider the political positioning of a speaker and their ethnic/ethnicized identity.

more careful attention to matters of race, ethnicity, embodiment, geolocation, and immigration status in studies of multilingualism. The project takes up Keith Gilyard's call for multilingual language theories to examine the ways in which "not all [multilingual] writers are stigmatized in the same manner" (2016, p. 286), and it does this from the perspectives of ethnic or ethnicized writers themselves (Alvarez et al., 2017), who are legally and nationally positioned at the margins.

To examine the complexity and politicized language and literacy practices of minoritized and racialized college eligible<sup>6</sup> students who are at the national margins requires a close understanding of their positioning as undocumented immigrants and as local multilinguals. This chapter, first, discusses how undocumented young adults are a part of the 1.5-generation in the U.S. and how this positions them as an in-between cultural and linguistic immigrant generation. Within this context of U.S. transnationalism and identity formation based on practice and lived experience, the chapter then turns its attention to how these young adults are part of the educational local multilingual categorization. Through this discussion, I draw distinctions on how conversations on multilingualism and multilingual students have emerged and grown differently in the intersecting fields of English education and composition and rhetoric. These distinctions also draw a trajectory and set of connections to how language ideology and practice have been theorized and covered in the literature. Finally, I offer a brief review of what each chapter in this research project offers.

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<sup>6</sup> All participants in this study are high school graduates, making them college eligible. Some participants in this study have already obtained undergraduate college degrees, making them college eligible for graduate school. I choose this term consciously as a reminder that undocumented young adults are eligible for college, but it is because of extreme national or state legislation that many cannot pursue their goals, which include obtaining a college degree.

## **Undocumented Young Adults: An Immigrant and American Generation**

Recent estimates indicate that of the approximately 11.5 million undocumented immigrants residing in the U.S., 2.1 million arrived as children, and one million are now adults (Gonzales, 2011). A large portion of this growing linguistically diverse population has attained higher education—despite the multiple obstacles they face—and are politically conscious about immigrants’ rights and socio-economic and educational injustices amongst minoritized populations (Abrego, 2011; Gonzales, 2016; Patel, 2013).

Scholars focusing on studies of migration and social movements have paid attention to undocumented youth<sup>7</sup> (Abrego, 2011; Nicholls, 2013; Gonzales, 2008), but the scope of their studies has not considered the languages and literacy practices these youths enact and produce, especially as a linguistically diverse and minoritized group. These migration scholars have focused on the obstacles that first-generation immigrant children and second-generation children of immigrants face in reaching higher education in the U.S. and have then offered us insight into these youths’ lives as part of what has become identified as the 1.5-generation.

The 1.5-generation of immigrants arrived in the U.S. as minors and have lived most of their lives in the U.S. (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012). Because of *Plyer v. Doe*, they have attended U.S. schools and acquired U.S.-based cultural and linguistic practices (Abrego, 2011; Gonzales, 2011; Nicholls, 2013). Although the 1.5 generation faces greater adversity in the U.S. in comparison to the second generation (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001), they usually do not have to face an

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<sup>7</sup> Most scholars have even come to term this group as DREAMers (ages range from 16 to 25). The term DREAMers emerges from the DREAM Act, which as mentioned in the opening of this chapter has failed to pass since 2001. This act would have provided some of these youths a pathway to citizenship. However, most of the young adults in this study rejected this term for reasons I discuss in Chapter 4.

unauthorized status until they reach their teenage years (Abrego, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012). Moreover, because of the implementation of DACA, legal restrictions on teen-to-young adult rites of passage, like getting a photo ID or obtaining a part-time job, have lessened these youths marking as undocumented, and for many it has allowed them to pursue higher education (Gonzales, Terriquez, & Ruszczyk, 2014). However, DACA has also marked particular state distinctions in its implementation, by which certain states have blocked or made it difficult for undocumented young adults to access the rights granted via DACA (Rodriguez & Monreal, 2017). In this way, the 1.5-generation of undocumented young adults are still at the peripheries of citizenship and state-sanctioned belonging. As U.S. locals and students but not citizens or permanent residents, and as transnational persons who have strong cultural and family ties outside of the U.S. and have a close insight into American life, the 1.5-generation appears to do better than the second generation regarding both language sustainability and their secondary and tertiary educational achievement (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Thus, undocumented young adults participating in immigrant rights' advocacy offer a strong representation of the potential of bilingual and minoritized college eligible students in U.S. writing courses and public discourse.

Moreover, the community spaces and organizations in which these immigrant young adults participate also offer great insight on the educational and bilingual potential of spaces outside of school furthering language and literacy practices (Alvarez & Alvarez, 2016). These spaces and organizations tend to be immigrant-driven, community-based, staffed by volunteers, and supported with community funds. In other words, while these young adults have busy and difficult lives, in which they often work two jobs or

more jobs and attend school at least part-time, they participate and work *with* and *for*<sup>8</sup> immigrant and community-driven efforts because of their own desire to learn more about their situation and advocate for their immigrant communities. By participating in these immigrant community-based organizations, these undocumented young adults can meet other students in their same situation, learn more about how to navigate their undocumented status, and sustain their bilingual language and literacy practices.

In the process of demanding immigration reform, undocumented young adults constantly negotiate the monolingual ideologies of language in writing of legislation and education with a bent toward social justice. For instance, Miguel, who I introduce in Chapter 3, learned to rely on his lived experience with Spanish-English bilingualism in the U.S. context—that ties particular accents and languages to citizenship and undocumented status—in order to infiltrate Broward Transitional Center in 2012 (*The Nation*, 2013; Santa Ana, 2002). Miguel’s infiltration is an example of such rhetorical maneuvering, but so are the kinds of press releases, organizing documents, cross-cultural exchanges, and bilingual protest chants that he and his peers generate, revise, translate, and critique daily.

Given their political positioning as representative of the 1.5-generation,<sup>9</sup> a group of young adult activists, and the growing bilingual student body in the U.S., undocumented young adults’ language and literacy practices suggest the need for

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<sup>8</sup> “Work with and for” is a phrase that emerges in much of the advocacy literature, but also my participants’ vocabulary on how people in the movement should be a part of these efforts.

<sup>9</sup> Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001), along with Todorova (2008) have written extensively on the schooling experiences of immigrant children, also known as the 1.5 generation, and children of immigration, the second and on generations. Gonzales and Chavez (2012) and Gonzales (2016) have also written about the implications for the 1.5 immigrant generation when undocumented. Furthermore, Rodriguez and Monreal (2017) have examined the experiences of undocumented youths in the South, and Trivette and English (2017) have looked at the ways in which these youths have responded to extreme measures of exclusion from higher education in the South.

consideration and analysis. Moreover, in a U.S. national climate in which immigrants and minoritized groups have been publicly, legally, and politically demonized—and undocumented migrants have been deported in record numbers (Campbell, 2011; Chavez, 2008; Gonzales-Barrera & Krogstad, 2014), even prior to the 45<sup>th</sup> president openly calling for extreme deportation measures and ailing the voices of Neo-Nazi nationalist groups (Hankes & Amend, 2017), undocumented immigrant activists’ texts deserve our attention.

## **Review of Relevant Literature**

### **The Global and Multirhetorical Turns**

Brian Ray and Connie Kendall Theado’s (2016) introduction to the special issue of *Composition Studies* titled “Composition’s ‘Global Turn’” asserts that the “turn [towards multilingual/translingual and transnational dimensions of higher education] seems inevitable for us to engage” (p. 10). As mobilities/immobility, and the advent of modern technologies occupy and transform our everyday language and literacy practices (Mufwene & Vigouroux, 2012), writing and rhetoric scholars are also shifting their attention to what these changes mean to our work—and such work is receiving prodigious consideration (Banks, 2015; Horner, Selfe, & Lockridge, 2015; Ridolfo, 2013; Vieira, 2016; You, 2016). For instance, in the last fifteen years, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) has presented the Richard Braddock Award to a significant number of articles focused on matters of language plurality,

policy, and its teaching,<sup>10</sup> and in 2016 the journal *College English*, much like *Composition Studies*, awarded a special issue to the theme of “Translingual Work.”

In light of this seemingly recent “global turn,” several terms, stances, and dispositions have emerged as a way to respond to an increasingly diverse and bilingual student body (García & Wei, 2016; Horner et al., 2011; Paris & Alim, 2014). Among these terms and ideologies, translingualism and translanguaging have gained particular momentum in the fields of English Education and Language Studies (Canagarajah, 2013; Horner & Kopelson, 2014; Wei, 2010; Martínez, 2010). Works immersed in this constellation of cultural and rhetorical traditions are also on the rise as they stimulate and push ideological and epistemological boundaries (Banks, 2011; Cushman, 2016; Mao, 2013; McKittrick, 2006; Mignolo, 2005; Olson & De los Santos, 2015). However, this sudden turn to matters of language plurality has also invigorated questions, tensions, and, perhaps, some conflation regarding the work and trajectory of translingualism and other works aiming to defy monolingualist views.<sup>11</sup> In addition, these tensions have become more visible now that indigenous epistemologies point to the great extent at which these theoretical debates have not considered ethnic and ethnicized peoples’ perspectives on

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<sup>10</sup> As of the year 2000 five articles—speaking directly—to matters of language plurality, policy, and its teaching have received this award: 1) Bruce Horner and John Trimbur, “English Only and U.S. College Composition”; 2) Min-Zhan Lu, “An Essay on the Work of Composition: Composing English against the Order of Fast Capitalism”; 3) A. Suresh Canagarajah, “The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued”; 4) Anne-Marie Pedersen, “Negotiating Cultural Identities through Language: Academic English in Jordan”; 5) Lisa R. Arnold, “The Worst Part of the Dead Past’: Language Attitudes, Policies, and Pedagogies at Syrian Protestant College, 1866–1902” (NCTE, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Such questions have been unveiled in the form of open-source discussions on platforms like the Transnational Writing blog—a website hosted by the Transnational Composition Standing Group at the CCCC (Mihut et al., 2016), the Second Language Writing (SLW) Interest Group and their open letter published in the journal of *College English*, titled, “Clarifying the Relationship between L2 Writing and Translingual Writing” (Atkinson et al., 2015), and scholarly publications, such as Canagarajah’s (2015) article “Clarifying the Relationship between Translingual Practice and L2 Writing.”

their own languages and literacy practices, and their experiences navigating and confronting monolingualist ideologies. In other words, translingualism, as Cushman (2016) and Gilyard (2016) have argued, must closely examine and concern itself with the social justice aspect of languaging in education, which takes into consideration all voices and the disparities they face in confronting monolingualist views. For instance, while the translingual orientation has focused on either theorizing a view of language difference or conceiving how to teach from this perspective, it has not attended to the role a translingual orientation might play in academic and professional writing directed at social justice. More attention is then needed in attending to what I theorize in Chapter 4 as translingual orientation with an activist end. This orientation and practice of translingualism or translinguality as explicitly politicized (or recognizably so) and with a social justice purpose is then more consciously aware of both embodiment and unequal differences in specific social contexts and linguistic landscapes. For example, in the linguistic landscape of New York City, seeing multiple languages in writing is rather common, but this does not mean that English—as monolithically imagined and imposed—does not exert the dominant power it has in most U.S. contexts. In this way, undocumented young adults navigating the linguistic landscapes of New York City and in the context of immigration advocacy are still in many ways having to navigate these monolingualist and English-Only contexts, legal documents, and texts.

### **Translingualism and Translanguaging**

In composition and rhetoric, the term “translingual” is often traced to Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur’s 2011 article, “Language Difference in Writing: Toward a



Translingual Approach.” In this pedagogical “call” the authors make the case for a translingual orientation in the teaching of writing. They write:

a translingual approach argues for (1) honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends; (2) recognizing the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both within the United States and globally; and (3) directly confronting English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations. (p. 305)

In addition, translingualism (the doing of translingual work or translinguality) has been identified within the perimeters of what A. Suresh Canagarajah has identified as “translingual practice,” a perspective on translingualism that focuses on the doing and “rhetorical positioning” of language plurality (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 5-6). Therefore, translingualism can be understood as a range of rhetorical literacy practices,<sup>12</sup> and a disposition towards what scholars like Lu and Horner (2016) have referred to as “language difference.” Through this ideological positioning, translingualism draws from and problematizes our field’s long history of language-related struggles and findings, as well as interdisciplinary areas of research, like linguistic anthropology.

In *Students’ Rights to Their Own Language (SRTOL)*, a “thirty-two-page publication that appeared in the fall of 1974 as a special issue of *College Composition and Communication*,” which Perryman-Clark, Kirkland, Jackson recently and rightly argued is a resolution and critical source worth reflecting on and reprinting, the CCCC Executive Committee stated:

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<sup>12</sup> These can be seen (and exemplified) in Paris’s (2012) works looking at the “linguistic and cultural dexterity” of minoritized youth, in which rhetoric functions as strategy awareness).

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style... We affirm strongly that teachers must have experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (p. 19)

The introduction of SRTOL forced the field to recognize the existence of language varieties and their legitimacy in students’ lives.<sup>13</sup> And as Kynard (2007) argues in her analysis on the potential of SRTOL, critically examining the Black Caucus’s work in forwarding this resolution is both a way to reassert the legitimacy of blackness in our field and call out its monolingualized whiteness (p. 229-231). Yet, it is important to recognize that while translanguaging and SRTOL are crucial parts of the social justice project of education, the language ideologies behind them are not interchangeable. As noted in Horner’s 2001 article, “‘Students’ Right,’ English Only, and Re-imagining the Politics of Language,” SRTOL unfortunately has not worked against English-Only ideology and legislation (p. 741-742). While SRTOL began a conversation on linguistic variety, it remains oriented by or conceptualized as “a” singular language, tied to a set of specific “skills” or “codes.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, because SRTOL was written as an ideology of “respectability” and inclusion, it cannot capture the symbolic and economic capital that language awareness generates in our time—whether for good or bad reasons.<sup>15</sup>

The conflation noted above—between the language ideologies behind

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<sup>13</sup> This recognition is in conversation with a more recent iteration in Matsuda’s (2010) *The Myth of Linguistic Homogeneity*.

<sup>14</sup> See Young and Martinez (2011) on codemeshing, for example.

<sup>15</sup> See Flores (2013) for his apt caution about the neoliberal pull of multilingualism, and Heller’s (2003) close qualitative study on the commodification of language varieties.

translingualism and SRTOL—seems to be furthered through translanguaging, the language plurality term in applied linguistics and urban education studies. The concept of translanguaging, however, has its own trajectory. It has largely arisen in the works of urban educators in New York City, Los Angeles, and London. García and Wei (2014) argue that “languaging” was initially brought forth in the early 1970s works by “Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela” in their cognitive theory of *autopoiesis*.<sup>16</sup> García and Wei also add that their use of the prefix “trans” is influenced by works like those of “the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz’s” 1940s conceptualization of *transculturación* and the Argentine semiotician Walter D. Mignolo’s “bilanguaging love” (qtd. García and Wei, 2014, p. 21; 41). In this way, translanguaging is traced as a decolonial epistemology that moves beyond the U.S. context of polyvocality and is tied to “bilinguals’ perspectives” and experiences of their own language practices. This conceptualization also works to unveil how coloniality<sup>17</sup> continues to operate in our transnational knowledge formation—and may work to suppress the participation and language practices of minoritized groups, such as Latinxs,<sup>18</sup> a gender-neutral term to describe people of Latin American descent in the U.S. Because this project is framed by translingualism as ideology and practice, but also understands the influence and importance of the decolonial bilingual stance advanced by the translanguaging view, the study adopts a framework of translingualism that is cognizant of translanguaging as a

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<sup>16</sup> This theory argues that humans “cannot separate [their] biological and social history of actions from the ways in which [they] perceive the world” (qtd. in García & Wei, 2014, p. 7).

<sup>17</sup> “the logic of domination in the modern/colonial world” (Mignolo, 2005, p. 7).

<sup>18</sup> New York-based journalist, Ed Morales (2018) argues that the term Latinx “best described as a gender-neutral term to describe US residents of Latin American descent” has come to be because of the perceived “inadequacies” of U.S. government-imposing or non-gendered neutral terms like Hispanic and Latino, correspondingly. I use this term throughout my research to refer to participants born in the Americas and of Latin American descent. However, when relaying the experiences of women of this descent I specify their preferred term to mark distinctions about their own gendered experiences as Latinas.

way to examine bilingualism and “bilinguals” perspectives on their own practices, especially as part of the composition of texts for public discourse. Such adaptation of this translingual framework and translanguaging bilingual stance is important because it recognizes that language and literacy related studies benefit from interdisciplinarity and can together advance a view of language plurality and its effect in our transnational world.

In thinking about how plural approaches to language have been studied and theorized, Yildiz (2012) offers an important cautionary argument about how the monolingual paradigm continues to operate amidst the growth of multilingualism. Yildiz writes that “recognizing the workings of the monolingual paradigm, I suggest requires a fundamental reconceptualization of European and European-inflected thinking about language, identity, and modernity” (p. 2). In this manner, Yildiz, like Mignolo (2007), calls for the process of “delinking”<sup>19</sup> from European models of language in which languages are seen as separate monolithic systems that reinsert the functions of the nation-state and gender formation (p. 6-11). To exemplify this argument, Yildiz poses that “writing ‘beyond the mother tongue’ does not simply mean writing in a nonnative language or in multiple languages. Rather, it means writing beyond the *concept* of the mother tongue” (14). Yildiz’s cautionary argument is crucial to understanding how undocumented young adults in the U.S. develop texts that may often be read as monolingual Englishes, Koreans, Spanishes; I discuss this more closely in Chapter 4, as I

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<sup>19</sup> From Mignolo’s (2007) “Delinking” or *desprendimiento* (undoing and untying) from coloniality. Coloniality, Mignolo (2005) argues, is the reinsertion of power hierarchies in the modern world, which operate through the “colonial wound”: “a consequence of racism, the hegemonic discourse that questions the humanity of all of those who do not belong to the locus of enunciation (and the geopolitics of knowledge)” (p. 8).

look to how the manifestations of bilingualism in writing for racialized youths are often misread as monolingually English or a different language. Yet looking at these texts from these young adults' perspectives and lived experiences as bilinguals reveals the texts' multilingual production. More importantly, showing this languages and literacies trajectories shows how these young adults accomplish their language and cultural sustainability desires and goals.

### **Multilingual Students**

Today's global and digital contexts demand that individuals negotiate a variety of possible and competing repertoires. It is for this reason that students are now at the center of these contending and growing scholarly language-related discussions about what they can and should learn. In the last ten years, the term, "multilingual students" has gathered significant traction in our field. Such a shift is not only noticeable in scholarship, but also in the everyday discourse referencing particular student populations. In her chapter on "Multilingual/ism" in *Keyword in Writing Studies*, Tardy (2015) argues that, although the ideology of labeling students as "multilingual" could be noted in scholarship as early as the 1990s, it was not until the mid-2000s that the term became widely employed (p. 114-115). Tardy also notes that it was works like Ruth Spack's 1997 article,<sup>20</sup> "The Rhetorical Construction of Multilingual Students," and Canagarajah's 2002 *Critical Academic Writing and Multilingual Students* that fostered the significant shift (p. 115). In addition, articles like Gail Schuck's 2006 "Combating Monolingualism: A Novice Administrator's

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<sup>20</sup> Spack's (1997) article examined how student labels like English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Language Learner (ELL) emerge out of deficiency models of education. This examination into labels and student identities has been extended in Flores, Kleyn, and Menken's 2015 "Looking Holistically in a Climate of Partiality: Identities of Students Labeled Long-Term English Language Learners."

Challenge” asked writing program administrators, in particular, to consider the possibility that an increasingly diverse student population was an opportunity to confront our English-Only model at the college level. In this way, both scholarship working to defy monolingualist views and works trying to better understand what changing population demographics mean to the university became enmeshed in what García and Kleifgen (2010) identify as an additive model of bilingualism (p. 43). This is how students bureaucratically, educationally and broadly categorized as “multilingual” become the most implicated in the discourse of translingualism.

Even though Horner et al.’s 2011 piece argues for “honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends” (p. 305), scholars seem to have understood this to be addressing only the student population they view or racialized as “multilingual”—that is, students that through systematic and nationalistic educational bureaucracies become codified as “ESL,” “International,” and/or “ELL” (Flores, Kleyn, & Menken, 2015; Friedrich, 2006; Schuck, 2006), thus, reinserting the native-non-native or L1 and L2, all-encompassing binaries, which are inconsistent with how bilingualism has been shown to work, and the ways in which all individuals can and do “shuttle” between linguistic repertoires (Canagarajah, 2010, 2013; García & Wei, 2014). Such a misguided understanding of translingualism as a pedagogical turn that only applies to students codified as “multilingual” not only results in the reinserting of monolingualist views but also erases the emergent bilingual and minoritized<sup>21</sup> student population. In contrast to the monolingualist orientation described above, this project aims to examine the potential diversity of ethnic/ethnicized bilingual writers from a translingual

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<sup>21</sup> For instance, the racially diverse groups of students described in Ana Celia Zentella’s (1997) study of Spanish Harlem—in *Growing up Bilingual: Puerto Rican Children in New York*.

perspective that views bilingualism as a dynamic model (García, 2009). Undocumented young adults' perspectives on their own language and literacy practices, especially as displayed in the context of immigrant rights' advocacy, can be a telling point about how such dynamicity takes place and intersects with social justice. In addition, because U.S. undocumented young adult immigrants' texts are predominantly misread/seen/interpreted as "Standard English," their texts' trajectories and histories can function as a telling case of how language norming in each time-space erases the pluralicity of their bilingual production (Peters, 2013). That is, the texts—standing alone without their human relationships, trajectories, intersecting cultures and histories—can produce the erasure of a diversity of languages and what is often read as "standard" English and a desired for monolingualism. In this way, cultural rhetorics become central to how we view translingual practices, since cultural and language practices have as much to do with language as they must do with the stances and meaning-making practices of the ethnic groups that generate them.

### **Dynamic Bilingualism in Languages and Academic Literacies**

In his closing statement to *Reading Chinese Fortune Cookie: The Making of Chinese American Rhetoric*, LuMing Mao (2006) writes, "The future belongs to us border residents straddling two or more cultures, to those of us who learn to cultivate and speak out our in-between subject positions, and who learn to practice the discourse of hybridity through the making of Chinese American rhetoric and/or other ethnic rhetorics" (p. 150). Similarly, in her 2011 "CCCC Chair's Address," Gwendolyn Pough, too, calls on us to challenge the borders with and around us. Pough argues that we must contest

“those borders that surround our individual spaces and carved-out niches right now” (p. 311). But she also reminds us that: “*We do language. We have that critical thing in the bag. So, [we must] take it out. Use it*” (p. 311). During my participation in and with immigrant rights advocacy and participant interviews, undocumented young adults, too, have expressed a sense of in-betweenness in respect to their ethnic and ethnicized identities, however, not quite like one Gloria Anzaldúa (1995) would advance. For undocumented young adults, their identities, language and literacy practices—and concerns over human rights and social justice—stretch beyond cultural and ideological ties to more than one nation; they also pertain to matters of legality and “legally” denied services and rights.

In this manner, undocumented young adults express a certain level of distance from their second-generation immigrant peers. They feel as though they “are speaking out from a place of risk” as undocumented, and in their very speaking on this, they are shifting and remapping the positioning and voice(s) of Americanness. This is why Mao’s (2006) and Pough’s (2011) arguments become so pertinent here. These authors promote positions of border residency with a stance toward responsivity. Pough says that we must learn to use language and make it do its work, and Mao argues for identifying how hybrid positions must learn to speak to know themselves and to speak about and for their plural practices. But understanding these hybrid-marginal positionings, such as the one the undocumented young adults face on an every-day basis, is also about remaining critical about ways in which global, multilingual, and transnational turns are invoked. For instance, cultural rhetorics are cognizant of coloniality and the ways in which the “global turn” operates to reinsert new forms of the same old forms of power. And this of course is



very relevant in thinking about language in literacy practices of minoritized youth in urban settings.

*Conciencia Bilingüe: The Multilingual and Academic Writing Practices of Undocumented Immigrant Activists* provides the intersecting fields of English Education and rhetoric and composition with insight on how minoritized and marginalized young adults can and do develop their multilingual potential *with* and *through* their scholarly and professional experiences as well as their political activism. In this chapter, Chapter 1, I have offered a brief review of the literatures of undocumented youth migration and how bilingual and multilingual language ideology and practice have been theorized in the fields of Composition and Rhetoric, Urban Education, and Critical Applied Linguistics. My aim in doing so has been to draw out connections about the ways in which undocumented immigrant activists offer invaluable insight into multilingualism from the perspective of racialized people. Chapter 2, which follows, offers readers a closer look into the methodology and methods that informed this project, and how these were adapted in the data collection and analysis. This chapter is also concerned with drawing out the literature and context of undocumented in New York City and the South. Chapter 3 focuses on the study participants and the political and bilingual perspectives they bring to the study. It looks at participants from a holistic perspective that looks to both the macro and micro aspects that affect their lives and language practices on an everyday basis. This chapter works to reveal the ways in which study participants all identified as undocumented but had different approaches and ways of assuming their roles as community leaders. Chapter 4, which emerges out of coded themes from the data analysis, examines the text production and histories of the bilingual texts produced by

participants in this study. This chapter works to show how manifestations of multilingualism and a translingual orientation—with an activist end—take on different forms in writing that may initially appear as monolingual. Finally, Chapter 5, discusses the implications of this research work, specifically as it connects to literature in academic and professional and technical writing practices. This chapter also concerns itself with how this research can be extended and further taken up by other scholars in the field looking to learn more from multilingual writing in the context of the transnational turn.

CHAPTER II  
METHODS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ENGAGEMENT WITH  
IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

While we believe literacy research is strengthened by the inclusion of diverse perspectives by and about young people, we also believe that researchers have a responsibility to listen—closely and carefully—to *what* young people are saying, and *how* and *for what reasons* they are saying it. (Kinloch & San Pedro, p. 26; emphasis original)

Advocating for immigrant rights in a world in which Neo-Nazi nationalist groups and hate crimes against immigrant people have risen drastically in the U.S. alone (Hankes & Amend, 2017) can often prove a daunting and exhausting struggle; however, following in the footsteps of the immigrant youths and communities that lead this activist work is an ever humbling and inspiring research journey. This journey, as I highlight below, requires an understanding of participants' diverse lived experiences as undocumented, and the ways in which they navigate this status in their specific contexts. In this chapter, I hold myself responsible to the careful and close listening that Valerie Kinloch and Timothy San Pedro advise for in the opening to this chapter. I first present the methodology and methods that informed my research work and how I positioned myself as a Latina immigrant conducting this project. I discuss how I collected data and analyzed

it based on my framework, and researcher stance. I then describe how participants in this study spoke to and represented diverse perspectives on and about undocumented young adults lived experiences, and how their ethnic and racial identities connected to specific migration trends. Finally, I relate the contexts and differences in and for immigrant activism in the U.S. South and Northeast. I discuss how policies and immigrant population demographics in these different geolocations mattered greatly in advocacy and worked to map specific stereotyped narratives on the national spectrum of immigration.

### **Theoretical Framework**

To observe and analyze the academic and multilingual writing practices of undocumented young adults requires careful attention to the intersectionality of lived experience of these youths. As related in the introduction, Chapter 1, undocumented young adults are part of an in-between immigrant generation group, generation 1.5. And to a great extent, their schooling and socialization experiences resemble more of those of the second generation, at least before college. In addition, this group of youths are adults who represent college-age students from minoritized and often historically underrepresented groups in higher education. Moreover, as noted earlier in this chapter, undocumented young adults are a diverse group of people who have experienced the multiple ways in which racialization manifests itself in the U.S. and in academic settings specifically, and not in the same manner.

Conscious of the intersecting and dynamic factors that influence and transform the writing and language practices of undocumented immigrant activists, this study drew on a theoretical framework that could account for these aspects of cultural and linguistic

diversity and lived experience. Adapting Lillis and Curry's 2010 text-oriented ethnography methods, which I describe further in the data analysis, this study drew on a collective framework informed by García and Wei's (2014) theorization of dynamic bilingual practices, translingual theories of language difference in academic writing (Horner et al., 2011; Lu & Horner, 2016), and Flores's and Rosa's (2015) call for raciolinguistics as a way to interrogate academic writing. The discussion that follows shows why this collective framework was necessary for this text-ethnography adaptation.

Forwarded in García's and Wei's (2014) urban and bilingual education book *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*, translanguaging views multilingualism through a transglossic lens in which individuals compose complex literacy and language performances depending on the terrain, context, or positionality at a given time and space. Translanguaging shifts away from the legitimizing of "a" language to the recognition of how language functions in practice and how it may actually be sustained in spaces in which it is constantly under threat. More specifically, translanguaging as a practice of language-minoritized bilinguals aims to "captur[e] the expanded complex practices of speakers who could not avoid having had languages inscribed in their body, and yet live between different societal and semiotic contexts as they interact with a complex array of speakers" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 18).

Translanguaging recognizes the linguistic negotiations and transnational and local movements that language-minoritized communities face in sustaining bilingual language practices, especially in nations that imagine themselves as monolingual and monocultural. However, while translanguaging as language theory recognizes these power differentials and the crucial aspect of embodied lived experience, scholarship in

this area has not yet explicitly addressed how these matters of language pluralism play out in academic writing, specifically as they pertain to writing curricula and assessment of academic and professional writing practices in and out of academic settings.

In composition and writing studies, translanguaging, on the other hand, has closely interrogated what these writing and communicative differences mean to college writing classroom settings. In fact, translanguaging, as posed by Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur (2011) and Lu and Horner (2016), argues that language difference in writing<sup>22</sup> should be seen as an opportunity to interrogate what these differences mean to our ways of thinking and argumentation. This orientation insists that difference in language is unavoidable and bound to occur in every utterance and reiteration of practice.

Additionally, a translanguaging orientation calls attention to the high demand and rich linguistic and multimodal contexts of the college writing classroom because of forced and voluntary migrations (Canagarajah, 2010, 2011; Horner, Selfe, & Lockridge, 2015; You, 2016). More recently, translanguaging has also turned its attention to how writing instructors' design and assessment of works can sustain students' rich language practices while they also encourage their academic literacies, and how educators should be conscious of their own embodied difference and positionality when evaluating students' writing (Inoue, 2015; Kynard, 2018; Guerra, 2016). Within this conversation several interdisciplinary discussions, including the works of critical applied linguists, have called attention to how not all difference is the same difference and how structural inequities in schooling and societal practices affect students differently.

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<sup>22</sup> Often also referred to as translanguaging practice (Canagarajah, 2013).

Keith Gilyard (2016), for instance, has keenly critiqued how the discourse of translingualism can extend and produce an erasure of inequity and structural difference by treating all language difference as if it were the same form of difference or could receive the same form of assessment. It is for this reason that this study answers to Gilyard's caution and looks to Nelson Flores's and Jonathan Rosa's (2015) framework for raciolinguistics. Flores and Rosa argue for raciolinguistics as a way to critique language ideologies linking standardization and academic writing with racializations of whiteness. They note that "raciolinguistic ideologies produce racialized speaking subjects who are constructed as linguistically deviant even when engaging in linguistic practices positioned as normative or innovative when produced by privileged white subjects" (p. 150). In this way, Flores and Rosa unsettle ideologies of linguistic and written "appropriateness" by explicitly addressing how the white gaze is extended in the discourse of communication. Flores and Rosa then further translingualism's goal to interrogate manifestations of language difference, as they call for a critical view on how societal structures of power—tied to the white gaze—prescribe particular links of academic value based on embodied language practice. As Flores and Rosa (2015) write:

a raciolinguistic perspective seeks to understand how the white gaze is attached both to a speaking subject who engages in the idealized linguistic practices of whiteness and to a listening subject who hears and interprets the linguistic practices of language-minoritized populations as deviant based on their racial positioning in society as opposed to any objective characteristics of their language use. As with the white gaze, the white speaking and listening subject should be

understood not as a biographical individual but as an ideological position and mode of perception that shapes our racialized society. (p. 151)

Flores and Rosa offer a clarification on how the white gaze—as an ideological positionality—functions as a mode of racialized perception towards the design and assessment of writing identified as academic, and/or pertaining to academia: That is, writing that serves specific rhetorical purposes while forwarding an argument and blending into a somewhat identifiable genre. A raciolinguistics framework then informs how the practices of language-minoritized youths, such as those of the participants in this study, ought to be studied in the context of their everyday racialized lives. However, it is important to pay attention to how the white gaze looks to citizenship, something that Flores and Rosa do not articulate in their work. This is central to the lived experiences of undocumented young adults, and immigrant youths growing up in mixed status families. In addition, in the context of schooling, thinking about citizenship and its assumed norm is crucial to understanding how “standard” languages are defined or invoked and how anti-immigrant ideology is developed through nationalistic language norming in writing.

### **Data Collection**

In order to understand how undocumented college-age immigrant activists practiced and enacted their multilingualism and academic and professional writing, I carried out semi-structured qualitative interviews with participants over the course of two years. The first set of interviews focused on getting to know the participants’ backgrounds and language and writing interests. Follow-up interviews focused on writing samples participants provided and discussions about language and writing that



participants brought up during initial interviews. Because the study was based on ethnographic fieldwork, it included observations and action research conducted during immigration-related meetings and national and local rallies and interviews of 12 youths and two authorized representatives of immigrant advocacy organizations. Over the course of this research, I collected over 450 pages of field notes and interview transcripts from nearly 30 hours of audio recordings and five hours of video footage, 200 photographs of the spaces in which these youths participated and how they positioned themselves to write, and 60 different multimodal and alphabetic-writing texts that youths in this study produced in relation to immigrant rights advocacy. Given that the main method of text analysis in this ethnography was an adaptation of text-ethnography (see data analysis below), cyclical conversations via text message and email about the youths' writing were also added to the data.

### **Data Analysis**

As a text-oriented ethnography, following a collective language, literacies, and racialization theory, this study relied on ethnographic pieces of data as well as texts designed and produced by participants in the study, “to explore the production of texts in their contexts” (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 2). This form of ethnography relies on text histories as a methodological tool for examining professional scholarly writing, and involves the following elements:

- Face-to-face interviews with the main author or authors, including discussions of the history of a text, such as who was involved, target publication, specific issues/concerns;

- The collection of as many drafts as available;
- The collection of correspondence between authors and brokers, including post-submission broker comments, such as reviews and email correspondence;
- Email correspondence and informal discussion with authors. (Lillis & Curry, 2010, p. 4)

However, it is important to highlight that this tool was adapted to the participant population of this study and their production context. For instance, while examining drafts of the texts collected could have proved relevant to this study, in many ways it was a futile effort. Per its translanguaging framework, this study centers on the perspectives of bilingual young adults regarding their own language and writing practices, so consulting outside perspectives for additional feedback on the young adults' writing was insightful from the perspectives of educators, but it did not yield much information or specifics regarding the young adults' lived experiences. In addition, this study proved that press releases, posts, and comments on a public social platform like Facebook were more typical of the texts young adults produced in their professional contexts, and these forms of text rarely went through several drafts.<sup>23</sup> In fact, these types of writing demanded immediacy. In this way, this data analysis drew heavily on Lillis and Curry's methodological tool of "talk around texts." This is a method of analysis that "involves cyclical dialogue between the researcher and the [writer] over a period of time, involving

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<sup>23</sup> It is also important to note that in this study, the term "texts" is used to encompass a broad range of forms of communication, not limited to only traditional alphabetic writing, but including the rhetorical composition of arguments in, for example, a video composed for a campaign and chants during rallies and marches.

face-to-face discussions as well as ongoing communication via email” (p. 43). And, in this study’s case, via text message and messenger as well.

Given this study’s aim to offer more race- and citizenship-conscious discussions of how languaging and translanguaging can take place, I offer my research positionality: I am a Latina, a bicultural woman who is part of a language-minoritized and historically underrepresented population in the U.S. I am a student and educator who has experienced the advantages of multilingualism at the personal and academic levels but has also confronted and contested the demands of a monolingualist orientation (Alvarez et al., 2017; Zentella, 1997). More importantly, I bring the perspective of being an immigrant and naturalized U.S. citizen who has personally experienced the boundaries of seeking U.S. citizenship and now its privileges. As participants in this study relate in Chapter 3, and as Vieira (2016), Gonzales (2016), and other scholars and writers, like Danticat (2007) have related in their non-fiction books, the U.S. immigration system is extremely complex, bureaucratic, and unjust. And while citizenship does not remove racialization or the discomfort of being questioned about one’s nationality as part of an ethnic group, it certainly grants state rights that move beyond a matter of belonging. For example, as a naturalized citizen, I no longer have to worry about how long I travel or engage in a work project outside of the country. I do not have to worry about recalling specific dates (and keeping receipts) for when I re-enter and exit the country. Perhaps more importantly, I am not in a constant state of risk of deportation because of some possible minor infraction like not making a stop at a stop sign, which is the case for green-card holders. This fear of state regulations that criminalize bodies, and the struggles and ties I share with immigrant communities, inform both my approach and analysis of this research.

They humble and humanize my vision as a researcher. And as it happens for Diaz-Strong, Luna-Duarte, Gómez, and Meiners (2014) in their participatory action research project with former and current undocumented Latinxs young adults, researcher emotions are also triggered in the process. As the authors accurately relate this:

Driving away from a meeting on immigration mobilization or a conversation with a young person, we could cry. We found ourselves angry during our planning and writing meetings; upset, depressed, and sad while trying to think and write. Our anger was associated with legislative and institutional failures, our anxiety and fear linked to the political realities of people whose presents and futures we cared about deeply. (p. 5)

Nonetheless, I should clarify that in my research analysis I was mainly driven by moments of joy and a “tickling” in my brain that often asked, how do participants in my study figure out ways to navigate these complex and highly constrained boundaries?

This study, then, unveils articulations of patterned codes that emerged out of the research (Saldaña, 2016) and which speak to the methodology adapted for this study. However, one clarification to offer of this research in adapting Lillis’s and Curry’s (2010) text-ethnography methods is that the body of analysis, in this case, was not just the physical texts provided by youths themselves but also “the text” as manifested in the discourse of lived experiences of these young adults’ activism. Furthermore, the translingual orientation I adopted for this study also challenged me to adopt tools in methods that were not stipulated in text-ethnography but were necessary for understanding how multilingualism is sustained differently and under diverse activist conditions. I coded for moments in which language ideology and language practice were

discussed in participant's discourse and noted every time that these discourses were brought up in discussion. I initially coded these moments as lived experience and multilingual practices of rhetorical attunement (Lorimer Leonard, 2014). However, I soon realized that these coded patterns were not sufficient in discussing racialization (per my raciolinguistics guiding framework) and lived experience. This is how the code for *conciencia bilingüe*, which I theorize further in the following chapter emerged. This code accounted for embodied discourse of language and lived experience in the lives of local multilinguals and immigrant youths. I then analyzed how this discourse manifested itself differently, and in which contexts of these youth's lives. I also coded for the terms that emerged out of participants translation practices, and how these terms offered similar and different iterations of translingual practice with a sonic orientation. I discuss this more in length in Chapter 5.

Furthermore, as a way to bring the dynamicity and expertise of participants' lived experiences into their own writing practices, I checked in with participants about specific writing pieces and their thoughts on these pieces. This allowed me to place these "written thoughts" with their languaging thoughts and how they had discussed these pieces during the length of the study. In some ways, this (re)created the cyclical tool that Lillis and Curry (2010) offer in their methods, but also added an extra and necessary layer of individuals' perspectives on their own writing practices and their languaging about these pieces. Moreover, throughout the three years of this ethnographic engagement, research fieldnotes, self-memos (in the forms of text messages to myself), videos of activist engagements, and conversations with participants (in person, via text, and over email) helped me make sense of the writing and contexts of writing for these participants.

Finally, one important code that also emerged out the discourse of lived experience, and which I discuss in Chapter 4, is activist writing. This code came to be because of García and Wei's (2014) reminder that translanguaging is, indeed, part of a political and carefully situated act. In Chapter 4, I discuss how one noticeable aspect of interviewing undocumented college-age adults as a PhD student and writing instructor was the desire participants had to let me know that I should know their evaluation of college writing. While my research questions were designed to prompt participants to think about their feelings of writing as a practice and how they positioned themselves as multilingual writers, I did not ask about their experiences in college writing courses. However, all participants discussed their thoughts on these courses with me. This I took to be part of their critique of how they were structurally positioned at the margins of the university and “academia,” but also as their way of challenging me to think about academic and professional writing in more profound, engaged, and—yet—flexible ways.

These codes (Saldaña, 2016) guided how I approached the organization of this project, so that participants' profiles could be at the center of the discussion of their writing practices. They also allowed me to have a better grasp of how undocumented young adults' experiences in the U.S. South and Northeast were similar and yet different and how even participants with similar ethnic and national backgrounds engaged their bilingual practices differently. I discuss this participant diversity in the section that follows.

## Research Participant Diversity

The dynamicity, diverse lived experiences, and rich practices of the undocumented immigrant activists I worked with in the past three years are discernable in every one of the interviews I conducted. I interviewed undocumented young adults in the early hours of the morning while they planned and staged local and national rallies, often having to step in and out of their offices to direct and consult with fellow activists, immigration lawyers, and organizers, and while people shouted—in multiple languages—how long before their buses would wait outside for them to go march. I interviewed participants while they had dinner in their cars and got ready for their graveyard shifts, in their homes before they headed out for school, and between classes at university libraries and glocal cafes, like Café Bene.<sup>24</sup> I also followed up with participants at their families' local restaurants, as they worked their shifts and generously shared meals with me, and at my own place when participants wanted a chance to talk in a space they deemed as private<sup>25</sup> and safe. Transcribing these interviews reminded me of the constraints of alphabetic-based writing, which cannot capture the vibrancy of these immigrant activists' lives.

In listening to the recorded interviews, I was reminded that these activist leaders rarely worked on their own or away from their families and communities, as I could “see” this aspect of their lives manifesting itself most clearly in the audio. In an interview

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<sup>24</sup> International corporations established and selling foods affiliated with specific national and ethnic groups and presenting themselves in a European fashion to appeal to the metropolitan context of cities like New York. Thus, they represent the growth of ethnic-oriented global corporations with a localized vision of what can do well in specific metropolitan settings (Trieu, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Immigrant activists deeming my place as “private” was an important reminder of my growing privilege, and how I could extend this privilege to participants in this study when they needed “a space” to talk, study, or eat a meal without having to hear and/or deal with the commotion of tight and shared spaces, sibling noises, fellow activists' discussions, and family and community life in general—a context which I am closely familiar with from my own upbringing, as a Latina and immigrant daughter myself.

recorded at a participant's family and immigrant-owned restaurant, for instance, one could hear the cooks and family members in the kitchen speaking Spanish and Mixteco, while the young activist entertained questions in English about his professional writing as he wrote down food orders in Spanish. In addition, when I interviewed activists in their offices, the visuals and posters that surrounded the spaces spoke volumes about their work and literacies. For example, at a participant's desk at an immigration advocacy office there were several images he had designed and hung together to speak to his advocacy position as a person of Mexican descent, believer in the Virgin of Guadalupe, advocate for Black Lives Matter, and in solidarity with Standing Rock. This participant's images in combination with his colleagues' posters, pictures, and designs made the room an energetic and lively place, speaking to the overt-awareness these young advocates had formed about the various socio-political and infrastructural issues tied to American history and our time and their desire to sustain their cultural practices.

The undocumented college-age activists I had the privilege of learning from are a diverse group of people who in many ways represent the multifaceted aspects of undocumented immigrant experiences. They come from a variety of national, ethnic, family, class, college-access backgrounds and upbringings and ways of becoming undocumented in the U.S. In fact, their diverse experiences as undocumented in many ways confirmed what Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) have argued are part of the complex and misunderstood ways in which "undocumentation" takes place in the U.S. and works to traumatize young immigrants who "feel a great sense of injustice when they first discover that they cannot go beyond high school" (p. 35). At the same time,



participants in this study also demonstrated how DACA<sup>26</sup> could shift and improve their employment and schooling prospects, allowing them to pursue jobs for which they had attained college degrees, or giving them the liberty to choose slightly better paid jobs to assist their families and improve their communities financially (Pérez, 2014). That is, participants held various forms of employment ranging from blue-collar to white-collar jobs. And, sometimes, they even held several wide-ranging jobs at the same time. For instance, during weekdays, one participant worked at a lawyer's office in bookkeeping and attended school part-time, and during weekends she worked as a restaurant server. Most participants, however, continued to identify with and live in working-class immigrant communities.

Despite this shared feeling of identification as undocumented and working-class, disparities between participants were at times most visible in how their transnational ties manifested themselves in their U.S. geographical settings and how this could work to extend the sociopolitical and racial dynamics of these places and their immigrant communities. For example, in the racial dynamics of the South, participants of Mexican descent with darker phenotypes often felt that they were met halfway by the white majority of the population. They reported being seen as hard workers, but not American enough to claim their rights or their families' rights. At the same time, they also reported feeling welcomed and a few times unwelcomed by the black communities of the South. This seemed to be tied with black communities empathizing with another minoritized community, but also feeling threatened by the black and white racial dynamics and labor

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<sup>26</sup> Out of the 12 participants in this study, only one did not hold DACA. He unfortunately did not meet the five-year (K-12) schooling period requirement. Not having DACA certainly marked a disparity in his schooling prospects, and his family's financial struggles.

disparities in the South. In the Northeast, participants of Korean descent, for example, often noted that they could claim their Korean background as well as their Americanness, but had a harder time discussing identifications that did not meet the evangelical/Protestant views of Korean immigrants in New York City, thus, offering complex commentary on how cities that had long histories of immigration advocacy could also be immersed in networks that suppressed people's plurality.<sup>27</sup> Simultaneously, undocumented young adults with Mexican backgrounds in New York related how difficult it was to escape the Latinx national and ethnic social stratifications of the city, which viewed undocumented Mexican laborers and families at the bottom of the Latinx community at large.

Additionally, this study also demonstrates what Gonzales, Terriquez, and Rusczyk (2014) present as a manifestation of DACAmented<sup>28</sup> disparities, in which undocumented young adults who had immigrant families with greater access to resources, financial stability, and higher educational levels were able to benefit the most from obtaining DACA. As the authors illustrate in their study of 2,381 DACAmented beneficiaries:

Young people from higher socioeconomic statuses were more likely to access some benefits when compared to peers who grew up with fewer socioeconomic resources. Specifically, having a parent with a bachelor's degree was positively

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<sup>27</sup> Menjivar, Abrego, and Schmalzbauer (2016) aptly note how community organizations and NGOs play crucial roles in guiding documented and undocumented immigrants in accessing resources to which they have rights. The authors also explain that specific metropolitan contexts—which have longer trajectories as immigrant settings—seem to have more organizations, including faith-based organizations, that can bridge immigrant needs with resources, rights, and educational options (p.153). This study then works to complicate how these networks can also at times extend exclusive practices that leave out young immigrants who do not adhere to these specific beliefs.

<sup>28</sup> This term generally refers to undocumented DACA beneficiaries.

associated with obtaining an internship. Perhaps, college-educated parents, understanding the value of an internship and not dependent on their children's earnings may have encouraged their young children to obtain such a position, even if unpaid. Meanwhile, with the exception of obtaining a new job, those from low-income backgrounds were notably less likely than their peers from middle/higher income backgrounds to access all other resources. As such, this finding suggests that family economic disadvantage hampered young people's ability to use DACA for their own benefit in the short term. (Gonzales, Terriquez, & Rusczyk, 2014, p. 1865)

Their study findings also concur with research by Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) that claims higher educational levels for immigrant parents means more access to middle-class and upper-middle-class expectations and resources. Conversely, “individuals and families of middle-and lower-class backgrounds [who are immigrants] are likely to face more adverse circumstances, to settle into less desirable neighborhoods, and to enroll their children in school with fewer resources” (p. 83). In this way, participants in this study not only demonstrated great diversity in undocumented and DACAmented immigrant experiences, but also the nuances and complexities of what could be seen as singular and unifying aspects of their experiences in regard to class and educational access. In fact, this study hints to the importance of looking closer to transnational immigrant ties and racialized experiences in the U.S., and how these aspects of identity also shape undocumentedation.

For this research, I was informed by my long-term work with non-profit organizations, public libraries, and coalitions in New York City and the South which

serve first-and second-generation immigrants. Participants in the larger study were purposely selected from these community's ties, which in and of itself functioned on the principles of a snowball sampling method but heavily relied on the trust that had been built with communities over a duration of time (Alvarez, 2017a, 2017b). Involvement in immigration advocacy as an undocumented college-age adult—representing a range of racial, ethnic, and birth place backgrounds—was the primary criterion that drove sampling, creating a participant pool that was ethnically and racially diverse. However, I did not set out to have a wide range of class and educational access undocumented experiences. These just happened to be the variations in this participant pool. Participants also demonstrated a wide range of language practices and nationally-identified languages.

As a group, the 12 participants were U.S. undocumented activists from five countries, speaking 18 languages among them. More specifically, six participants were born in the continent of Asia, and six in the Americas. Yet, six participants identified as Asian, four as Latinx, with two singular individuals identifying as Indigenous Latinx and Asian and Filipino.<sup>29</sup> This statistic alone demonstrates how important it is for studies of immigrant communities to examine the specifics of ethnic and regional identities since race (as conceptualized in the U.S.) cannot do justice to these important markers of difference. Of the 12 participants, ten immigrated at or before the age of 12, and two at the age of 15, meaning that in their majority, participants received their primary and secondary schooling in the U.S. Furthermore, while all participants reported the desire for a college education, only five had been able to attain a college degree; five were enrolled at two-year or four-year colleges and taking one to three courses each semester in the

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<sup>29</sup> A participant offering this specific identification hinted at racial, ethnic, and regional differences between Asian communities, and perhaps their stratification and labor access in metropolitan cities like New York.

span of three years. During the length of data collection, only one individual reported having a full scholarship at a competitive four-year school in New York City. Yet, two New York City individuals had received full and partial scholarships to attend elite schools in the southern Midwest and the South, correspondingly. Both individuals had graduated at the time this study began and had returned to the New York metropolitan area. In this way, three individuals had attended elite institutions of higher education, six had attended or were enrolled in four-year public universities, and five were enrolled or had attended a two-year institution.

Participants' access to four-year schools was certainly contingent on their geolocation in the U.S, their age, and DACA eligibility, and their potential path to a work permit. Five of 12 participants resided in a Southern state and viewed the South as their U.S. home, the remaining seven resided in New York City and viewed specific boroughs and neighborhoods in the city as their home. Of the five participants in the South, all had received DACA, but only two had been able to access four-year schools, with one individual first having to enroll at a two-year school for three-and-a-half years. In New York City, five participants had received DACA, and six had accessed four-year institutions of higher education with four participants accessing public universities. The overall participant sample showed that the two individuals who had lived as undocumented for most of their early twenties when DACA was not an option, and the individual who did not have DACA, seemed the most affected in making their higher education dreams become a reality. For one of these participants, schooling had stopped for a period longer than four years. Three participants continuously struggled to remain connected and enrolled in higher education institutions, and for two participants the main

indicator for this statistic was their age and how long they had lived as undocumented before DACA, meaning that after a certain period of struggle, they felt “excluded” from their university education and had to focus their efforts on financial stability.

Although—in many ways—the undocumented young adults in this study represented a great range of diversity in undocumented experiences, this participant pool could not fully capture the wide range of racial and ethnic groups that represent the undocumented experience, as no self-identified black, Middle Eastern, West Indian, or white European undocumented young adults participated in this study. To offer some mitigation for the need of perspective about the experiences and struggles of U.S. black undocumented college-age young adults, a national non-profit organization working with this population was consulted.<sup>30</sup> Participants’ shared racial backgrounds in New York City were greatly due to the community-trust-ties snowball sampling method, since community organizations representing particular ethnic immigrant communities were more common in this setting. However, the shared Latinx ethnic background of Mexican nationality in the South was due to Mexican migration trends in this region of the U.S. (in the past three decades) and the somewhat “neutral” place that some of these states played in the growing criminalization of undocumented families (Alvarez & Alvarez, 2016; Marrow, 2011; Rich & Miranda, 2005). I discuss this more in-length in looking at the sites of study below.

While this research cannot speak to the full racial diversity of undocumented immigrant experiences, it certainly indicates the need for and importance of more race-

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<sup>30</sup> For more information on this network of former and present undocumented black communities in the U.S., and around the world, see the UndocuBlack network, <http://undocublack.org/>

conscious studies in undocumented. Looking at this lived experience from the perspective of 12 undocumented immigrant activists demonstrates that discussions of race, ethnicity, and nationality are vital to understanding undocumented and shows how multilingual writing students' language and write about these experiences. To this extent, discussions on multilingualism (from the perspective of self-identified bilinguals) then are also situated in the rhetoric of "absent-presence" that Catherine Prendergast (1998) identifies in her argument about how race is not explicitly talked about in studies of writing.

Looking at participants' experiences as undocumented and multilingual, this study also highlights the need for attention to setting, time, and migration histories and trends. The migration patterns and timelines that participants in this study related in their undocumented experiences cohered with research looking at population demographics for undocumented people in the U.S. in the past 30 years. Thus, this study confirms rising trends in undocumented in Asian communities in large metropolitan cities like New York (Ramakrishnan & Shah, 2017; *MPI*, 2015) and the importance of discussing undocumented from these polyvocal perspectives. It also shows the need for discussing citizenship from a more historical perspective that can work to debunk the discourse of undocumented and immigrant as conflated with *Latinidad* and *Mexicanidad* (Ribero, 2016), demonstrating how racial and ethnic groups that do not identify as *Latinx*, specifically Asian American and African American communities, have been part of the long history and struggle for citizenship in the U.S. Within this racial shift in population demographics of undocumented communities, this study also signals the need for additional research on citizenship and undocumented that examines the relationship

between the migration trends of high-skilled immigrants becoming undocumented and what that means for youths in these immigrant families. As Lorimer Leonard (2017) discusses in her review of migration trends and literacies in the U.S. and in specific metropolitan sites in the Midwest, “although the migrant population in this midsize metro area is small, it is highly skilled” (p. 22). Being highly-skilled immigrants and working at lower-skilled jobs in the U.S. is something that resonated with most East and South Asian participants’ parents’ histories of migration in this study. However, the ways in which this study unveiled how high-skilled immigrants’ prospects of work<sup>31</sup> and their families can become undocumented or rely on undocumented labor<sup>32</sup> (working off the books) because family members cannot work in the country (to aid the family’s financial needs) requires more attention. This, in fact, occurred to two participants—two brothers—in this study. The participants’ father lost his work permit leading their family to become undocumented.

Participants in this study all identified as multilingual and identified their hometowns to be in a U.S. locale, even though they felt culturally tied to their places of birth. Half of the participants held professional positions with immigrant rights advocacy organizations or institutions, while the remaining half volunteered to lead a number of activities in immigrant-oriented organizations. All participants reported that they

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<sup>31</sup> This is related to, though slightly different from Vieira’s (2016) argument about undocumented immigrant workers taking on lower-skilled or prestige jobs because of their undocumented status. In this case, some of my participants’ parents entered the country with work permits but through immigration bureaucracies and lack of familiarity with a complex and broken immigration system they lost these permits. Additionally, even when they had these permits their income was not sufficient to sustain their family, pushing family members to work off the books.

<sup>32</sup> Here, I note that undocumented labor usually refers to a person working off the books (in cash), but not necessarily not documenting and paying their fair share (or more) of taxes. As much research looking into social security funds has demonstrated, it is because undocumented communities pay taxes and do not receive money back, or retirement funds, that this system remains afloat (Campbell, 2016; Sevak & Schmidt, 2014).



participated in the immigrant rights movement out of their own need to learn how to advocate for themselves and their communities. Lastly, it is important to note that a large percentage of participants expressed strong feelings about not being disguised in this study, as they felt that this was a rhetoric that reiterated fear and shame about their positionality. Participants also felt that anonymity could be an act of erasure of their accomplishments since they wanted recognition of their authorship of their written works, and, most important, their knowledge about their own experiences. For this reason, participants' names in this study appear per the authors' choices and reflect their need or desire for anonymity at different times. While at one point some participants were comfortable speaking to cameras on local and national news outlets about their undocumented status, this could have changed before or during the length of this study.

### **The U.S. South and Northeast Immigration Advocacy Contexts**

Languages, migration, and an incessant desire to explore their own embodied experiences as undocumented in their respective regions in the U.S. ties the young adults in this project, but to some extent also marks their distinct experiences in living and facing “undocumented” status. Scholars studying migration, specifically the lived experiences of young adults in particular U.S. states and regions, have noted that the U.S. South can prove the most challenging area for many undocumented young adults to attain higher education (Trivette & English, 2017; Muñoz, 2015).

This project certainly confirms this research, although it also offers an insightful view into how literacies and language practices can sometimes be more likely to be fluid in spaces of high constraint and limited ethnic diversity. The study demonstrates that

when undocumented young adults from linguistically, racially, and ethnically diverse backgrounds come together to advocate for their human rights as immigrants, they have more opportunities to collide, challenge, and help each other grow as advocates. Concurrently, the study reaffirms the great necessity for spaces that sustain ethnic affiliations and learning. And it offers an additional layer to our understanding of how undocumented young adults who have received DACA have learned to navigate their own specific Southern contexts and ID requirements to make their everyday lives slightly more manageable.

## **Setting and Time**

### **The South: “The New Latino South” and UndocuActivism**

As the works of scholars and journalists like Kochhar, Suro, and Tafoya (2005), Rich and Miranda (2005), Gordon (2006), and Rodriguez and Monreal (2017) have richly documented, the South has generally viewed and treated undocumented immigration as interchangeable with the growing Latinx population, specifically Mexican men, the labor involved in the farming and (re)construction industries, and the growing tensions of difference between black and white communities in the South, in particular regarding income and work disparity. Additionally, Latinx in the South have seemed almost synonymous with Mexican immigration, which in and of itself is problematic given that the growing New Latino South<sup>33</sup> is also a product of refugee and transnational

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<sup>33</sup> Refer to Alvarez & Alvarez (2016) for the history and coining of this term to depict the dramatic increase of Latinx communities in the U.S. South.

communities like those from Cuba.<sup>34</sup> This conflation and difference in immigration narratives adds to what has become common knowledge within the U.S. Latinx community regarding how immigrant statuses, nationality, and regional differences mark lack of unity for Latinx and immigrant groups. These factors—as well as long-established dehumanizing metaphors that not only portray immigrants as “animals,” but specifically target and racialize undocumented as solely tied to a Mexican Latinx background (Santa Ana, 2002, p. 85-88)—set much of the stage for how many activists’ conversations took place. However, the rich history of black-led liberation-driven activism also shaped the conversation for many undocumented young adults in the immigrant rights movement in the South. For instance, the (re)opening of the Freedom School in the state of Georgia resulted from a careful and critical historical understanding of how oppression results from racist legislation that deters marginalized groups from entering educational systems (Trivette & English, 2017). And leaders of Advocating for Immigrant Rights and Social Justice (AIRS) in the South were well-aware of this history and the existence of this school.

Based on my three-year engagement and participation with immigrant groups in one specific state of the U.S. South and my close discussions with participants in this study who were part of various immigrant advocacy groups in the South, several aspects of how this immigrant advocacy took shape became salient. First, immigration advocacy led by undocumented young adults was purposefully centered on matters related to immigration and immigrant discourse. So, while ethnicity and race were important to and transformative of how advocacy took shape, for undocumented young adults their main

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<sup>34</sup> Krogstad (2017).

goals included coming together with their immigrant communities and allies to discuss how undocumented was an issue that should interest everyone in their state, and how undocumented immigrants were neighbors and friends who have human rights. Second, given the immigrant population demographics, many of the cultural intersections shaping advocacy often centered on Spanish-speaking immigrant communities and Spanish languages as part of the immigration debate. University administrators often added to this rhetoric by using Latinx or Spanish-centered platforms to center immigration work; though in their defense, at times these were the only platforms available to promote this advocacy. This, of course, contributed to the problematic assumption that Latinx was equivalent to immigrant, undocumented, and Mexican, and greatly affected undocumented communities that did not identify with these ethnic or national groups. However, because organizations like AIRS were specifically focused on immigration work—on the ground—languages, ideas, and different lived experiences seemed to collide more often, leading to impactful transformation and approaches for their work.<sup>35</sup> Third, the U.S. history of racism, specifically anti-blackness, and desire to create more inclusive conversations often permeated these young adult’s meetings. Participants in the South—though generally more institutionally excluded from spaces of higher education (and at times younger in age)—were more aware of how racism functioned institutionally and seemed more mindful about how specific local policies could mean life-changing alterations to their immigrant communities, and how their use of specific discourses could be reinserting racist rhetorics. Fourth, because the U.S. South was generally still

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<sup>35</sup> On the flipside of this, it became less clear how culturally and linguistically sustainable (Paris & Alim, 2014) this translanguaging practice could be for ethnic groups that would end up being minoritized in this discourse of immigration.

learning how to respond to new immigrant groups or conceiving of ways to further policy that could deter non-white immigrants from moving to these states, some aspects of undocumented post-DACA—to some extent—could be more strategically navigated by young adults advocating for immigrant rights in the South. For example, in the South the idea that a person could be undocumented, speak English with a Kentuckian accent, and have a Deferred Action temporary relief would often puzzle people—in their majority white—at official document-granting offices like the DMV, especially in small cities and regions as there was no particular law that marked this distinction in their state law.

### **The Northeast: Undocumented Diversity in Numbers and Languages**

In New York City, undocumented-led immigrant advocacy took on a different form and impacted undocumented young adults' advocacy and language practices differently. This seemed to be the case, on the one hand, because of New York City's well-documented narrative as an immigrant city, and more recent reports publicizing the ways in which immigrants contribute to the city's economic growth (DiNapoli & Blewias, 2015; Stringer, 2017). On the other hand, this advocacy was different because in New York ethnic and racial affiliations were more prominent and possible. The diversity of groups that identified in a specific racial and ethnic group and immigrant undocumented positionality was larger, and organizations that advocated for these groups' ethnicities and racial identifications were also prompted by undocumented leaders to take on this immigration work, if they were not already doing so. This diversity in ethnic and racial affiliations to the experience in undocumentedation was also impelled

by the changing immigrant demographics in the city. For instance, from the 1990s to the early 2000s Mexicans were the fastest growing group in the city, their population more than tripling during this time (Smith, 2005). More recently, as of the 2010 Census, the fastest growing population is Asian American, with 43% identifying as Asian alone (no other ethnic demarcation). More specifically, as the NYU Center for the Study of Asian American Health (2018) notes, “New York City (NYC) is the home to nearly 1.2 million documented and undocumented Asian Americans, representing more than 13% of the total NYC population...The Asian American population in NYC is tremendously diverse, comprising of individuals representing more than 20 countries and 45 languages and dialects.” Moreover, based on 2017 data collected by the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) from the Center for Migration Studies (CMS) and the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), one out of every seven Asian people is undocumented, with New York State having the second largest Asian undocumented population in the U.S. Nationally, “Asian immigrants account for a third or more of the undocumented resident population,” and in places like New York where Asian populations are larger, Asian undocumented increases as well (Ramakrishnan & Shah, 2017). Within this growing racial group there are not only large differences in ethnicity, nationality, and language, but income and education attainment and, in some cases, two geopolitical migrations within one generation. For instance, in the case of one participant, her family migrated from South Korea to Brazil, and then to the U.S. And, in the case of two participants, their families first migrated to Canada, and then to the U.S.

However, despite this diversity in immigrant groups, specifically undocumented immigrant groups, large undocumented-centered events were still often predominantly

led and composed by Latinx peoples. In this way, just as it tended to happen in the U.S. South, in New York City large public advocacy for and with undocumented communities also took on a predominantly Latinx formation, though many more languages and forms of Spanish in writing and speaking were seen and heard during public events.

Based on my direct observations of how several organizations and student-led groups<sup>36</sup> that participants in New York were a part of, and my own participation in various immigrant-led events in the city, several aspects of undocumented activism in the New York became apparent on the ground. First, New York City demonstrated the importance of ethnic/cultural affiliations as ways to sustain cultural and language practices for immigrant young adults. Because young adults participating in immigration advocacy in New York City were also participating in spaces that interrogated cultural, ethnic, and national affiliations, there was a larger demand and need for them to sustain their cultural and language ties. For instance, in the case of Angie, whom I introduce in Chapter 3, in her professional setting, Korean writing was highly demanded and not just any type of Korean but one that could account for generational differences. This is not to imply that culturally sustaining language and writing practices were not taking place in the South—they were. However, when ethnic groups did not have such a strong hold immigration advocacy did not become this platform. In this way, we can think of some of these immigrant ethnic organizations working with undocumented youths in the Northeast as doing ethnic studies work outside of school.

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<sup>36</sup> Here, I want to clarify that I am not making large assumptions about how these organizations or student-led groups operated and/or were successful in meeting their goals. This study does not study these organizations. However, because these sites were part of the context of how undocumented young adults in this study took on their work, this is important to discuss.

Second, these ethnic and racially based organization engagements in New York City seemed to leave less room for cross-cultural/cross-linguistic discussion about how immigrant experiences and citizenship were part of an issue that did not just affect one specific group and did not affect all groups in the same way. In this manner, these spaces also left less room for critical encounters with problematic cultural practices.<sup>37</sup> For example, as one participant notes in their experience working with The Asian Community of New York (ACNY), an organization led by Korean and Korean-American Asian people, this participant often battled to have their queer identity be heard and made visible, and in this way, this participant felt like they had to overtly discuss their queerness to an extent that created great discomfort, thus pointing to how intersecting factors of identity like gender and sexuality could be less likely to be challenged in these culturally-normed spaces.

Third, undocumented young adults in New York City received more support from various ethnic group affiliations and the city's imagined community (Anderson, 1991) as one that was in favor of immigration.<sup>38</sup> This meant that being openly undocumented in the city was perhaps less confrontational than in the South.<sup>39</sup> As I will describe further in the next chapter, one participant in the South felt that disclosing her story meant that she would have to directly deal with people of her age and older threatening to call

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<sup>37</sup> In forwarding culturally sustaining pedagogies for the growth of language and cultural plurality with youths of color, Paris and Alim (2014) argue that while teacher expectations should challenge the reproduction of the white gaze, they should also be mindful of uncritical responses to cultural practices that could extend forms of marginalization. Paris and Alim offer hip hop as an example, which has proved to sustain the literacy and cultural practices of youth of color, but in some instances can reassert sexist ideology (p. 86).

<sup>38</sup> I treat this cultural phenomenon as an imagined community because New York City, as part of the New York State, was heavily immersed in policies that over-regulated and marked undocumented, and immigrant status.

<sup>39</sup> Here, I am consciously terming this confrontational, as disclosing undocumented anywhere in the U.S. carries an immense level of risk.



Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on her, putting her in a less-supported position to be protected from deportation. In New York City, the generational difference of immigrant populations and the city's public discourse on how immigrants "made" the city seemed to lessen the potential and direct impact of confrontational responses. Tony's and Miguel's experiences, which I discuss in the next chapter, of having lived outside of the New York City context to pursue their college degrees and activism—Tony in the South and Miguel in the Mid-South—also spoke to how different it felt for them to be racialized, minoritized, and undocumented in the South than the Northeast. At the same time, undocumented young adults also spoke about these experiences as emboldening them to learn more about their status and to become more connected with other undocumented and social justice-driven communities—at least for the time they were in the South (Goodwillie, 2013).

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, I continue my committed effort to closely and carefully listen to participants in this study, to best "storying" their rich lived experiences (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). I discuss the ways in which their activism is contingent on their love and commitment for their communities and their commitment to social justice advocacy. I also discuss how for undocumented immigrant activists languages are part of them but also with them, and how they complicate and extend our understanding of languaging as an embodied practice, as their discourse interrupts monolingualist ideologies and works to untie nation from language.

CHAPTER III  
UNDOCUACTIVISTS  
DYNAMIC BILINGUALISM IN THE MOVEMENT

*Angie and I have become good friends. We message and consult each other often. We privately share immigration and ethnic community events with one another, and we make plans to meet as often as we can. After knowing Angie for nine months, I ask myself how it is that our friendship has grown this quickly. I have the sense that Angie, being part of this study, may have asked herself similar questions, questions like: why trust her? This is something I come back to often, especially given the nature of our first meeting over the phone, which Angie keenly centered on the matter of trust and how researchers and journalists could not always be trusted with the stories of undocumented communities.*

*“You ought to be careful, you know?” Angie said.*

*But I am privileged because Angie, like all the participants in this study, has placed her trust in me, and she has generously called me a friend.*

In her foreword to Leigh Patel’s *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability*, Eve Tuck (2016) precisely states that the most seemingly important implication of Patel’s work is its shift “from ownership to answerability. This intervention on the conditions and terms of our efforts” to design and carry on

educational research in an answerable form can lead to important transformation (p. xiv). Tuck explains further, “in emphasizing answerability, Patel is emphasizing relationships, interactions, echoes, and connections –she is emphasizing complexity, enfoldings, multiplicities, and contingencies.” Working and researching with and about undocumented young adults demands answerability. As Roberto Gonzales (2016) rightly shows via his 11-year ethnographic study of undocumented young adults in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, undocumented youths’ lived experiences demonstrate the “cruel and damaging flaws of our contemporary immigration system,” a system through which “undocumented young people are substantively integrated into American society and can make certain claims to belonging, [but] full membership is denied them by capricious immigration policies” (p. 16). In this way, the diverse lived experiences of undocumented young adults call for closer attention and understanding but also place them at the peril of what Patel identifies as “a settler colonial justification for research.” Through this lens, qualitative studies are carried out under the

presumed lack or underdevelopment leading to an achievement gap, rather than being grounded in the political, economic, and historical infrastructural of inequity (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Instead of focusing attention on the dysfunctionality required by this societal system and how else people might be in relation to each other. (Patel, 2016, p. 42)

This argument can be illustrated in the way in which “suddenly” immigration and undocumented youths, in particular, have become a “hot topic” for journalists and researchers—alike—since the beginning of the presidential campaign for the now 45th president of the U.S. Most important, Patel’s argument is illustrated in Angie’s words,

noted in the fieldnote opening this chapter. Angie’s caution that I “ought to be careful” as an undocumented person advocating for immigrant communities is apt and necessary for her to maintain, and now more so during these tumultuous times for immigrant and marginalized communities.

This qualitative engagement, however, began much before the “sudden” immigration interest sparked on local, national, and global media and academic conversations, and it is answerable to the communities whom I have had the pleasure and privilege to learn from and to work with. Equally important, this research understands that conversations on the struggles, triumphs, and advocacy of undocumented young adults and immigrant communities have a long history that predates the current and past presidential administrations. This chapter, then, centers on the voices and experiences of the 12 undocumented young adults in this study. This research examines how their embodied and racialized multilingual practices as immigrant activists become the basis for their critical sense of what I introduce here as *conciencia bilingüe*.

The *Real Academia* of the Spanish language dictionary (*RAE*, 2017) defines *conciencia*<sup>40</sup> as referring to a personal state of being in which a person has “a clear and reflexive knowledge of [a particular] reality” (*RAE*, 2017). *Conciencia bilingüe* then refers to a person’s reflexive knowledge of their bilingualism as a dynamic practice which intersects every aspect of their lived experiences and literacies. In this way, *conciencia bilingüe* builds on Juan Guerra’s (2016) work on cultivating rhetorical sensibility (p. 228) by specifically addressing and calling for a reflexive knowledge of the

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<sup>40</sup> In this bilingual research text, the term *conciencia bilingüe* in-and-of-itself visually and orally challenges monolingualist visions of bilingualism, which seek to separate languages systematically. Not italicizing or providing consistent translations to the words included in this working term is then tasking readers to engage the bilingual practice of this writer.

development of bilingualism as an everyday occurrence for minoritized bilinguals and Rebecca Lorimer Leonard's (2014; 2017) argument about how multilinguals are highly dispositioned to navigate languages and rhetorical practices in ways that can uplift their mobility. *Conciencia bilingüe*, in other words, is a working term for how local and racialized immigrant-generation multilinguals begin to make sense of their bilingual practices and processes—especially as they relate to writing—and how these ongoing reflexive processes may lead them to a sense of ownership and advocacy of these practices as bilingual.

As I note in Chapter 2, *conciencia bilingüe* emerged out of coded patterns of practice in participants' lived experiences and writing—as related in their interviews and discourse—but which did not fully fit previous theorizations of bilingualism, specifically as tied to academic writing literacies and practices. This may be, in part, the result of the fact that there is still great need to examine academic writing from the perspective of minoritized immigrant-generation groups who identify with the immigrant and bilingual experience. This may also be partly tied to the fact that Flores's and Rosa's (2015) theorization of *raciolinguistics* is still an emergent work. For this study, what became clear was the ways in which all participants related to and grew in their *conciencia bilingüe* as they advocated for immigrant rights and social justice.

“The paradox of education is precisely this—that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.”

—James Baldwin, 1963

### **Participant Profiles: Undocumented, College-Age, & Community-driven**

The lived experiences of participants in this study vary widely. In the next section I will introduce the participants, offering brief narratives that highlight some of the conditions and contexts for their multilingual undocumented activist and community-driven engagements. General information about their place of birth and age (as noted in Table 1) comes from initial interviews in which I asked participants about this information. However, participants’ place of residence, hometowns, languages in-at-practice, self-identification, and age of migration come from their related discourse during interviews, as well as when I asked participants to relate information on what they wanted me to know about them. That is, as a way to: 1) avoid monolingualist discourses that tie nations to languages as monolithic, I did not ask participants to directly list what languages they practiced or engaged in their everyday lives; 2) Additionally, as a way to dispel the nativist rhetoric of “how did you get here?” I did not ask participants to share their immigrant stories, or family’s immigrant travails with me, though all of them did, but via other interview, text, immigration conversations. This allowed me to draw connections between their writing and “their stories” in ways that could have been missed or misinterpreted otherwise. Moreover, participants’ critical discourse of the educational system and their college courses is a product of their own undocumented lived experiences as epistemology, as brilliantly posed by Baldwin in 1963—and highlighted in

the epigraph opening to this section. In other words, I did not ask participants to evaluate the educational system and courses related to it, but they did. And they also made sure to communicate this stance throughout the study.

The table below (Table 1) offers some of the general factors of identification expressed by participants in this study.

**TABLE 1**

Names	Place of birth	Place of residence	Age (2018)	Languages	Self-identification	Age of Migration	Mixed Status Family
Angie	South Korea	NYC	35	한국어 English	Korean American Dreamer Asian New Yorker	Ten years old	Yes
Miguel	Oaxaca, Mexico	NYC	28	español English Tu'un Sávi français	Mexican New Yorker Mixteco Indigenous	Three years old	Yes
Zulema	Jalisco, Mexico	U.S. South	23	español English	Mexican Southern Latina Woman	Ten years old	Yes
Tony	South Korea	NYC	30	español 한국어 English português 日本語 français	Jersey South Korean Queer Asian New Yorker	Ten years old	No
Akash आकाश	Southern India	U.S. South	26	हिंदी ಕನ್ನಡ /kannada English	Indian Southern Asian Dreamer	Nine years old	No
Victor	Southern India	U.S. South	29	हिंदी ಕನ್ನಡ /kannada English ગુજરાતી /gujarati Some español	Indian Southern South Asian	Twelve years old	No
Eugene	São Paulo, Brasil	NYC	22	한국어 English português español	South Korean Asian American Asian from Latin America	Four years old	Yes

					Brazilian/Brasileira Dreamer		
Antonio	Veracruz, Mexico	NYC	24	español English	Mexican New Yorker	Twelve years old	No
Mark	Zamboanga, Pilipinas	NYC	21	English tagalog 한국어	Filipino New Yorker Asian Dreamer	Fifteen years old	No
Sandra	Hidalgo, Mexico	U.S. South	22	español English	Mexican Latina Southern	Five years old	Yes
Jung	South Korea	NYC	28	français 한국어 español English русский /Russian	Korean Tunisian Asian American	Fifteen years old	No
Jes	Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico	U.S. South	23	español English français	Mexican Latina Southern	Six years old	Yes

### *Angie*<sup>41</sup>

Angie was born in Seoul, South Korea. She migrated to New York City in 1993 at the age of ten. Unlike most recent immigrant young adults who became part of the immigrant rights movement during or soon after their high school years, Angie got involved with immigrant rights advocacy in her late twenties and has become a fierce community organizer in her mid-30s. Angie relates her involvement with the movement to her mother's ways of knowing and immigrant networks in the city<sup>42</sup> (Alvarez, 2017a, 2017b; Mihut, 2014). In 2012, Angie's mother saw a newspaper ad for a free DACA

<sup>41</sup> Participants exercised their right to select what name appears in this project.

<sup>42</sup> Painfully aware that her daughter had been excluded from the family's green card petition because she had "aged out," Angie's mother looked out for her daughter in the best way she could. She relied on her long-term literacy practice of reading the local Korean newspaper to look out for any immigration-related news that could help Angie in coping with her undocumented status.



Clinic at the Asian Community of New York (ACNY),<sup>43</sup> and she encouraged her daughter to attend. Now, Angie works in this very organization as a community leader for immigration advocacy. Angie directs legal clinics, workshops, and empowerment programs with Asian undocumented immigrant youths as well as Asian immigrants in general. She also participates in multiple local and national immigrant and social justice rallies.

Angie's role is vital to this organization in that she offers support to her undocumented and immigrant communities and can grant English language access and translation (both verbally and in writing) to Korean-speaking immigrants in need of help. She attributes much of her immigration writing and advocacy knowledge to her work at this grassroots organization. According to Angie,

Before my involvement with ACNY, and other grassroots organizations, I had no interest to study politics and that's local and federal. The only education or knowledge I had were introductory courses [in college]. I wasn't up to date in politics, especially local level government. I didn't know that local level government has so much impact in our daily lives. I still don't have an interest in politics. I feel like you are forced to learn and keep yourself updated because you need to. And I should. You should. I don't have any desire to get into politics or anything, but I have to know.

Like most participants in this study, Angie is well-versed in immigration policy. She can name and describe current laws, referendums, and legislative petitions with a level of ease that goes beyond most citizens' everyday knowledge of local and national politics.

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<sup>43</sup> All names for organizations are pseudonyms.

But despite Angie’s professional-driven credentials and experienced bilingualism (García, Ibarra Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017), she has been structurally excluded from spaces of higher education.<sup>44</sup> Angie’s undocumented experience, as an Asian Korean New Yorker, is then distinctively marked by her intersecting identities and how they critically disrupt dominant narratives of Asian, immigrant, and undocumented experiences in the U.S.

Angie’s undocumented lived experience as an Asian Korean New Yorker is not the only aspect of her identity that disrupts dominant narratives of undocumented activists. Her adulthood does, too. As I mention in my introduction, Chapter 1, much of the discourse about and around undocumented activists has focused on their activism and exclusion from “transitional” steps into adulthood, like getting a driver’s license, or entering the university (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Nicholls, 2013), thus, building an immigrant undocumented narrative that in many ways envisions this 1.5 generation as only children or minor youths.<sup>45</sup> But in a hesitant manner, and shy manner, Angie tells me, “That I am—me being unmarried could be important.” I take this to mean that Angie wants me to know that there are aspects of her adult life as undocumented that are not often discussed in her activist narrative.

In what I have observed in the length of this study, Angie’s activism drives her to advocate for her rights as a human being and as an emergent American, but her undocumented status does not just concern her advocacy work. In her article “I’m Not

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<sup>44</sup> Angie completed an Associate degree but was unable to continue her studies because of economic reasons tied to her undocumented status. Undocumented students cannot receive financial aid, and in some states, like Georgia, cannot attend public institutions of higher education and/or receive in-state tuition (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Trivette & English, 2017).

<sup>45</sup> For more on this immigrant generation refer to Chapter 1.

Good Enough for Anyone’: Legal Status and the Dating Lives of Undocumented Young Adults,” Daniela Pila (2015) insightfully argues that,

Because of how the current immigration laws are structured and implemented, dating and marriage for undocumented men and women are complex. The lack of identification for them limits their access to dating venues such as bars or movie theaters. Their perceptions about their trajectories of their dating lives are also negatively impacted. This fear of lacking a “normal life” and remaining a burden pervades even after marriage to a U.S. citizen. Regardless of the motivation of undocumented partners and spouses, it is nearly impossible for them to live the lives that they envision for themselves because of current immigration policies.

(p. 15)

Very few Americans are closely familiar with the intricacies of obtaining citizenship via the current immigration system and policies. In fact, few people know that marriage to an American citizen, as Pila highlights, does not grant immediate citizenship to the partner or guarantee a path to citizenship. Undocumented activists, as this study demonstrates, are impressively knowledgeable about the ins-and-outs of this broken immigration system. Pila’s study of undocumented young adults’ romantic lives then confirms the ways in which undocumentedness not only pervades every social aspect of a person’s life but also how it shifts their interpretations of romantic relationships. For instance, Pila’s point about remaining “a burden” or lacking a “normal life” speaks to the complex intricacies of a possible path to citizenship in which romantic partners or spouses will have to face the restrictions placed on bodies because of undocumentedness, or the constraints of temporary permits. In this way, although Angie relates this aspect of her

undocumented experience almost quietly, the effects of this lived experience ring loudly in her life.

All participants in this study at one point or another reported—in passing—that romantic relationships were difficult for them to navigate, mostly because, as activists, they felt that they advocated for a path to citizenship because of how they formed a part of their American locales and communities and not because of their potential to marry an American citizen. But, as I noted earlier, Angie mentioning that “being unmarried could be important” to know about her personal profile appeared to me more broadly as a main indicator of her adulthood. This information about Angie spoke loudly about her desire to be presented as the adult that she is, facing adult problems that grow more complicated as she gets older, and move beyond the struggle of accessing higher education. Angie’s quiet contribution then importantly comments on the dangerous rhetoric that works to infantilize the experiences and actions of undocumented activists in the immigrant rights movement. It works as a salient reminder that participants in this study are adults, living and facing adult lives and problems.

### *Miguel*

In 2012, when Angie was attending her first DACA clinic, I had just moved to a large Southern city, and had begun working as the co-investigator on a two-year ethnography study on the literacy practices of Latinx<sup>46</sup> youths in the South. Given the nature of my research, I met several Latinx leaders in the state and was invited to attend several Latinx-based events often focusing on immigration, as these identities and matters

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<sup>46</sup> For more on the use of the gender-neutral term Latinx or Latinxs, see Chapter 1.

were often tied to one another or misguidedly conflated. Among these events was a non-televised panel with a U.S. senator representing the state. The panel focused on the senator's stance on immigration, and the state's investment in the criminalization of undocumented immigrants. Miguel was one of the panelists. Wearing a light blue T-shirt, that read "I AM UN[dot]DOCU[dot]MENT[dot]ED," with the sign "Ən-' dā-kyƏ-men- ted" in smaller font at the bottom, a telling representation of Miguel's critical confidence, Miguel was the humblest and yet most critical young immigrant voice I had ever heard until that point. Prior to the panel, Miguel introduced himself to me and mentioned that he had heard I was coming from New York and that he, himself, was a New Yorker.

Four years later, after Miguel had become one of the most public figures in the immigrant rights movement because of his participation in the DREAM 9,<sup>47</sup> I ask Miguel what place he considers home while he works at his family's restaurant. Miguel's response reveals much about his immigrant ethos and his investment in adopting a new home community. He explains:

N-Y-C. [A & B<sup>48</sup>]. I feel part of [B] community now. We grew up in [A] with a lot of fear and reservations. Going to church; going to school. We weren't that willing to be open to people. Yeah, by middle school, I was going to [C<sup>49</sup>] at ten-years-old. I live here [in neighborhood B] for three years now. It feels like home.

At the age of 27 and during the first year of a U.S. presidency built on anti-Mexican, anti-Latinx, and anti-immigrants discourse in general, Miguel remains hopeful. He has turned

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<sup>47</sup> See Demby (2013).

<sup>48</sup> Two specific neighborhoods in two different boroughs of New York City, which are significantly underserved, and which are generally known for their predominantly black and Latinx immigrant populations.

<sup>49</sup> A neighborhood also often tied to black and Latinx communities, and which struggled with high levels of crime in the 1990s.

his activist efforts to “being in community with people,” something he tells me he was unable to experience while being a part of several national immigrant advocacy organizations. Having known Miguel for several years now, I am still learning about his decolonial epistemologies, which in many ways are deeply rooted in his immigrant upbringing, schooling experiences,<sup>50</sup> and his family’s indigenous background. Miguel was born in a small town in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, to a Mixteco and Spanish-speaking family. In 1993, when Angie and her family arrived in the U.S. from Seoul, South Korea, Miguel and his family made their way to a borough of New York in search for a better life. After Miguel’s younger sister was born in the U.S., Miguel became the middle child, and their family also became a mixed status family. His youngest sister was then “the only person who has papers in [Miguel’s] family.” This, Miguel also tells me, is important for me to know.

Miguel’s insistence that I should know that he is part of a mixed status family is a reminder that six of 12 participants in this study offered me, all of them being from mixed status families themselves. I took these reminders as a vital nuance to the everyday complexities of living and facing undocumented status and having close family members who did not directly experience this precarity. As Kate Vieira (2016) forcefully argues, papers matter in immigrant lives and their literacy practices. Documents related to citizenship shape family dynamics, and what could generally be seen as a banal interaction becomes a life-transforming marker of difference and national exclusion. Specifically, the physical experience of “having papers” localizes and positions bodies in

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<sup>50</sup> Via a New York City program known as Prep for Prep, which grants access to a few number of minority students excelling in standardized tests in the city to attend elite and private schools in the Northeast, Miguel attended boarding school during his high school years, and went on to attend an elite small liberal arts college in the Mid-west.

different and unequal ways. Vieira contends through her study of undocumented and documented first-, second-, and third-generation migrants from Brazil and Portugal, and living in the Northeast:

Migrants experienced texts as strong—as having far-reaching consequences—precisely because of the social contexts that imbued texts with power. Texts were made strong both socially and materially in migrant’s lives, as literacy practices and products accrued associations with the powerful bureaucratic institutions that undergird everyday life. (p. 144)

In living and experiencing undocumented, immigrants grapple with the ways in which documents acquire state-sanctioning practices which affect all of their functions in societal institutions, and how they must see themselves mapped onto the concept of nation. Miguel’s positioning of his younger sister’s American citizenship as she is “the only person who has papers in the family” is an attempt to make sense of how citizenship and “Americanness” are largely contingent on “papers.” This is also Miguel’s positioning of himself as similar and yet different to his sister. He is “without papers” and she is “with papers,” but they, along with the rest of their family, are part of the American migration narrative that has shaped much of their identities till this day.

### ***Zulema***

Like Miguel, Zulema is also part of a mixed status family. In her case, however, it was she and her younger sister who were unable to regularize their status. Zulema’s two older sisters are U.S. citizens. Zulema immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 10. Zulema—along with her family—arrived in a large city in the South from a small municipality in

the Mexican state of Jalisco. Zulema reads, writes, and speaks Spanish and English, and she is an avid reader and writer. She tells me, “For me, writing is very therapeutic, whatever comes to my head, I write it down.” In fact, Zulema has been working on the writing of her immigrant and undocumented story for the past six years. She has been using her journals from as far back as twelve years ago to remember what it was like when she first arrived in the U.S.

Zulema embodies the liveliness and spontaneity of many 22-year-old young adults. This has served her well in most cases but has also placed Zulema in situations of high risk as an undocumented person. For instance, Zulema’s willingness to engage her peers and mentors to learn about immigration and what it means to be undocumented in the U.S. South has brought many committed and informed members to the undocumented-led youth organization she is a part of in her state, AIRS. Yet, to some extent, opening up about her status has also placed her in a vulnerable position in front of white U.S. citizens who have threatened to call ICE or the local police to alert them of her immigration status. But, Zulema remains hopeful. Zulema tells me that despite the “scary moments, when people try to use your status against you,” she feels strongly about being a part of immigrant rights advocacy. Zulema rationalizes this in the following manner:

I identify as undocumented. This plays a big role on why I chose to participate in AIRS. I wanted to give back to my community, not be a leader, but help our communities understand that we have rights. It’s kind of hard—I fit into demographic of being Mexican and undocumented. Regardless it’s good to be involved. I’m still breaking stereotypes. It’s also good because I am a woman, and



I bring a different perspective to what we do. [Being part of this organization] helps me learn. Over the years, I have developed a lot of skills that I wouldn't have learned without activism. And I guess [I've also learned] how to phrase what I've gone through, and I've gained support.

For Zulema, undocumented status has become part of her multifaceted identity as undocumented, woman, activist, and Mexican. She feels that hiding any of these aspects of her identity would be like denying something that makes her who she is. As she explains above, Zulema feels that the high risk of sharing her status is worth doing because it will help her, and her undocumented and immigrant communities, find support in their new Southern U.S. context. However, one thing to note is the complex relationship she builds, when Zulema explains that she wants to advocate, but “not be a leader.” Perhaps, this is something to do with distrust of leaders or how she has come to understand leadership positions—in their majority—at the hands of men.

Additionally, Zulema poses one other dilemma about her desired, practiced, and performed identity, and that is that her Mexican nationality can add to the anti-immigrant discourse of undocumented as Mexican and Latinx. This is something that Zulema and many AIRS leaders are constantly mediating: to what extent can they represent and demystify undocumented immigration. Zulema's apt comment about how she, as a woman, brings an important discussion to this experience is part of this AIRS discourse on representation.

## *Tony*

Differently from Zulema, whose nationality and cultural heritage are often conflated or stereotypically tied to her undocumented status, Tony, a self-identified queer Jersey<sup>51</sup> South Korean feels like he is a “minority within a minority and undocumented.” As Tony sees it, to some extent his Asian identity as well as his fluency in English have shielded him from openly racist encounters regarding immigration but have also placed him in unique situations in advocating for immigrant rights. Tony explains this as, “I feel a lot times Americans, white people trust me more. A lot of times, when people, white people, really, don’t know me well they’ll say things about immigrants I wasn’t expecting, but I feel if I spoke with a discernable Korean accent people wouldn’t say those things to me. It’s hard to say.”

Like Miguel, Tony has given a lot of thought to his own immigrant experience and how it may be rationalized and related to academic-like and social justice-based frameworks, like Black feminist traditions and the Black Lives Matter movement. In many ways, Tony unveils and practices what Flores’s and Rosa’s (2015) raciolinguistics framework calls for, as he looks to how speech and embodiment are related and tied to particular discourses of language norming and immigration and the white gaze. As Tony poses, he feels that if he “spoke with a discernable Korean accent [white] people wouldn’t say those things [about immigrants and people of color] to [him],”<sup>52</sup> though as an activist and advocate for a pathway to citizenship for undocumented communities, Tony engages literacy as defined by Rhea Estelle Lathan (2015) in her book, *Freedom*

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<sup>51</sup> Tony explained this as his upbringing happening mostly in Jersey City, New Jersey.

<sup>52</sup> What is not clear is if Tony has received these types of comments in his NJ/NYC upbringing in general or they are more specific to his time attending college in the South. From the way he discussed this, it appeared as if these comments were rather recent and ongoing.

*Writing: African American Civil Rights Literacy Activism, 1955—1967*. Lathan argues that literacy functions as “a way of knowing, a process by which decoding and making meaning take place in social contexts: in other words, individual acts of composition (reading and writing) are attached to larger social systems” (p. 23). Tony demonstrates an important awareness of how language functions in society, how it is perceived in ways that reinsert dominant language ideologies that reassert whiteness. Most important, in Tony’s case, Tony is conscious of how language practice and perception get tied to nationalist notions of citizenship, which superimpose nativist and dominant language ideologies that “citizens” have no accents and fit a particular profile of whiteness. In this manner, Tony is fully immersed in the social context of his advocacy and how languages in writing or oral communication face notions of citizenry.

In addition, Tony has also delved into the question of what it means to argue for citizenship as a means to obtain and secure rights under a state government. As he explains,

Like, for example, when I argue for citizenship. What does it mean to be a citizen when, for example, for black people...Like, Jordan Edwards, his citizenship didn’t protect him. He was only fifteen. People of Flint. You know? They don’t have water. Their citizenship does not protect them. Standing Rock, I mean you can say in a way that they are the most deserving, but [silence] citizenship is not the end of all. Our problems will not be magically solved. It doesn’t mean that I will stop fighting for citizenship, not at all. But, knowing that it is not the end of all. That’s important.

Here, Tony demonstrates a provoking attunement to how citizenship works for Americans and how his literacy practice of advocating for citizenship also carries a cultural, historical, and present understanding of what citizenship means for racialized bodies, specifically black and indigenous peoples in the U.S. Tony is also extremely familiar with how fighting for citizenship as a non-white person is deeply tied to American history (e.g., the Chinese Exclusion Act).

Tony was born in Seoul, South Korea in 1988, and he arrived in New York City in the middle of the winter of 1998. Like Miguel's, Tony's academic talents led him to reaching higher education at a small private liberal arts school outside of the Northeast, specifically in the U.S. South. Attending college in the South gave Tony first-hand experience of the differences of being undocumented and an activist in these two regions of the country, but also a unique perspective as a queer Asian undocumented young person.

Tony is a polyglot. He speaks, reads, and writes Korean, Spanish, and English, and he has working knowledge of Portuguese, Japanese, and French. But Tony is rather humble about his talents, including his easiness with language-learning and his position as a public undocumented leader. According to Tony, "To me it is not a big deal [to know so many languages]. It is not that big of stretch. I'd be more amazed if I could speak Arabic and Chinese." Tony explains that majoring in Spanish, as well as political science, granted him an opportunity to have a good grasp of the Spanish language and how it functions in different settings and with people from different Spanish-speaking countries. Tony also brings up Arabic and Chinese as languages that would impress him more if he spoke them, and it could be that he believes learning these languages syntax and writing

practice would demand more of him, or that these are languages that are in his close memory become of his New Jersey and New York City upbringing. In this manner, while Tony may generally discourse about languages as units, in his practice, he is quite aware of how they may collide or mark particular distinctions or connotations.

But for Tony, being an immigrant rights activist at the intersections of several marginalized identities has not come easy. Tony tells me that when he worked with ACNY, the immigrant rights organization that Angie now works for, intercultural interactions with co-workers and organization partners were difficult because of his intersecting queer identity. As Tony explains,

I had to push my queerness more than I was comfortable with. I had to serve as a liaison and that burned a lot of bridges for me...The organization created a lot of events and links with conservative Christian spaces, and that made it tough for me.

Although Angie also experienced the seemingly imposed push in ACNY to work with evangelical/Protestant groups' missions, Tony's experience also brings to light embodiment and identity within an ethnolinguistic community and how his intersecting identities add a layer of complexity to working with and for immigrant communities and their diversity.

### *Akash*<sup>53</sup>

While most of the Northeastern young adults in this project participated in immigrant rights organizations that were specifically advocating for or were founded by particular ethnic or racial groups, this type of racial or ethnic identification in immigrant rights advocacy was seemingly non-existent in the Southern city where Akash grew up. Thus—on the ground—there seemed to be more opportunity for interethnic and intersectional advocacy for immigrant rights in the South than in the Northeast. However, given population demographics on the largest and growing immigrant group in the South being Latinx, specifically Mexican (Marrow, 2011), immigration advocacy—at large—often took a Spanish-speaking Latinx immigrant narrative.

Akash was born in southern India in a large city of about 100,000 people. Now, at the age of 25, he tells me that a major metropolitan city in the South “feels like home.” Akash, a rather humble, softly-spoken, and generous young man, whose mother would accurately tell him “in Hindi that he is *दिल से dil se*, from the heart,” now lives with his older brothers in the comfort of their own home, a home that carries much of the history, trauma, and family separation tied to his and his family’s undocumented status,<sup>54</sup> but also their resilience.

Akash tells me that all this can be a difficult matter to deal with if one is an immigrant and undocumented and does not meet the stereotyped racial, ethnic and national profile, as is his case. Because this study also had as its focus to look at how

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<sup>53</sup> Akash *आकाश* means sky in Hindi. Akash tells me that knowing the meaning of a person’s name is an important cultural practice. He says, “It’s not just language; it’s pretty important to know the ties, the meanings, you know?”

<sup>54</sup> Akash’s father was given an order of removal after many legal travails trying to obtain a green card via his place of employment. Additionally, a few years later, Akash’s mother was forced to self-deport after her husband, the father of her children, fell ill in India.

immigrant youths could sustain cultural and ethnic practices through their self-advocacy, I asked Akash about how he sees his Indian identity intersecting with his participation in AIRS. According to Akash,

I don't think it does. I know the immigration movement, when people talk about it, they think it is a Latino movement, and I'm Asian, so we're still kind of on the low, not being noticed. But Latinos are majority. There is a lot of loud Latinos out here [in our local movement], so I understand why people don't understand that this is about immigration and the issues of it.

Akash explains this further by complicating how identity formation must also take into consideration his participation and investment in the immigrant rights movement. He says:

[Being undocumented] is the major thing that has impacted my life right now. Not being able to see my parents for so long [eleven years], and all the issues that, that creates, and when you don't have documentation to drive, to go to school. It is major part of my life...Sorry, I'm getting all emotional.

In explaining how he views his identity intersecting with his activist lived experience, Akash's eyes fill with tears, and he moves into a slow and almost quiet speaking pace after mentioning his parents, a quiet speaking pace like the one Angie used when she mentioned that I should know she has not married.

Obviously, thinking and talking about his parents and not being physically near them is still very difficult for Akash. Through this discussion of immigration advocacy involvement, Akash's lived experience and perspective on what it means to be undocumented points to how his involvement in immigration advocacy, as a young adult,

involves all aspects of his lived experience, his dynamicity, vulnerability, and racialization in U.S. society, though it is important to note that Akash's observation about the discourse of immigration advocacy and how this works to leave him out of claiming his own lived experience is not unique to my study. In fact, his sense that people confuse the immigrant rights movement with a Latinx movement is visible throughout my data, in which, as noted earlier, seven of twelve participants identified as Asian, and were from four different nationalities.

### ***Victor***

Fortunately for Akash, his South Asian undocumented experience as a young Indian man in the U.S. South has never really been one that he has had to face entirely alone, as he has always had his older brothers, who are also undocumented, by his side. Victor is the oldest of the brothers, and the closest to a parent-figure in their household. In the four years that I've known the family, I have watched Victor engage in the seemingly ordinary everyday practices related to taking care of the home. For instance, on the one hand, I have watched Victor check in on his brothers late at night (while they work the graveyard shift), cook meals for the family, and talk to their parents and family members in India. On the other hand, I've also had the opportunity to notice that, despite Victor's maturity, he is still often overcome by his family's separation, and what that has meant when he himself has become ill. This has led Victor and I to have lengthy conversations about his long-term plans of "being by his parents [whether in India or the U.S.] to take care of them, as they get older," and to be reunited with his entire family. Victor dreams of having his four-year college degree and sees it as his greatest potential



to a way in or out of the U.S., without more family trauma due to permanent separation. However, like the experiences of many college-age undocumented young adults, Victor's path has been a bumpy one (Gonzales, 2016; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Patel, 2013). Victor started at his local community college and, due to financial and time constraints, spent three-and-half years completing his Associate degree. More recently, Victor enrolled at a four-year institution in a nearby state<sup>55</sup> and hopes to complete a degree in Business Administration within two to three years, depending on whether he will be able to attend school full-time in the coming years.

Victor, like Akash, was born in the south of India, but his longer exposure to schooling in Mumbai allowed him greater access to reading and writing in Hindi. In Mumbai, Victor attended a bilingual English and Hindi school, so when he first arrived in the U.S. South—at the age of 12—the English language was part of his linguistic and academic repertoires. Now at the age of 28, Victor is closely familiar with five languages: Hindi, Kannada (ಕನ್ನಡ), English, French, and Spanish. Victor explained that his French and Spanish languages are a product of his U.S. schooling and activist experiences, and to some extent they have gained greater presence in his daily life, especially Spanish. Additionally, Victor “can also understand eight other languages of India, which are somewhat like one another.” However, when—in passing—I commend Victor for his knowledge of these many languages, much like Tony, he gently brushes off my praise by telling me “you know, India has like 132 languages.” I view Victor's quick response as a

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<sup>55</sup> These movements across states for college purposes though seemingly normal for U.S. citizens become an additional marker of undocumented status for immigrant youths in the U.S. As Trivette and English (2017) note in their work, the U.S. South is particularly known for this, as states in these regions have made it extremely difficult for undocumented youths to access a college education. In some cases, they have even created legislation to deny undocumented immigrants entry into public institutions of higher education.

sign of what Steven Alvarez (2017b) theorizes as *confianza*. Alvarez introduces *confianza* as a practice of invested community engagement over a period of time in which “reciprocating a relationship [develops] where individuals feel cared for [. . .] an ongoing, intentional process that is centered in local communities and involves mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation” (p. 4). Victor offers me a quick comeback that points to an important and critical factor about languages in India, a fact that I am not unaware of, but that he is certainly the expert on, and in this way my commending his rich language practices is also met with critical lived experience and historical push-back.

Instead Victor offers me specific insight on how he sees himself navigating these languages in localized, flexible, and what he views as unbalanced, ways. Victor says,

Actually, I barely use those languages [from India]—aside from when I’m talking to my parents, to be honest. I wish I could, but like, you know . . . I have a friend at work, he’s also from India; and when I speak to my parents since they are from South India, they speak Kannada there, and they don’t want me to forget that language, so they keep talking to me [in this language] on Skype, even though now I kind of mix all three languages to talk to them. That’s the reason my grandmothers they kind of have a difficult time understanding what I am saying sometimes. But, you know, the reason my parents they keep talking to me in Kannada, is so I can keep up with it, and that I don’t forget it. And Hindi is actually the language that I was bound to forget, but now I have this co-worker who speaks to me in Hindi. He tells me, “don’t worry, I’ll teach you.” You know, being from Mumbai, I kind of speak a little bit like slang and stuff that is

different. It's kind of like slang compared to where he is from in Hindi. He speaks, like, more polite, so he is like, "oh my god, mate! Instead of me teaching you, you are teaching me all the bad stuff." So, it's funny. But aside from that I don't think I actually use Hindi. Sometimes I speak in Hindi or Kannada to my brothers, but that is it.

Victor's discussion on how he mediates and "uses" languages in his everyday practice is something I delve into more in-depth in the following chapter, where I focus on participants' language ideology. Here, I am particularly interested in his desire to sustain cultural language practices by whatever means. As Victor notes, he only seems to "use" the language he shares with his grandmother when he Skypes with his parents. Engaging the full repertoire of these languages becomes more distant in his everyday language practice with his brothers in the U.S. South; nonetheless he still manages to shuttle between these linguistic and cultural contexts situated demands.

### *Eugene*

While Victor in the metropolitan U.S. South seems to somewhat effortlessly shuttle across several languages tied to his Indian nationality, Eugene, in New York, feels somewhat estranged by the Portuguese connected to her Brazilian citizenship. This is, in part, because her older sisters share this language in their everyday practice, but Eugene believes she did not live in Brazil long enough to gain full access to it, although as Eugene views it, "like, [she] understand[s] [Portuguese] not the actual words, but the meaning and context around the words. Like, for example, when [her] sisters were talking about [her] in front of [her] face. [She] spat back at them what they were saying about

[her].” Eugene was born in São Paulo, Brazil in 1996 in a Korean and Portuguese-speaking household. Eugene and her family migrated to New York when Eugene was only four years old, and they settled in a borough of the city where many South Korean immigrants have now established themselves.

In the spirit of a long-time New Yorker, Eugene quickly complicates and spins my question of how she defined her nationality:

I am of South Korean descent. I identify as Korean American or Asian American depending on where I am. So, when I am with a group of Asians I would say that I would specify that a little bit more because we have a general understanding that our cultures are very different, and, you know, we want to know what type of experience we know or we might have had. But when I’m in a large discussion, like different types of people, I would say that I’m Asian American, just because that is how we are categorized in a way, and it carries more power, so I would say Asian Americans rather than Korean Americans. It’s like, for example, if you are at a rally you would not say, “oh, I’m fighting for Korean-American rights” rather than Asian Americans, which is a broader base. It is kind of more applicable in the context of race relations in the United States. Because it’s just hmmm. I mean if you look at the way the census is organized it just relates. Asian Americans, black, white, Hispanic, you know? When you talk about it to a wider audience there seems like there is more numbers and more reasons why this matters rather than being a country specific or origin specific . . . [Brazil] is where I have my citizenship. I wouldn’t necessarily be like “oh, I have Brazilian blood running through my veins” because that is totally wrong because both of my parents are

from South Korea. But, I also like that I am from Brazil. I think it throws people off.

Eugene challenges normed assumptions about nationality by positioning herself as of South Korean descent first, then of Korean American and Asian American heritage as well as Brazilian belonging. She also does this by intersecting multiple layers of identity formation, which are often conflated. Eugene speaks about how a racial identification as an Asian person can be a unifying factor but also one that does not suffice in addressing cultural and ethnic differences and upbringing. In this way, Eugene dissociates nation from language and presents herself, and her wide-ranging linguistic and performative practices, as dynamic and whole. Through her racial and ethnic embodiment and rhetorically selected performances, Eugene then challenges monolingualist orientations, which tie “a” nation to “a” language and belonging. Eugene displays the aptitude and language orientation of many racialized multilinguals who strategically position themselves for a given audience or context without dismissing cultural and ethnic associations the ways in which structural marginalization works (Alvarez et al., 2017). For instance, Eugene specifically re-asserts her Brazilianness as a fact that “throws people off.” She adjusts her argument for her immediate audience, in this case, me, the researcher from a shared minority group, but she also offers some context in considering the larger audience of this study, including academics assumed to be predominantly white individuals. Her consideration of an academic audience is most glaring in our later exchange when Eugene points out that the writing she appreciates the most, the kind that she is the proudest of, is the kind that “goes places.” And, that, as Eugene views it, “to be honest, [her] academic papers are not going anywhere. They go to [her] professor, [her]

grades, and [her] flashdrive.” Yet, interestingly, she adds that “the research I am doing is cool,” because it “tells ideas and stories,” and for Eugene “her story [and lived experience as an undocumented immigrant] goes places. It is intentional.” Her story ties her with her fellow immigrant communities, as well as the mapping and history of U.S. exclusion based on race and citizenship.

As a multilingual, Eugene rhetorically attunes herself to her audiences, yet as a racialized multilingual she seems to do more (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Lorimer Leonard, 2014). As a racialized multilingual, Eugene constantly contests systems of oppression that privilege particular languages and racial and ethnic groups in the discourse of nation and belonging. This is visible through her discourse highlighted below, but also in her writing. For instance, in the following exchange, Eugene reminds me that nationhood is in many ways a matter of rhetoric:

S: But, there’s a lot of Asians in South America.

E: Yeah, there are, but the general population are like, what? Koreans in Brazil? So, I also use it [my Brazilianness] as a stereotype defying thing. My experiences are different from the typical person who speaks the same language as their home country, so I think my experience is unique in that I literally don’t speak that language. It’s also, I speak Korean and not Portuguese. My whole immediate family, my mom, my father, and two older sisters they speak Portuguese, and then most of my extended family lives in Brazil. The thing is I can still understand them. Yeah, it’s funny how the human brain works. I never had Brazilian education. I actually went to Korean pre-school when I was in Brazil, but I can still manage to

understand what they are saying, and if they need to say something discreetly to me in public, they would say it in Portuguese. But, I have better Spanish than I have Portuguese.

Though Eugene claims a certain strangeness to Portuguese, she also reasserts her closeness to the language. In fact, entertaining the nationality question becomes an opportunity for Eugene to consider and assess her relationship to specific Romance languages, and how languages in general seem to function in her “brain” or everyday embodied language practices. Like Tony, Eugene also brings up other languages that appear to be close to what I am beginning to see as a memory and practice of linguistic landscape. That is, Spanish in the context of the United States, specifically in New York City is very present in the landscape, and Eugene may have a certain keenness to it because of both her linguistic landscape and her relationship with Portuguese. Eugene’s relationship with Brazilian Portuguese also depicts the interesting conundrum of “home/national/native” language in which she moves in and out of what may be seen as her “home” language with discomfort, but even that language is the byproduct of the history of colonialism in Brazil. One thing seems clear, however: Eugene is an emergent bilingual, and she is becoming more and more aware on how to draw from her rich linguistic repertoire. However, at no point does Eugene identify as a bilingual individual. Thus, much like Victor and Tony, Eugene treats her bilingual practice as an everyday occurrence, which can have a “funny” tone to it because to a great extent she’s also unsure as to how this can and does happen in her practice.

### *Antonio*

Contrary to Eugene's seemingly somewhat unaware bilingual practice, Antonio, who came to the U.S. at the age of eleven from the state of Veracruz, Mexico, and grew up in New York City, exhibited what I introduced in this chapter as *conciencia bilingüe* of his emergent bilingualism in Spanish and English. Upon asking Antonio about his relationship with writing, Antonio quickly delved into a discussion of his language and academic writing practices as part of a process in which he was gaining more and more ability to select when and how he would express meaning, very much in-line with how García and Wei (2014) theorize the bilingual practice of translanguaging. He said,

I'm good in Spanish. Since I was little I used to write a lot and read a lot as well. You know, reading is a way for you to learn vocabulary. But when I came to the United States I had to transition into another new system and trying to learn and all . . . but when you are coming into a different nation you have to learn that language. And for me, I think, the English language is one of the hardest ones. And I feel like even though now I write in English and speak in English I feel more comfortable writing and reading in Spanish than English. However, I continue to develop my skills, especially in writing, through my college career. And I have seen my writing from middle school, and high school as well, and I'm like, damn, I used to write this? It doesn't make sense, but now I understand that it is a process to get into that level, and Antonio, homeboy, writing a little bit everyday makes you, you know, be a better writer. And I'm bilingual. That is something that I learned with [Bilingual Education Professor's First Name], with professor [\*]. That it doesn't matter how well you speak and write as long as you



have something on paper, you are still able to communicate beyond one language...Which you always think you need to assimilate to another language, another nation, but that is not totally true.

For Antonio, as it is the case with most bilinguals, the often seemingly stabilized categories of language and nationality are rather unstable and in-constant flux. For instance, in our discussion above, Antonio sees how writing in the U.S. context is generally seen as fluency in the English language, and so in answering my question about his feelings toward writing he discusses his mediation of writing—as a literacy and academic practice—in both languages. In this way, he finds himself using English to tell me about his bilingual practice, and how he has come to see his growth in writing in English and Spanish as an asset. That is, Antonio has learned to view his migration to the U.S. as an opportunity to learn about new cultural practices and merge and sustain practices he relates to his upbringing in Mexico. Of course, this flexibility comes with its own complexities and intricacies, which Antonio is continuously trying to work out. Additionally, as a racialized and minoritized bilingual, Antonio feels that self-reflection and spaces that promote bilingual and bicultural-oriented pedagogies have helped him negotiate this emergent practices and identity (Alvarez & Alvarez, 2016). As Antonio describes, it was through a bilingual college-level writing course, as part of a study abroad course in Mexico, that he gained confidence and strength in his bilingual practices and critically delved into questions of belonging that moved beyond monolingualist assumptions.

For a 23-year-old and recent college graduate in film and political science, Antonio exudes maturity and altruism. He speaks, leads, and marches calmly and

confidently, even when co-organizing a 10,000-plus person rally in the most populous city in the United States<sup>56</sup> or speaking to a group of high school students about how being undocumented does not mean they have to give up on their dreams. Antonio is a community and youth leader for the interstate Northeastern immigration advocacy organization New York Power Association of Immigrant Communities (NYPAIC). Antonio stands out as an undocumented leader and community activist. In fact, all the participants in this community-based research project stand out. As a researcher, I am highly aware that scholars and legal analysts in immigration studies could describe these young adults as DREAMers, and possibly as “privileged” undocumented youths (Nicholls, 2013). Additionally, fellow undocumented immigrants reading about participants in this study may view Akash, Angie, Tony, Victor and everyone else as what has become known in immigration circles as high-profile DREAMers, undocumented youths who can draw and address large audiences, in the thousands, and with their public personas that project “good” and individualistic immigrant models. However, I, like my fellow immigrant community members in this project, contest the use of the DREAMer and high-profile DREAMer categorizations because I met participants in this study through local channels in which they navigated the everyday struggles of being undocumented with and in their communities. The fact that I met undocumented young adults in their struggles and desire to advocate for themselves and

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<sup>56</sup> During the period of this research, I had the privilege of learning from Antonio (and other participants) at times when he was prepping for and leading rallies. However, this one rally became one of the most humbling and eye-opening experiences for me to follow Antonio. His work got started at 6 AM with his NYPAIC team, and by 3 pm in the afternoon Antonio led what news reports later in the day estimated to be about 10,000-12,000 people marching in the city of New York. After marching for about an hour, Antonio stood in front of thousands of New Yorkers, thousands of police officers (possibly the most police I have seen in one area at once), and he shared his story while he advocated for immigrant and human rights. I wrote in my fieldnotes, “that is professional communicative practice at its best with a big sense of ethical purpose.”

to access their dreams, which in most cases included accessing higher education has a lot to do with their community commitment and their lived experience as undocumented. For me, as a researcher, it means that I have been an active participant and advocate in this movement—as both an immigrant and a scholar-teacher-researcher who believes that these young adults have been wronged by a broken immigration system.

By clarifying this lived experience and how undocumented young adults should not be described in ways that could make people believe that they are not at risk of deportation, as if they had acquired a form of resident status, I do not mean to say that they cannot be referred to as dreamers in a broader sense. On the contrary, participants demonstrated that they are constantly striving to reach their goals and dreams, but what seems distinctive about them is how community work, social justice, and immigrant advocacy are grounds for their perseverance. This is something that becomes noticeable through Antonio's discourse on how he sees himself being driven by his desire to work *with* and for *his* communities. For instance, Antonio rationalizes his desire to do well in school and his willingness to help his immigrant communities as directly impacted by his immigrant experience. Antonio vividly remembers crossing the Mexico-US border, and feels that this is important for me to know regarding his immigrant experience:

[I remember] seeing family members crossing the border with me in order to provide for their families, and I saw the risk of crossing the border. I remember on the last day we were running out of water and food . . . that is the risk of many of my brothers and sisters who cross the border. Thank God, I didn't have to cross any fence or anything like that, but I think just crossing the natural barrier that is these two borders is incredible enough. So, yeah, I crossed the border for those

three days and three nights, and we got to Arizona, and from Arizona we took a van to Los Angeles. On the way there were, there were two cars, the one that me and my family were in and then another three folks...And I remember one of them, the driver, from the other car calling and telling that he got caught and those people will get deported. So, I remember that very, very clear. Like, hearing those moments, because it was the same patrol that passed next to us that caught the car in the front.

As I note earlier in this chapter, I did not ask participants in this study “how did you get here” or “tell me about your migration story,” as I find this research approach questionable and rather problematic in framing the lived-experiences of immigrant youths. However, I did ask participants to tell me about something they felt was important for me to know in order to understand their positionalities as immigrants and transnational young adults. Antonio wanted me to know that crossing the Mexico-US border continues to shape his identity till this day. Also, that “family separation has been part of [his] life from a young age.”

In 1996, when The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) had dramatically affected their home finances and Antonio was only two years old, his parents moved north to the Mexican state of Tamaulipas in search of more work opportunities. However, things were not that much better there, and, shortly after, in the year 2000, Antonio’s parents felt forced to migrate further north, to the U.S. Thus, since the age of two, Antonio has experienced the agony and trauma of family separation from his immediate family, and it is now that he is an adult that he is beginning to think

through how these migration events shape his advocacy work as much as they make him someone who can better relate to the communities he serves. As Antonio explains,

I totally relate with the students that come to the organization. And that is something that people who didn't cross the border or came with visa, or other type of immigration situation, I guess, I don't know what's the word. They don't have that, and they don't relate sometimes with other folks who had to cross borders [and have had family separation].

***Mark***

Mark has also experienced family separation from an early age. He migrated to the U.S. at the age of 15, and, though he was not entirely sure what he was getting himself into, Mark knew well enough that he was seeking better opportunities for him and his hard-working mother. His mother followed him four months later, and since then they have made New York City their home. Mark was born near Zamboanga City in the Philippines but moved to Manila with his mother at the age of four. Mark's mother sought to give Mark the best education possible, even with their limited resources and income. She paid for Mark to attend private school in Manila and encouraged him to learn English. Mark reads and writes in English and Tagalog, and since his early involvement with ACNY, he has developed an interest in and attunement for Korean languages. In fact, when I met him, he was taking his second Korean class at his four-year public college.

As is the case with most millennial youths, for Mark information often travels and circulates best through digital channels (Block & Buckingham, 2007). In fact, this is

how Mark found ACNY. While in high school, Mark quickly realized that his undocumented status would prove tremendously challenging in attending college and getting a job, so he looked online for local organizations that could help him learn more about how to cope with his undocumented status. And despite the many federal and local policies of exclusion, which in many ways place colleges and universities as some of the most inaccessible places for undocumented youths, when I met Mark, he had already managed to pay for and attend college for two semesters, taking one to two courses per semester at a time. In addition, Mark was a committed member of his university's undocumented student community. He attended all their meetings, and strategically challenged the perspective that undocumented immigration is a struggle exclusive to Latinx communities, and shared resources and information about events that could empower immigrant communities. The way Mark saw this was that before getting involved with immigration advocacy groups, and before confronting his undocumented status—a year into his life in New York—Mark and his mom were somewhat out of touch with politics and their impact on people's everyday lives:

Back then [when I was somewhat unaware of the implications of being undocumented] politics was never a thing for me. I guess that is like a saying we have: you don't know what you lost until you lose it. Figuring out I don't have all of these papers, discovering my process, and that these papers are part of a system that is often manipulated by politics. [For instance, you should know about] people who implemented the state ID of New York... [You should know about] people possibly taking rights away from you, especially now. Now, it is super

terrifying... Oh with Obama, [my mother] was not as worried. Now, I've never seen her watch more American TV.

Like Zulema in the South, Mark views his activist work as an opportunity to learn about his status and as a form of schooling outside of school. Mark feels that through advocacy work he is more in-tune with his world and has gained a better sense of how local and national laws directly impact his communities. Additionally, in the context of a presidency built on hate and fear of immigrants, as immigrants, Mark and his mother feel an urgency to be informed and work to defend their rights as human beings.

### *Sandra*

Sandra, a recent college graduate in the South in the field of geography, felt the urgency to learn about community work outside of school, too. Sandra felt that even though her full-time job in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) would grant her important professional practices, she needed to volunteer and work part-time “sharpening [her] social activist skills. Trying to network with local leaders. To help other, younger people [access college and cope with their undocumented status].” In other words, for Sandra, while her college education offered her many important literacy practices and opportunities, it did not suffice in helping her achieve her personal and professional goals of working with immigrant youths who were undocumented like herself and viewed the U.S. South as their home. This is how Sandra actually sought involvement in AIRS as well as other immigrant advocacy groups and spaces in her home state.

In the same vein, and in close similarity with Eugene's experience, Sandra felt that her college writing did not carry the weight of the writing she had to do related to her

self-and-immigrant advocacy work. While Sandra felt intimidated by having to write in college, she felt that having deadlines and knowing that papers went to professors made writing “easy”—perhaps too safe. However, writing about her life experience, for large audiences, was a different story:

What I’m talking about is, like, a couple months ago I had to do a speech [for an immigration rally] and that was terrifying. I thought I was going to say something wrong. Like unknowingly hurt someone. There are certain groups that people don’t think about and end offending them. I didn’t want to do that. I wanted to practice equity. For example, like if I say something about the LGBTQ community, and/or being Latina, or not being able to speak Spanish, and that is in some way inappropriate, [or these arguments get taken out of context]. Sometimes those things get highlighted. If I’m writing to convey a point. I haven’t really written for just myself in that.

In this exchange, Sandra explains that writing for advocacy has much higher stakes for her because she is invested in it. Sandra believes that the work she is “conveying” in her written arguments has weight. In this way, Sandra considers both the rhetorical situation and the ethical compromise that she has as a racialized bilingual who is advocating for immigrant rights and equity.

As it happens for Eugene, for Sandra academic/college writing loses its intimidating aspect in the face of the writing tied to lived experience and impacted by structural systems of oppression. Eugene’s and Sandra’s perspective on this is certainly insightful in considering how college students may perceive writing assignments that, in Eugene’s words, “do not go places.” Yet, it is important to note that in many ways,



Sandra's and Eugene's push-back on the importance and weight of college writing is shaped by their own college experience and disciplinary college experiences, as well as their experiences as children of immigration in large metropolitan cities. As scholars like García and Wei (2014), Menjívar, Abrego, and Schmalzbauer (2016), and Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) point out, bilingual practices as embodied lived experiences of minoritized young adults carry a great deal of criticality. This has to do with how language is tied to nation and to racialized stereotypes. As Menjívar, Abrego, and Schmalzbauer (2016) aptly contend, "Racialized stereotypes, which are based on the conflation of culture and social class as well as on race and legal status, shape the life chances of children in the second generation too" (p. 125). These stereotypes also affect the 1.5 generation and give them a view or perspective of how they are situated in society and how they have to work to reposition themselves differently and in a way that allows them to challenge these misguided and hurtful ideologies. This was also visible in how Sandra negotiated and contested monolingualist ideas of belonging in the South.

Although Sandra felt confident calling a large metropolitan city in the U.S. South her hometown, she felt conflicted by the complexities that this brought regarding her status. As Sandra shared with me, she was born in the state of Hidalgo, was a Mexican national, but had not been there since the age of five. She was proud of her Mexican cultural heritage and her Spanish language but would not necessarily call where she was born her hometown. As Sandra put it,

I think [hometown] has to do with where you felt accepted, and you had a lot of memorable experiences there, and also where you grew up, and also assuming

you grew up with your parents and community... That's how I think about a hometown.

Sandra's idea of hometown matched that of other participants in this study, who felt that the places they called home were those where they had grown up and grown "in community" with people. Sandra's description of hometown would make her the bicultural American that she appears to be, but it is important to remember that she is not American. For undocumented young adults in this study, their hometowns did not match their place of birth and/or their nationalities. The lived experiences of the undocumented young adults in this study then challenged the assumed stabilization of nationality as belonging. These young adults' experiences also offered commentary on how transnational communities form local ties, furthering translocal alliances (Alvarez & Alvarez, forthcoming). Perhaps this is most visible through Jung's experience.

### ***Jung***

Jung tells me, "for now, I'll call NYC my hometown. Mainly because I'm living here right now. I like it here. It's very crowded city." For undocumented young adults like Jung, the sense of hometown is not so much about nationality or a particular linguistic context; it's about a sense and emergent feeling of belonging. In this way, his idea of hometown is similar to Sandra's in that he feels that calling a place home is about how one feels connected to a particular community. At the same time Jung's argument about hometown is closely tied with Miguel's in that hometown is also flexible—to a certain extent—and likely to change. As Jung puts it, "for now." However, Jung's vision of hometown as particularly tied to nation as perhaps more flexible than is the case for other

young adults in this study also speaks to his experiences as an immigrant in several places within and beyond the U.S.

Jung was born in the Gyeonggi Province of South Korea. At the age of 13, Jung immigrated to Tunisia with his mother and adapted to a new cultural environment while he learned Tunisian French. While in Tunisia, Jung's mother corresponded with a Korean-American man, and when he proposed to marry her, Jung and his mother made the decision to migrate once more. Two years after being immersed in Tunisian French, Jung arrived in the U.S. South as an emergent trilingual. He moved between his recently acquired French, experienced Korean, and emergent American English seemingly swiftly. But things did not work out between Jung's mother and her American fiancé, since the man became abusive towards her and towards Jung. This led Jung and his mother into seeking seasonal jobs within ethnic communities in the South. Through these physical moves and migrations, Jung learned to identify with and adopted some of the English accent variations between North Carolina and metropolitan Atlanta. Additionally, the U.S. South also opened a window for Jung to learn some Spanish, which he picked up with friends.

Jung's migration story is then also about the ordinariness with which four national languages became a part of his daily life, and how he strategically and consciously adapted them to serve his communicative and educational purposes. For instance, learning Spanish was a way for Jung to socialize with immigrant peers in the South. It was a way to obtain language help when English or Korean were not an option. At the same time, Spanish—via French—was a way for him to demonstrate his knowledge of both a romance language and perhaps other school-related subjects. Jung's lived

experience as an undocumented immigrant who has moved predominantly within immigrant communities in large metropolitan hubs and has acquired mastery in navigating languages is also a telling point about how multilinguals position themselves towards language. This is most visible in our exchange below where Jung casually shares how he learned to speak five languages: Korean, English, French, Spanish, and Russian:

Jung: Korean has been my nurturing language. I was born in Korea. I actually used to live in Tunisia, North Africa. Before coming to the U.S. So that is where I picked up French. I went to French school there. Technically, French is my second language. So, I am an ETL, not ESL. So yeah, I came to the U.S. and I learned English, and also a little Spanish, too, with my friends. And I took Russian in College out of interest, which was a bad decision. Oh, and that one semester of German I took to graduate!

S: How did English come into your life?

J: So, I learned English a little bit through school, and then also I took ESL classes when I first came here because I came on a student visa, and in order to maintain the visa you had to take, well, not take, but you have to go to these language schools. So, I went there for several months until my visa expired, so that is how I learned English. And also, when I went to high school here.

S: That is a lot of learning in a very short period of time.

J: I guess *I have a thing for language*.

Jung sums up his learning and movement through several languages in “I have a thing for language.” That is, while I explicitly express to him that what he has accomplished is no

easy task, especially in just a few years, Jung, dismisses this accomplishment. In fact, he treats it as “a thing,” and interest, that individuals either have or do not. In taking this stance about how dynamic bilingualism works, Jung seems to imply that this is something he just has. However, his discussion of his writing process, which I discuss in the following chapter, reveals much more.

### **Jes**

*I see Jes the week after the U.S. 45<sup>th</sup> presidential election. We got together to attend a social justice event in which Dr. Angela Davis delivered the keynote address. I encouraged AIRS members to attend the event in the hopes that Davis’s talk will offer us some light, or at the very least some momentary comfort in these overtly troubling times. Jes “does not really know too much about Angela Davis” before the talk, but within a few months Jes will know more details and works by Angela Davis than I do. We are headed home. Jes has offered me a ride before she must head to work for her graveyard shift with a large cargo company.*

*“Trump is president,” she says.*

*Jes is afraid. It shows in her look and posture. I, too, feel overcome with fear.*

*She tells me she feels guilt overpowering her. Jes’s father told her to “stop telling [her] story a long time ago,” but she “insisted in being an activist, and maybe now too many people know that she—as well as her family—are undocumented.”*

*Jes is fierce. Sometimes I have a hard time remembering that she is only 22-years-old.*

Jes, much like Akash, Sandra, and Victor views a metropolitan city in the U.S. South as her hometown. She tells me, “I know this place more than I know Mexico.” Jes was born in Mexico City and migrated to the U.S. with her parents and younger brother at the age of six. At the age of 21, Jes has already taken a very specific stance on her undocumented activist work: she’s unashamed and unapologetic for her migration story. When I ask Jes how she sees her identity intersecting her activist work, she tells me:

I don’t think it intersects, it is me. It is a passion that I express in different ways. My background on my phone has some type of activism and what I like to do. I think the biggest impact that shaped me was becoming undocumented and unafraid. I started to realize that I also shouldn’t be apologetic, and politics, and all the fun stuff. I learned to be unapologetic. And I became aware of the empowerment that DACA gives you, the leverage. My parents did it [physically crossed geopolitical borders] out of love. One of the biggest sacrifices I always think about was when they crossed border. It’s made me who I am, and it has made them. I don’t think that, that is something to be ashamed of anymore.

In this exchange, Jes, in the same vein as Eugene in New York, presents her undocumented immigrant experience as whole: an identity marker that has influenced her way of thinking and how she sees herself and her family in the U.S. context. By establishing this multifaceted form of identity as whole, Jes is showing the complicated and ongoing navigation of self as undocumented that she has to go through, as she mediates this for herself and for her relationship with her family. That is, accepting all these aspects of self, Jess is not implying that everything is okay. Instead Jes appears to

claim that this mediation is an ongoing reflective practice—a practice by which she has already accepted she is no longer ashamed of her and her family’s undocumented status.<sup>57</sup>

When I met Jes, she was pursuing an Associate degree in Applied Science for Multimedia at her local community college. Jes dreamed of graduating with a degree in social work from the four-year public university where she led most of her social justice and undocumented activist work. However, much like Victor, she faced many challenges in making this dream come true. Jes worked full-time to help pay for home and school bills, and she had not—yet—found scholarship options that could support her in transferring to the four-year school.

Despite Jes’s struggles to access higher education, she was confident in her writing practice. She told me that she often wrote in “Spanglish” with an added twist of “visual images because they [worked as] common language.” Jes moved between English and Spanish with great easiness though she reported that “Grammar [was] probably the biggest error in [her] broken Spanish.” Jes had become quite critical of her use of Spanish, the language her parents felt most comfortable with, and she at times seemed to rely on monolingualist frameworks to discuss her Spanish practice. For instance, on the one hand, while she recognized Spanglish as a language, when I asked her about her writing practice she referred to her Spanish as “broken.”<sup>58</sup> And she also noted that “you

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<sup>57</sup> After Jes became more involved with activist work, she learned that there was a type of visa, the U visa, that applied to her and her family. Jes communicated this information to her mother, and since then her family hired a lawyer to guide them in the process of possibly adjusting their status. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (*USCIS*), updated in 2018, “The U nonimmigrant status (U visa) is set aside for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and are helpful to law enforcement or government officials in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity.”

<sup>58</sup> This seems to show a slightly different trend from most participants in the study in which Jes views Spanish as being broken, but not English. Most participants in this study were actually most critical of their use of English. This is something that becomes most visible in Eugene’s text-analysis of her own writing and her notes on English syntax, and in Jung’s discussion of his use of English.

have to know both languages to be able to master [Spanglish],” thus to an extent adding to the discourse that languages function as individualized and monolithic systems (Alvarez et al., 2017).

On the other hand, Jes seemed hyper aware of what audience she would share this information with, and ways in which she could negotiate this struggle. After relating to me her view of her Spanish as “broken,” Jes told me, “But of course I don’t put that in my resume.” She also explained that the “errors” she struggled with were accent marks and common Spanish terms that were not singular to her practice of Mexican Spanish, but that she often addressed them via “Google, and social media,” and help from her friends and family. In other words, Jes did not allow her own critical view of her use and practice of Spanish to deter her from claiming that she is “fluent” and professional in her use of it. Jes is also confident in adding French to the languages she has a degree of familiarity with in writing and reading. Jes is then, like all undocumented young adults profiled in this study, emergent in her *conciencia bilingüe*. She ties her bilingualism with every part of her every practice and professional engagements in written and oral communication. Jes is also aware of her audience and works hard to advocate for her bilingualism as one that must be noted in her resume. This means that although she personally is critical of her bilingual practice, much like Antonio, she maneuvers strategically to make her practice be heard and known. Jes is growing in her practice of advocating for her bilingualism as an immigrant activist.



## **Reflections: UndocuActivists and their Advocacy Contexts**

In analyzing how undocumented activist youths arrive at the “juncture” of “undocumented and unafraid,” in her book, *Identity, Social Activism, and the Pursuit of Higher Education: The Journey Stories of Undocumented and Unafraid Community Activists*, Susana Muñoz (2015) eloquently highlights how immigrant networks become crucial in undocumented communities, and specifically in undocumented youths’ lives. As Muñoz explicates,

The social networks among immigrant families demonstrate a sophisticated support structure for undocumented immigrants. The information and knowledge exchange among family members who are considering context and location are informed by the experiences of immigrants who are already residing in the U.S. This knowledge exchange is an asset and a powerful tool for immigrants transitioning into U.S. society. (p. 32)

Muñoz’s research highlights how family and transnational ties extend opportunities to new incoming immigrants and provide a sense of orientation for those who are learning the new land. Similarly, Menjívar, Abrego, and Schmalzbauer (2016) discuss how U.S.-based community organizations and NGOs play crucial roles in guiding documented and undocumented immigrants in accessing resources to which they have rights. Moreover, Mihut (2014) as well as Alvarez (2017a, 2017b) show how locally-led information networks and public entities can help sustain and extend transnational and bilingual literacies. All of these scholars point to the ways in which immigrants’ lived experiences and pursuit of a better life in a new geolocation is rarely a singular endeavor. The undocumented young adults in this study and their diverse immigrant-based family and

activist-oriented networks in the South and the Northeast confirm this. For instance, Angie, who I introduced in the opening of this chapter, owes much of her undocuactivism to her mother's perseverance and desire to help her find a pathway to citizenship. Akash and Victor owe many of their immigrant ties to their parents and their own social media navigation, by which they have obtained jobs and connected with other undocumented Asian youths outside of their Southern context. Additionally, the community-based organizations and immigrant public advocacy entities in which these immigrant young adults participate indicate how ties between undocumented and documented immigrants and citizens can be strengthened in the pursuit of social justice and fair immigration reform. For example, Zulema's—as well as Jes's—insistence on and faith in the humanity of their Southern community guided several U.S. citizens to join their advocacy efforts and balance out some of the heavy weight of their struggle fighting for human rights. It also offered local Southerners a closer look into the intricacies of a broken immigration system and a ravaging detention and prison complex.

While immigrant ties and local networks in undocumented young adults' lives proved vital to their activist work and their desire to advocate for themselves, this study also unveiled ways in which ethnolinguistic-based immigrant advocacy communities could pose particular challenges for specific members because of their differences. In this way, this study exhibits some of the complexities—and importance—of considering regional ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexuality, and up-bringing difference in looking at ethnolinguistic communities. It confirms Gilyard's (2016) argument that not all difference is the same difference or experienced in the same way, especially in examining language practice from the perspective of racialized bilinguals. What is clear

in the profiles of the undocuactivists I have worked with in this study is that being undocumented has become a central identity factor in their lives. Being undocumented brings together the diverse group of young adults that are a part of this research, but also speaks to their everyday embodied and lived experiences with their languages and literacies, which are in constant friction with the boundaries of the state they call home.

Being undocumented or “without papers” for the young adults in this study is also about how they learned to navigate and contest the marginalization boundaries imposed on their lives. Participants in this study demonstrate that they are in a seemingly constant battle of fighting to attain basic rights, like pursuing education, but also realizing that their constant struggles in seeking citizenship as non-white people have long histories in their U.S. context. This becomes most visible in how Tony and Miguel view their relationship to the civil rights movements and the current state of the nation in which people of color, specifically black and indigenous peoples, are constantly having to claim their humanity and dignity. That is, becoming undocuactivists for these youths is about advocating for their rights as human beings as well as the rights of the communities they have learned to love. This conscientious involvement is in many ways what informs their emergent and developing *conciencia bilingüe*, as these undocumented young adults situate themselves in a state that constantly presents ideological paradoxes of belonging to undocumented young adults: 1) They are Americans “without papers”; 2) They speak English, but also seek to sustain the languages tied to their ethnic communities; 3) They work hard and want an education, but there is legislation that prevents them from accessing higher education; 4) They navigate and graduate from a difficult—nearly

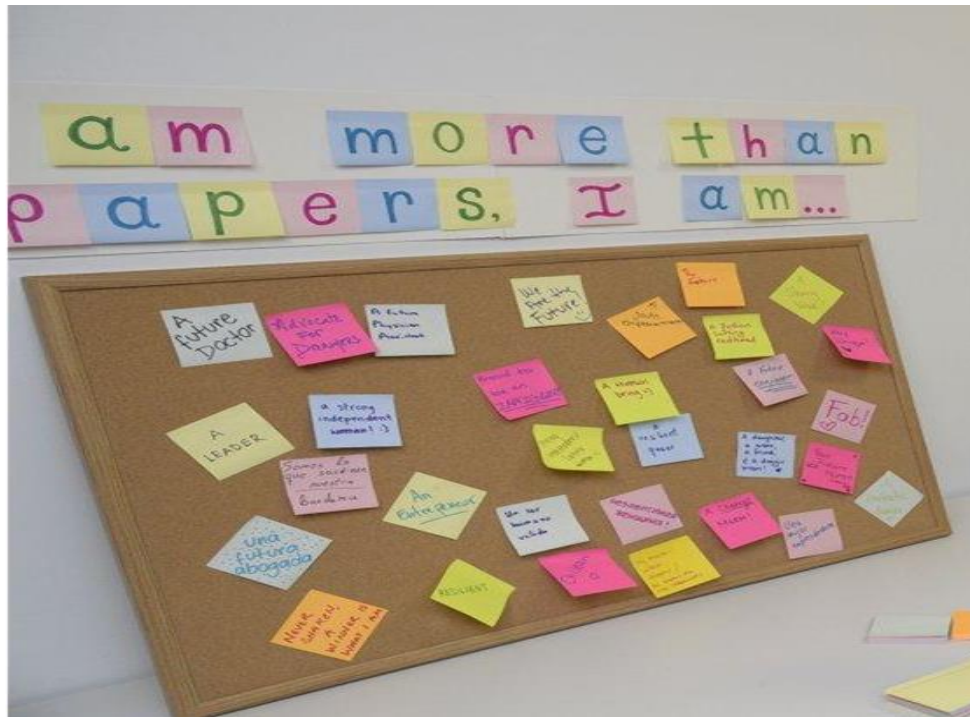
impossible—higher education system in which they must pay their tuition on their own, but they cannot obtain jobs.

In this chapter, I introduced the rich family and community experiences that inform the lives of the undocumented young adults in this study. I discussed the ways in which these youths generally navigate and talk about their language and writing practices and how they often contest nationalist ideologies of belonging. I have also shown how our researcher and participant relationship, in which I am “answerable” to them (Patel, 2016), has grown “in confianza” over the year, and has been critically checked in when needed (Alvarez, 2017b). I have also shown my positionality in taking on this project as someone who identifies with the immigrant narrative but is now a naturalized U.S. who enjoys the many benefits and privileges that can come with this.

This chapter also discusses how the distinction of “having papers” as an American national formation (Vieira, 2016), marks striking differences in the lives of these undocumented young adults—to the extent of signaling distinctions in their own family’s lives. “Having papers” and being in a mixed status family becomes an added difference to navigate for undocuactivists. They are happy for their family members that “have papers,” but feel confused and hurt that this very same system has left them “without papers.” In the following chapter, I build on this growing awareness that undocumented young adults have as local multilinguals and activists, to interrogate systems that are broken and dysfunctional, or boundaries that work to reassert boundaries in their language and writing practices.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MULTILINGUAL AND EMBODIED PRODUCTION OF WRITING



**Figure 1:** Eugene’s Writing Initiative for her New York University System

In *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, Yasemin Yildiz (2012) unties language from national identity through her careful and substantiated examination of the monolingual paradigm in the literary imagination. Yildiz argues that the concept of “mother tongue” is a nationalistic project disguised as a family romance, which works to further a language ideology of “suffocating inclusion” or “carrier of state violence” and exclusion. As Yildiz states, “this story about language and identity [with the mother tongue], can best be

understood as a linguistic family romance that constructs a narrative of true origin and ensuing identity” (p. 203-204). In a similar fashion, bilingual and critical applied linguists Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese (2008) show how their qualitative study of Bengali multilingual schools in the UK, including interviews with parents, students, and teachers, dispelled language ideologies of “heritage” as a monolithic unit tied to a specific language. As Blackledge and Creese explicate,

While teachers and administrators of the schools believed that teaching “language” and “heritage” was a means of reproducing “Bengali”/“Bangladeshi” identity in the next generation, the imposition of such identities was often contested and renegotiated by the students, as classroom interactions became sites where students occupied subject positions which were at odds with those imposed by institutions. (p. 552)

Blackledge and Creese’s study also reaffirmed García’s (2007) claim about dynamic bilingual practice, that it was less clear “where a ‘language’ began and ended” for students who moved between nationally or locally-ideologized languages on an everyday basis (p. 535). That is, one could not mark specific distinctions as to what classified as “English” or “Bengali” in these youths’ practice, because these two nationally-identified languages were not so discretely bounded in their bilingualism and varied greatly from student-to-student. Furthermore, my own collaborative and reflexive research on language practice and ethnicity indicates that

Ethnicity is a complex semiotic achievement. It depends on how diverse semiotic resources are orchestrated in relationship to dominant ideologies and norms that seek the desired uptake for specific identities and voices. But the reality remains

that, in spite of our efforts to index a particular heritage or to even assume a particular ethnicity, sometimes we become ethnicized by others in ways we may not always expect or even comprehend. (Alvarez et al., 2017, p. 44)

Therefore, language ideology and practice and its relationship to bodies, specifically marginalized bodies that act and move within state boundaries, is complex and differently navigated. And racialized language ideologies that mark specific bodies and their language practice call for minoritized and racialized bilinguals to navigate these “language,” “heritage,” and “ethnic” boundaries in ways that allow them to sustain and re-negotiate their cultural and emergent identities.

In the previous chapter, I introduced the dynamic and rich lived experiences and contexts of the undocumented young adults informing this study. I discussed how their positionalities and lived experiences as racialized bilinguals challenge preconceived ideologies of nationality and language, and citizenship. I also showed the ways in which participants in this study bring a great range of diversity and experiences in speaking to and about languages and cross-cultural communication in the context of advocating for state-sanctioned belonging. This chapter focuses on how undocumented and immigrant young adults navigate languages and belonging *through* and *by* their activism. Informed by Lillis’s and Curry’s (2010) methodological tools one and two that consist of “text histories” and “talk around texts” (p. 29), and which are paired with ethnographic data, I first discuss how a translanguing orientation and a raciolinguistics framework for language manifest themselves in two different forms in the language discourse of these multilingual youths: 1) translation; 2) how language is embodied and works to sustain the writing of the bilingual self. Next, I look to how the cyclical conversations around and

about texts yield multilinguals' ideologies about writing and how their bilingual practice manifests itself in these texts. In doing this, I offer a distinction between the writing that youths do for academic spaces and how they talk about these texts and the writing that dominates their activist practice—professional writing—with a translanguaging activist stance. Through this discussion, I build a vision of how multilinguals' perspectives on their own writing practices and their doing of writing transforms professional and technical writing. I also highlight how the examination of language and writing practices in the context of these immigrant activists' lives unveils what I theorize as their emergent *conciencia bilingüe*, or a person's reflexive knowledge of their bilingualism as a dynamic practice which intersects every aspect of their lived experiences and literacies. Finally, I pose how participants' dynamic bilingual practices at their professional spaces offer commentary for academic writing at the undergraduate level since much of the writing that youths are tasked to do in these courses is built to prepare them for their future professional endeavors.

### **Multilingualism and Writing and the Practice of Translation**

The growth in transnational engagement and people's forced and voluntary movements across geographical contexts tells us that there is a high demand and rich linguistic and multimodal context for shifting academic and professional and technical writing practices (Horner, Selfe, & Lockridge, 2015; Ray & Theado, 2016; You, 2016). This is, in part, because of globalization and its growing neoliberal forces that work to co-opt multilingualism in decontextualized and dominant ways (Heller, 2003; Flores, 2013), and, in part, because of the need for technical and digital communication to



account for the plural ways in which race, gender, and cultural and rhetorical practices participate or “language” into digital and user production and design (Banks, 2011; McCorkle, 2008). As Laura Gonzales (2017) pertinently shows through her study with professional and technical writing students working with the Language Services Department at Michigan State University and in partnership with a translation services community organization, this push for multilingualism and cross-cultural communication is also a matter of language access and fairer representation in digital and technical design. Translation matters, and it matters greatly from a localized and context-based view. In fact, as Horner and Tetreault (2016) argue, translation can be the practice to cultivate a translingual orientation in the writing classroom and in a way that is localized and mindful of the neoliberal pull. As they explain,

By focusing on translation, writing pedagogy can encourage translingual orientations to languages as always emergent and constructed “local practices” (Pennycook, *Language*) and thus the need for all writers to attend to and take responsibility in their writing—whether seemingly conventional or seemingly deviant—for the difference their choices inevitably make to such practices as local, contingent, emergent rather than sets of unquestionable standards or codes.

(p. 18)

Horner and Tetreault pose that in the practice of translation, all writers must attune themselves to the friction and flexibility of moving in-and-out of normed communicative practices. All writers become more aware of and “take responsibility” for how their affinity to specific moves reasserts or challenges ideologies of language standardization in writing so that they may begin to view these manifestations of language “sameness” or

“difference” as largely ideological, situated, and navigable. Additionally, Horner (2017) clarifies that in engaging the practice of translation in the writing classroom, instructors should emphasize repeated and varied translation rather than unidirectional translation. In a classroom setting, Horner suggests that students

Produce several viable yet different translations of a single common word or phrase in English related to their work as students, consulting not only ordinary dictionaries in English to consider variant meanings but also the *Oxford English Dictionary* to build on the range of meanings over time and their etymological relation to terms in other languages. In addition, I ask them to consult a translation dictionary that provides multiple ways of translating the term into a language other than English. (p. 93)

Here, Horner (2017) speaks to the translingual etymologies of the English language to note that what we conceive as being a monolithic language, or a “pure” language, has always already been a mixture of languages, cultures, and meanings produced over time, and archived in dictionaries. For students examining translation, this means finding common roots of words, exploring language history, and how languages move and change over time. In the next section, I examine how the multilingual participants in this study intuited and developed this aspect of language movement in between and across languages and contexts of translation, and how they extended and transformed this practice in their writing.

## **Racialized Bilinguals on Translation: “I’ve been translating documents my whole life”**

In this study, the experiences of the undocumented multilingual young adults with translation resonate with Horner and Tetreault (2016) and Horner (2017) in that translation practice indeed proves a productive form of interrogating monolingualist language ideologies, and how each iteration of language that may appear as the “same” re-constructs “difference.” At the same time, data on how translation practice emerged for these writers, and how they understood it, suggests the importance of highlighting how racialized lived experiences yield different social interactions in translation. More precisely, this data unveils some of the ways in which translation gets carried out in combination with activism or in a specific cultural context, and by people who face racialization on an everyday basis in society. Translation from the perspective of multilingual young adults at the front of community and immigrant leadership poses a translingual orientation with an activist end, which relies on the cycle of “translanguaging events” in these bilinguals’ lived experiences (Alvarez, 2014), and their emergent *conciencia bilingüe*. In this way, translation manifests itself as a constant practice in these young adults’ bilingual lives, and as a practice that speaks to their construction of self as well as their attunement to multilingual and multicultural immigrant and non-immigrant audiences.

Sandra, a geographer with a specialty in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and who I introduced in Chapter 3, worked with a federal agency for nearly a year in the

U.S. South before formally<sup>59</sup> working with an immigrant-based community organization. When I first spoke with Sandra about her new job, she related that it was “kind of interesting” how what she grew up doing all her life “with language” became so necessary in her professional work with this federal position. Sandra went onto explain that, despite the fact that she was generally new at her job, people liked her a lot, because her work mapping communities and specific happenings “demanded lots of translation.” By translation, Sandra meant movements across nationally-identified languages and movements within and across English languages and their varied contexts. Sandra explained that in mapping communities she had to include supporting documents for the particular incidents or things that took place, and sometimes she had to provide brief translations between English and Spanish or consider how her report was going to specific and very different audiences. Sandra noted that,

Usually those documents [that I’ve worked on] are confidential. [They go] to a landlord, [they are] a request for a raise. No one else will have access to these [original] documents, so I have to do my best in representing what is there. It’s a lot of responsibility... [How I knew to tackle this job?] I guess it was experience. I’ve been translating documents my whole life. And when you are translating like that, when there is a word you don’t understand it is really easy to translate. It is just experience with having done this.

In discussing what she does “with language,” Sandra discusses her academic practice of translation in writing. She connects her community and family-based knowledge of

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<sup>59</sup> Prior to formally working with a community-based immigrant organization, meaning as a paid-full-time job, Sandra worked informally and volunteered for a public entity working with and advocating for immigrant communities.

translation for older family and immigrant community members from an early age, a practice identified as language brokering (Orellana, 2009), to her work as a professional. Sandra theorizes on translation and its situated practice: that for herself—as a Latina bilingual—this practice is indebted to her community’s strengths and family’s bilingual practice. More specifically, Sandra relates translation from her multilingual perspective as an embodied literacy practice, something that she has been doing her “whole life.” She explicates that growing up doing translation also had to do with “documents,” papers that carried sanctions and regulations. In this way, Sandra poses translation as a practice that she feels confident in engaging, but also cautious about because of its weight in her immigrant community’s everyday lives. Moreover, as a racialized bilingual Sandra connects her translation practice as a negotiation that helps her re-affirm her ethnic and bilingual identities—as well as her positionality as someone who for her “whole life” has understood the weight of documents.

Angie, in New York, has a similar take on this. Working with the Asian Community of New York (ACNY), a Korean-based organization, Angie feels that her work in immigration advocacy has made her more introspective about the power and practice of translation, specifically between Korean and English and with different age bilingual speakers. Angie tells me that she “thinks a lot about how to best translate.”

Angie explains:

And I don’t mean translate as in a literal replacement for a particular word or writing from one language to another. I mean translate as in how to best resonate the full meaning of a writing into another language. Because I think that is a different thing than just literal like, you know, you can have like 10 words, and

you can have a sentence, and you can actually have like literal corresponding words, a translated word, but if you do that for every word...that sentence would not be understood very well, as for the person who speaks that language. Does that make sense? I look at translation as a way of delivering the content of like a writing in the best way possible into another language.

Angie's emergent conciencia bilingüe becomes apparent in this self-reflection in which she theorizes about what translation means from her own lived experience and professional work with translation. Her goal of seeking "how to best resonate the full meaning" is of particular importance to the practice of translation and the understanding of dynamic bilingual practice from the perspective of racialized bilinguals. Angie seeks to form a meaning making practice that can be loud enough or last long enough to have an impact, but also careful enough to pay attention to differences in audiences so that the message can be heard more widely. In the context of Angie's advocacy work in immigration this practice becomes vital.

As is the case for Sandra, Angie's translation practice extends to academic and professional writing practices in that she is producing and translating documents that carry legal weight in society. For Angie, these documents carry immigration-related weight. Angie reveals this added layer of complexity (and worry) in her translation practice when she discusses what she worries about in having to write for ACNY as a community leader and advocate. Angie says,

I know that I have difficulty. I think I would definitely say so, if I'm writing about things like research, like public documents. Political science and sociology stuff. There is some difficulty about [understanding and writing about] government

policies. It is not something I am always familiar with. Okay, for instance, immigration the writing of it, there is a particular way or style of doing it. If you look at legal documents or any kind of policy, it is not written in a modern kind of way. It is not generic. Sometimes I have a hard time with that. Other stuff is not like that. It's really not like writing intensive, like it doesn't require a lot of "academic" education. A lot of emails and drafting letters.

Here, Angie highlights how her translation practice moves between nationally-identified languages, disciplines, and legal and professional documents. Despite having been left out of her dream education and only having had access to a two-year degree, Angie recognizes how certain kinds of documents have and require different formats and genres. Angie did not study political science or sociology, but she refers to some of these documents as "things like research" and "political science and sociology stuff." Angie recognizes that navigating these types of documents can be difficult, and she often finds herself engaging in her own developed practice of translation, by which she first, moves across disciplinary genres to then translate (in a more traditional definition) from English to Korean, to finally move from Korean to a Korean that can be understood with the different age immigrant groups she works with at ACNY. As Angie puts it, "when you are speaking to a halmoni 할머니,<sup>60</sup> you have to be mindful of the difference. It is really important." In this way, when Angie initially argues that translation is "delivering the content of like a writing in the best way possible into another language," she does not just mean from Korean to English or vice-versa. Rather, Angie considers the cultural weight

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<sup>60</sup> Korean for grandmother and elder.

of meaning, not just how the meaning of words change, but how they may be interpreted by ethnolinguistic communities of different age groups, gender, or race, for example.

In their qualitative research with Latinx Spanish-English bilingual elementary and middle school-age youths, Ramon Martínez (2010) and Ysaaca Axelrod and Mikel W. Cole (2018) have shown that these youths construct meaning in ways that are conscious of cultural and racial difference. As Axelrod and Cole (2018) pose “our data demonstrate that emergent bilinguals [even as early as of kindergarten age] exhibit exceptionally sophisticated considerations of audience as they write across linguistically and culturally diverse communities” (p. 131). As multilinguals, Sandra and Angie demonstrate the dynamic bilingual practices of rhetorical attunement (Lorimer Leonard, 2014), language brokering (Orellana, 2009), and cultural and linguistically diverse affinity (Martínez, 2010; Axelrod & Cole, 2018) in that they carefully consider their audiences, recognize power differentials during acts of translation, and listen closely for cultural differentials in language writing. Yet, as racialized undocumented immigrant leaders, writers, and professionals, Angie and Sandra exhibit a reflexive stance of coming to terms with their bilingual practice in which writing genres and language constraints are mutable and negotiable. Through this stance and assumed positionality, they begin to build their own theories of translation and advocate for their own bilingualism. Perhaps, most important, this cyclical process—of reasoning about and around their own dynamic bilingual practices as they involve writing and language constraints—allows Sandra and Angie to challenge their own monolingualist frameworks. For example, during initial interviews, Angie expressed that in her everyday language practice she believed that she didn’t “mix [Korean and English] up a lot. Because to [her] that is not a language. No one will



understand that.” Two years later, when we were discussing activism during the 45<sup>th</sup> presidency, and a letter in which Angie—along with other activists—signed off with several languages expressing thanks to governors that opposed the agreement to enforce national security, Angie clarified that during meetings at ACNY she realized that “mixing does happen” though she was not always conscious of it.

Conciencia bilingüe as a working term for how local and racialized immigrant-generation multilinguals begin to make sense of their dynamic bilingualism—especially as it relates to writing, describes an ongoing and reflexive practice. It works to account for how racialized bilinguals mediate languages and literacies in specific contexts and under particular demands that have state-sanctioning practices. As Sandra’s and Angie’s examples illustrate, conciencia bilingüe is an emergent practice for both, but perhaps more apparent in Sandra’s confidence in her bilingualism. In Angie’s case, activism with an ethnolinguistic community has offered her the opportunity to begin critically interrogating her own practice and grow more used to her bilingual practice—even if it means that “mixing does happen.” But how does this practice of translation, as theorized by these multilingual and racialized youths, map onto their writing? How does it inform their writing practice specifically? Miguel’s, and Eugene’s examples highlighted below can offer some answers.

**Embodied and Written Translation: Translation practice “has been a gift for my bilingualism”**

As I mention in Chapter 3, Miguel has a continued interest in understanding and interrogating his undocumented experience, as well as how structures of power operate to

exclude people and their cultural practices. This specific desire to better understand his own lived experience and how it ties to the U.S. history and struggle for civil rights has led him to think about displacement and exclusion at large. Miguel especially sees this in his relationship to Mixteco language and feels as though he only knows “a few words”; yet, his evangelical home-upbringing, and high school boarding experience in the Northeast (via prep for prep), as well as his elite education at a small liberal arts college in the southern-Midwest have allowed him to learn and sustain Spanish and French.

Miguel tells me:

Mixteco is almost like a comfort language and it comes from my parents. I find a comfortable nostalgia to it. You know there is that shared history [of indigenous roots], even though it is pretty inaccessible. The strangeness of Mixteco. I’m always thinking about removal and being displaced. That is a weird thing, to be removed from your original language.

Miguel has an uncanny ability to tie his life experience to how the state operates to marginalize and expunge language, literacies, and ways of knowing for him and his communities, and it is this very practice that leads him to counter his displacement from Mixteco culture and language. As Miguel tells me, “Now I’m 27 and trying to learn as much Mixteco as possible, to someday form a sentence.” This has also led him to critically think about the role of immigration and advocating for citizenship at large.

While Miguel attends to his family’s restaurant, takes orders, rinses dishes, and brings in condiments from the storage room to the kitchen, he begins to tell me about how he has tackled these questions of immigration and displacement in his writing. For this study, Miguel shared multiple writing pieces: a single-authored book which includes his own

paintings, poems, and prose on his lived experience as an undocumented artist; a co-authored book of reflections and poetry written after having been held in detention; four articles published in local and national newspapers; and two college papers. Without question, Miguel is an accomplished and driven writer. The following fieldnote further illustrates this:

*Second meeting—I told Miguel that I looked over the many and rich pieces he shared with me, and something sparked my attention: The thread of discernable Spanish-written pieces, which are few and far between. I mentioned that they all seem to have a romantic turn.*

*Miguel chuckles.*

*He says, “es que Spanish is more of a Romantic language.”*

*We both laughed. There is some irony and truth to that statement.*

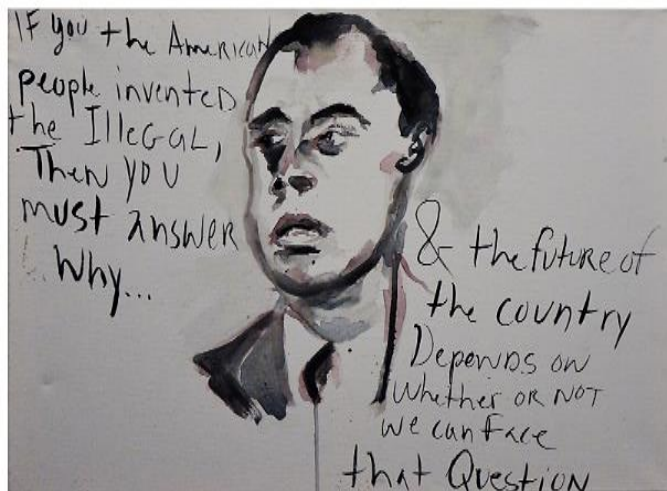
*I felt like in this moment we both understood that as Latinx bilinguals, and part of the same ethnolinguistic community, we get how that language ideology can be somewhat twisted.*

During this interview meeting and the two that followed, I pressed Miguel on a particular piece, which he placed exactly in the middle of his single-authored book. This is the “only” piece that would be interpreted as written in Spanish, and it has a paired translation to English: the Spanish piece first and the English second—a subtle and yet loud multilingual move. In making this subtle but visible, concrete editorial and multilingual move, Miguel exhibits his awareness of the U. S. linguistic landscape in which dominant language ideologies are constantly trying to subtract bilingual knowledges and Spanishes. But Miguel does not only make subtle editorial moves, he

also takes overt steps to show how he understands language: He titles the discernibly Spanish poem, “how being a romantic fuck makes you suck at living,” and the discernibly English with “por ser un romántico me convertí en un ser jodido.” In this way, Miguel made both poems Spanglish to be more accurate.

“how being a romantic fuck makes you suck at living” follows Miguel’s (2014) own artwork and series on James Baldwin, which explores Miguel’s take on Baldwin’s examinations of societal expulsion from the perspective of undocumented or “illegality” (see Figure 2 below). He tells me this has to do with why he placed those pieces after Baldwin.

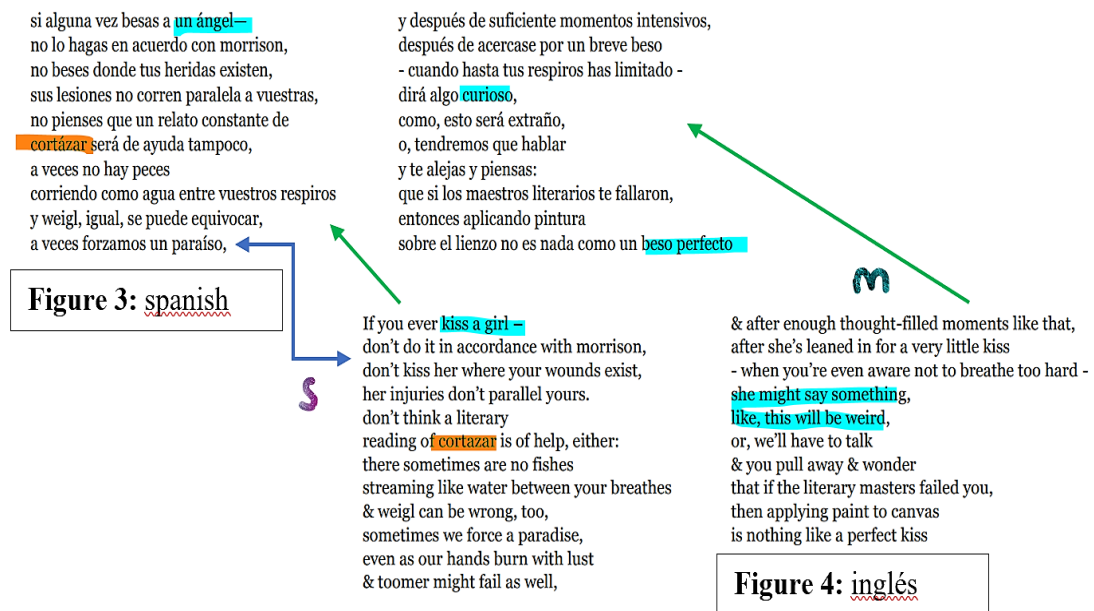
**Figure 2:** BALDWIN SERIES (2014), questions on “the illegal.”

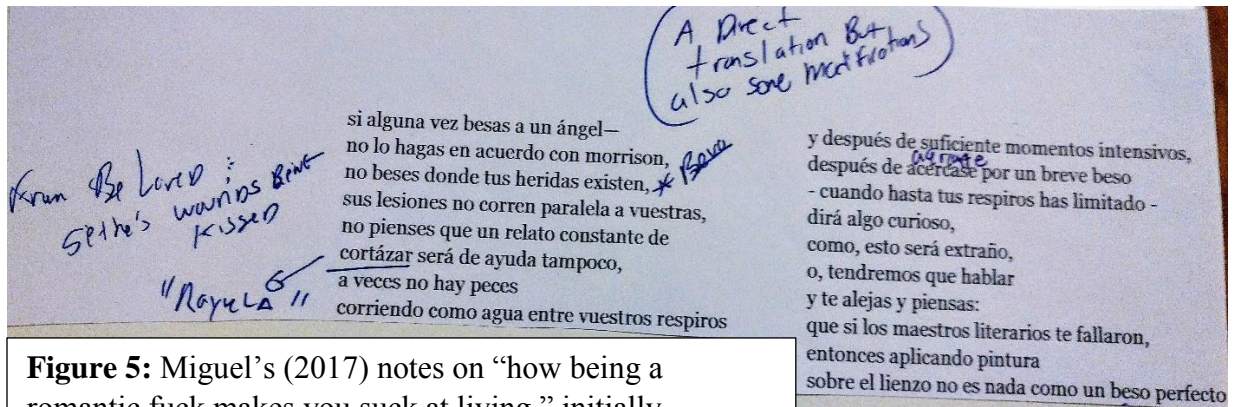


If you think the American people invented the Illegal, Then YOU must answer Why... & the future of the country Depends on whether or NOT we can face that Question

The “BALDWIN SERIES” speaks to Miguel’s translation practice as well, though this becomes most visible via our discussion on the “Spanglish” piece (which follows below). Here, I want to note that I am less interested in commenting on these writing pieces for “the writing” per se. Rather, I am interested in what discussing these pieces reveals about Miguel’s translation practice, and the literacy histories that precede these pieces. I am

mainly interrogating the multilingual processes, or translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013), that informed these pieces as they became the published writings they are. The following, illustrated by figures 3, 4, and 5, with green arrows to mark Spanish, English, and marked Spanish fragments of the pieces, is meant to exemplify how Miguel talks about the writing process, and what his practice indicates about how these bilingual poems came to be. Figure 5, specifically, shows Miguel's 2017 notes on the Spanish version of the poem. The notes came after the piece had been originally published in 2014. In this way, Miguel's notes work as a representation of his own reflection and bilingual writing practice.





**Figure 5:** Miguel’s (2017) notes on “how being a romantic fuck makes you suck at living,” initially published in 2014.

When I first inquired about these Spanglish poems, Miguel said that “por ser un romántico me convertí en un ser jodido,” the English version, came first. And that “[he] tried doing a direct translation” for the Spanish poem after. In the book, however, the Spanish version with an English title appears first. Nearly a year later, Miguel’s notes on the poem offer more nuance on this translation process. As Miguel writes, “a direct translation but also some modifications.” Modifications that are visible in the tones the pieces assume, and the terms they use to communicate particular arguments. For instance, as I highlighted in Figures 3 and 4, Miguel modifies “girl” for “ángel” in Spanish, and “weird” for “curioso,” meaning curious, as he felt that these were more “vibrant representations” of what he wanted to present in these texts.

When he wrote the piece in English, Miguel wanted to mimic the language he saw in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Julio Cortázar’s *Rayuela*. At the time, he had also started reading the work of Junot Díaz. As Miguel put it, he was getting into “those kinds of [Díaz] pieces. [This poem] is also about tragic love and tragic modern love. I was trying to copy that style.” While it may seem apparent that Díaz influenced the Spanglish of these pieces, and that there is intertextuality, when I noticed that Miguel mentioned Cortázar’s novel in Spanish I had a sense that there was more to it, especially because

“how being a romantic fuck makes you suck at living,” the English titled piece, is discernibly in Spanish.

During initial interviews, Miguel related that he learned to read and write in Spanish through his family’s evangelical upbringing. He explained that growing up he only read the Bible in Spanish. At home he heard Spanish and Mixteco, so in many ways, he felt that “it only made sense” to deal with “heavier subjects in Spanish.” Later as a college student, Miguel would pick up “poets like Neruda and Lorca,” different spanishes and Spanish traditions from Cortázar, and Díaz, also very different on their own, and that these authors and their texts would encourage his writing in Spanish. But he also started to read the Bible in English and in different versions of Spanish and English. Given this perspective and lived experience, and his “newly” added notes in 2017, I ask Miguel if he can tell me more about this process of reading the Bible in Spanish and English and in different versions. Miguel tells me:

So [reading these texts in Spanish and English] helps a lot because I feel like whenever you see text vocabularies, you can see how the structures change. Stress some things more than others...Every iteration of this...I’m riding in this different train of thought. I don’t have the verses in front of me [to show you how different they are], but I think it is always helpful to look at these differences. I think also looking at some things that will echo through different versions is important. I’m interpreting the text and the text itself is being interpreted through all these lenses. I think that being aware of all those versions and holding attention to it has been a gift for my bilingualism.

Miguel's take on translation practice reasserts Sandra's and Angie's translation experiences. As a matter of fact, Miguel appears fully aware of how this translation practice has been useful to "[his] bilingualism." Miguel uses the term "echo through different versions," while Angie discusses "resonating" through language and cultural differentials. Additionally, Miguel's theory of translation concurs with Horner's (2017) argument about the value of translation and proposed practice of examining word etymologies. More specifically, it coincides with Horner's point about the practice of translation in the writing classroom as a way of "developing specific dispositions—dispositions that have consequences for language and language practices as these are continually re-written by students and their teachers" (p. 96). At the same time, Miguel's introspection into his own translation practice as a racialized bilingual also calls attention to the development of a bilingual stance that moves beyond language practice. For example, what becomes most interesting about the exchange highlighted above is how Miguel becomes attuned to the language and literacy thread that emerges of his own translation practice. Soon after he reflects on this process, Miguel turns us back to the discussion on the Spanglish text. He says, "[the Spanglish] also shows the complicated notion of bilingualism."

Throughout this discussion, Miguel reminds me that it is interesting that he placed the Spanish piece in the book first because of the "dominance of English," but ultimately his relationship with bilingualism is about his removal from Mixteco. Additionally, Miguel tells me that this piece is also about his activism as an undocumented young adult. The piece is about



[His] own personal romance...It balances out a lot of the stuff. It was good to talk about these other issues and not directly being undocumented. Those everyday life moments are sometimes the most more relatable points of contact. Dubois has those echoes. Until you realize that undocumented people date, and dance, and are in love, you won't see that they are also people. But I think the minutiae of this stuff is in knowing how to navigate it.

Miguel ties “how being a romantic fuck makes you suck at living” with his undocumented experience, as part of his embodied human experience of romantic love and having his heart broken. In this way, while on the surface these pieces reflect bilingual engagement in a more linguistically overt form in writing, tracing the histories of these poems and pairing them up with Miguel's own perspective of his bilingualism reveal much more. Doing so exposes the dynamic relationship between Miguel's immigrant and evangelical upbringing, his adulthood as an undocumented activist, and his embodied practice of translation, in which he is not only translating texts, but also his own lived experienced as a racialized bilingual. A practice, which as he is beginning to make sense of it “is complicated” and cannot be so perfectly balanced. As Miguel later tells me of the Spanish translation: “It doesn't flow, and still now. But, I mean, I like it.” And yet for Miguel, Mixteco is still emergent. It is “almost like a comfort language and it comes from [Miguel's] parents.” This negotiation of languages, literacies, embodiment and adulthood speaks to Miguel's growing and emergent conciencia bilingüe in that he advocates for his own bilingual practice—seeking to sustain his Mixteco heritage and language—and he exhibits confidence in claiming his bilingualism as an ongoing process which is not linear.

Miguel, a Mexican national with indigenous Mixteco roots and a New York American identification, works to renegotiate the “mother tongue” family romance that Yildiz (2012) contests. He works to balance Spanish in the U.S. anti-immigrant and Spanish-speaking context, and Mixteco in the context of his indigenous heritage and lived experience of displacement from indigeneity. Miguel’s immigrant activism has then guided him into writing his embodied language practices, undocumented story, and biculturality in his texts. This is something he shares with all participants in this study, seeking to write his own story of Americanization “without papers.” Miguel’s translation practice also unveils how dynamic bilingualism is about a racialized bilingual person’s desire to translate their experience of negotiating the linguistic landscape.

Like Miguel, Eugene, a New Yorker from Brazil and of South Korean ethnicity, has also worked to (re)negotiate the languages of her life. On an everyday basis, Eugene navigates between Korean, English, Portuguese, and Spanish. In fact, the Portuguese she has a hard time claiming has allowed her—as a community activist—to assist Spanish-speaking immigrants of Asian and Latinx descent at ACNY, where she is a youth leader (as Romance languages, Brazilian Portuguese and Spanish share very similar syntactical constructions). Eugene also holds a position as an intern with the New York City regional offices of immigrant affairs. Additionally, as of November 2017 Eugene launched a new public university initiative designed to support and engage all undocumented students across all boroughs and campuses of the city. But beyond nationally-ideologized languages, Eugene has also learned to negotiate the many languages of immigrant activism in the context of liberal and conservative ideologies of immigration.

When I first met Eugene, much like most participants in this study, she exulted in her activist languages. A few hours after speaking with Eugene, I would often find myself researching and looking up referendums, organizations, and activists she would mention in passing and was able to grasp more of her discussion. More recently, when Eugene was three years into her Political Science and Urban Studies Major, with a minor in Legal Studies, Public Policy, and Economics, I—as a researcher—often realized that I was having a harder time navigating the many languages she has learned to negotiate. But what I find most compelling in the pieces of writing she shared with this study is her insistence on merging the voices and languages of lived experience in arguments about immigration.

In an early 2017 paper she wrote for her sophomore-level political science course, Eugene found a way to introduce her voice and relation to immigration into the paper. In this paper, Eugene writes on “Reflections on representation: intersections and parallels between immigrant rights and feminism.” As argued in her essay, Eugene

wanted to break stereotypes about undocumented immigrants, Asian Americans, and women. This reflection develops connections between my life as an activist and the works of feminist activists before me, and how recognizing the lack of or skewed Asian American female representation affects immigrant discourse.

The essay, a final paper for her semester-long course, is 10 pages-long and includes a rich reference list, but what is particularly striking in this case is Eugene’s strategic inclusion of her voice in this “research-based” academic paper. On page five of her essay, Eugene begins to weave in a statement about how immigration discourse requires the voices of immigrants and specifically undocumented immigrants. Eugene argues that immigration

research should pay attention to the voices, perspectives, lived experiences, and efforts of people who are undocumented. Eugene then strategically illustrates her claim by quoting from a statement she helped co-write as an undocumented youth leader at ACNY, something she does not disclose in her paper. Eugene writes, “we believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly from our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else’s oppression.” Here, Eugene shifts academic discourse and her disciplinary genre—to some extent subverts it—as she provides evidence which in many ways comes from her own lived experience but is from an “outside source.” Eugene’s piece de résistance, however, is her inclusion of her letter to *Elle Magazine* for which she was asked “to write a letter to my younger self” as an undocumented young woman. Eugene includes the letter on page six of her “research paper” and points out how her writing of this letter and including her own voice in her discussion of immigration works to do the same representation work that she traces in her paper’s argument.

The resonance and echo (quoting from Angie’s and Miguel’s conceptualizations of translation) of Eugene’s letter as an effective communicative and writing practice is undebatable: Eugene’s letter became a part of a national video by *Elle* that went viral<sup>61</sup> and showed women, specifically Asian young women, as the face of undocumentedation reading their own letters to their younger selves. The video challenged the very stereotypes and invisibility of Asian women that Eugene contests in her political science paper, but what is most interesting about interrogating Eugene’s perspective and

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<sup>61</sup> The video received more than 60,000 views in one site alone.

construction of this letter is how it unveils how her bicultural self is represented in it and how her activist languages have gradually transformed her academic writing practice.

Figure 6 (below) shows Eugene's letter for *Elle Magazine*, which she included in her political science research paper. In this version, I highlight some aspects of the letter that she discusses in relation to the Korean term she introduces me to, Da-Jeem. Figure 7, which follows, is the copy of the letter she marked several months later, and Figure 8 displays Eugene's own notes and reflection on this piece.

Dear

There will come a time when you may want to give into inclinations to stay back and let others do the talking for you. But you know what – prepare yourself to muster up the courage and defy fears that repress you. Be ready to take ownership of your problems and raise your voice alongside a strong and resilient community that supports you.

You may face a moment of despair when you realize that you cannot enjoy the same privileges as many of your friends, but keep that moment short. People will call you a DREAMer, but you will learn to pick up shattered dreams more than once in your life. Accept your situation with grace and determination, and then be grateful that you can encourage and empower others around you.

I want you to remember that you are worth more than papers. You are more than a status. Do not let the ugly words and tones thrown around in political shows consume you. Challenge labels that are placed on you. Embrace your roots and encourage others to do the same. Fall more in love with the country for which you will fight to protect and belong.

You may be shocked at the heartlessness of some people, but you will be more touched by the love and strength of others around you. Do not lose your faith even when the nervous thought that you might lose your home creeps up on you.

Reach out to others and help them understand and feel the urgency that you feel.

Take active part in mending a broken system because you will not stand alone. Complacency, fear, and silence will be your biggest enemies. Generations of immigrants, activists, and allies will go before you so that you can continue to march on.

Sincerely,

Your future self

**Figure 6: Eugene's Letter to Her Younger Self**

**Figure 7: Eugene's Marked Reflection Copy**

There will come a time when you may want to give into inclinations to stay back and let others do the talking for you. But you know what – prepare yourself to muster up the courage and defy fears that repress you. Be ready to take ownership of your problems and raise your voice alongside a strong and resilient community that supports you.

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Accept your situation with grace and determination, and then be grateful that you can encourage and empower others around you.

*reflects.*

I want you to remember that you are worth more than papers. You are more than a status. Do not let the ugly words and tones thrown around in political shows consume you. Challenge labels that are placed on you. Embrace your roots and encourage others to do the same. Fall more in love with the country for which you will fight to protect and belong.

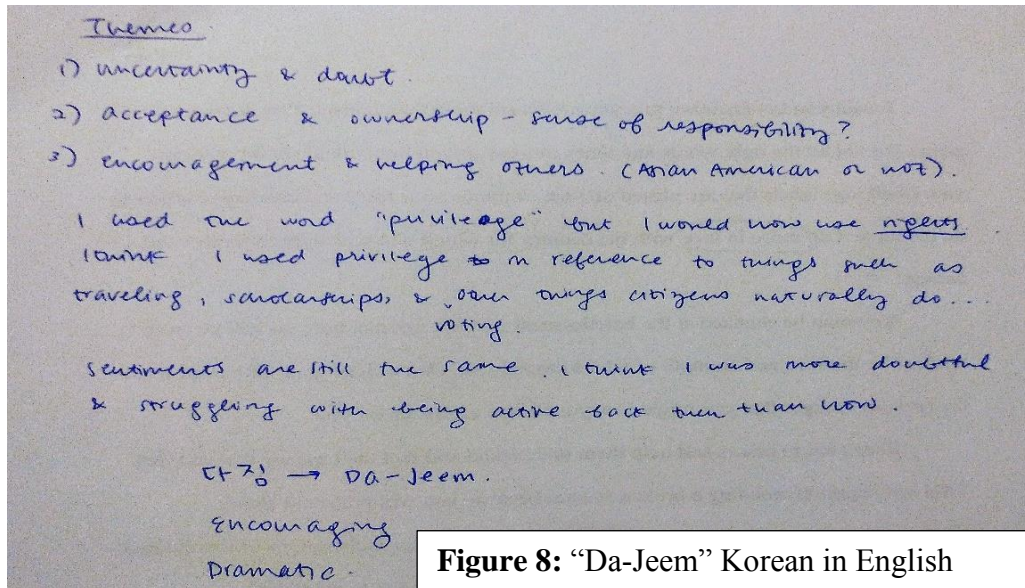
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Reach out to others and help them understand and feel the urgency that you feel. Take active part in mending a broken system because you will not stand alone. Complacency, fear, and silence will be your biggest enemies. Generations of immigrants, activists, and allies will go before you so that you can continue to march on.

Sincerely,

*why didn't I use past tense?*

Your future self



**Figure 8:** “Da-Jeem” Korean in English

Eugene’s letter to her younger self (Figure 6) asks that she “muster up,” that she builds courage for the things that she will have to face in her teen and adult years. Eugene explained that she wrote the letter as if writing for herself initially but then added some “flowery language” because she wanted to add “some dramatic emphasis.”

Upon self-reflecting on the piece, Eugene circles the words “ownership,” “privileges,” and “accepts” and connects them to a hand-drawn smiley face (Figure 7). Additionally, she draws out an arrow from the word “privileges” to the word “rights.” Eugene tells me she has a few “regrets” in this letter, but she still feels proud of it. She notes some of her reflection—and sense of the piece—as shown in Figure 8. While making notes on her own letter, Eugene gets quiet and teary-eyed. We are sitting in a New York City café, which just a few minutes before seemed rather noisy and hectic for a follow-up interview, but I noticed how focused and invested Eugene was in this letter.

Eugene: Are we gonna talk about this?

Sara: Yes. If you are okay with that.

E: Good. I feel like talking about it would be better for me.

Eugene tells me,

I think in this letter I have a lot of words such as like ownership and accept, and so I think back then I was struggling more with like being more active, I guess. Because being active is training, I guess. No, not I guess: It is training! And so, I think in this letter in itself I am talking about like—even though I don't explicitly say it—well I do kind of do it when I say, “embrace your roots and encourage others” in the back of my mind I was thinking about being Asian, and like, yeah [points to herself]. And like the strong and resilient community I feel like I was talking about the ACNY community.

In this reflection, Eugene unpacks how her activism and racial and ethnic identifications are marked in her English language writing. As she revisits her own “doubtful” statements, Eugene argues that “being more active” as an activist and in her immigrant community “is training.” She does away with “I guess” declarations and owns up to her own writing practice when she says, “well I do kind of do it when I say.” More precisely, Eugene focuses on what she means by “embrace your roots and encourage others to do the same.” She initially tells me that this phrase has to do with herself, her Asian background, and her ACNY activist community, but does not specifically say what aspect of these is there. Eugene physically points to herself as she tells me this, inserting her body into the discourse of roots. However, it is not until we slightly detour from this text to discuss something that recently occurred for Eugene, that she explains more about what she means by “embrace your roots.”

Just a few weeks earlier before my follow-up meeting with her, Eugene tells me that she had the opportunity to meet and become a mentor to a young Korean woman



who had recently “come out” as undocumented and had never met another DACA recipient before. In bringing up this discussion, Eugene tells me that it is hard to learn the language of coming out and telling others about being undocumented. She then begins to theorize about language in practice, language access, and in particular her own language practice. Eugene says, “Yeah. I mean if you are around me, like I can’t avoid it: Murmuring something in Korean to someone else...and me not being fluent Portuguese speaker. People keeping [Portuguese] simple to what I can kind of understand.” Through this introspective analysis, Eugene reasserts the ways in which Korean and Portuguese are a constant in her life, and Korean-English/English-Korean, in particular, is a language that she “can’t avoid” engaging on an everyday basis. What is interesting about this turn to self, more specifically, to Eugene’s perspective into her own language and literacy practices, is how it coincides with Miguel’s turn to what that means to his writing. Shortly after discussing this aspect of her language practice with me, Eugene tells me that she now knows what she was thinking about in writing “embrace your roots,” and how “complacency, fear, and silence will be your biggest enemies.” Eugene says, “I was thinking of da-jeem, Korean for taking heart, encouraging, honoring, and facing your fears. It needs to have a certain endurance, more than a momentary knowledge. I wish I could have written that there.” Eugene’s emergent *conciencia bilingüe* becomes quite apparent in this situation, by which her reflection on her own writing leads her to interrogate her language practices—as unbalanced and yet navigable—and as impactful in her writing design.

Establishing a translocal approach recognizes that languages, cultures, meaning-making practices, and commodities are overtly mediated and adapted, yet, unequally

exchanged amid globalization. In *Cosmopolitan English & Transliteracy*, Xiaoye You (2016) studies how languages and literacies, in particular academic Englishes, get negotiated and transformed in the interest of communication. You poses a vision of English as cosmopolitan, by which

every English speaker is a “native speaker,” native to one or multiple speech communities or to certain established norms. At the same time, every speaker sounds different to interlocutors outside his or her communities. C[osmopolitan] E[nglish] is English as it is actually used by individuals across the globe, each with differences inflected in his or her pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax, and/or discourse structures...CE is both descriptive and heuristic. (p. 11)

You extends Yildiz's (2012) historical and literary theorization about moving past nationalistic language lenses, while also considering the practical implications of these lenses for the teaching of academic writing. More precisely, You states that “taking a cosmopolitan perspective will enable us in writing studies to further appreciate the creativity that English, along with other languages, affords multilingual writers” (p. 85). To a great extent, Eugene's writing and her translated incorporation of “da-jeem” into her English writing could be seen as a “creative” practice of cosmopolitan English. After all, Eugene's multilingualism would broadly categorize her as a local multilingual college student, however, her use of “da-jeem” is also about embodiment and lived experience as a racialized multilingual, who is at the boundaries of the state and advocating for state-sanctioned belonging. In this way, Eugene's *conciencia bilingüe* is also about constructing critical awareness in her writing practice, not just a creative practice with words. *Conciencia bilingüe* then not only adds the embodiment layer to what You (2016)

identifies as cosmopolitan English, but also a critical conscious awareness of languages in contact and negotiating across one another for communicating meaning. This becomes most salient in our exchange that follows and by which Eugene contests the “tokenization” of her Americanness.

“People will call you a dreamer, but you will learn to pick up shattered dreams.” I was pretty proud of it. I underlined it [on the copy of the text] because I remember writing it, and being like, yes! Because it really captured the fact that how like people tokenize us now. I didn’t really verbalize this but when I was writing it I was thinking, like people say how great we are but at the same time it’s like we’re a population that went through so much but rigged very little. Yeah, like it is a whole dichotomy: DREAMER! But still undocumented, and the lowest, and the most rejected of society!

Here, Eugene expresses how proud she still feels about having written an argument in her letter that resonates and echoes even louder in the current national and political climate. Eugene refers to the “tokenization” of undocumented communities, specifically young adults that Angie cautions for in Chapter 3. Eugene adequately argues that the term “DREAMer”<sup>62</sup> and its rhetoric—as a way to tokenize undocumented youths, people like her—is in many ways contested by their own lived experience, by which they do not have the rights and “privileges” that liberal discourse portrays.

Eugene further clarifies her stance on the language of activism and how she has come to understand her own lived experience by proposing how she would revise what she wrote in her letter. Eugene tells me that:

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<sup>62</sup> See Chapter 3 for why this research does not engage this term in describing participants in this study. For more history on how the term emerged see Nicholls (2013).

If I were to re-write this I would use the word rights instead [of privilege].

Because I was referring to like people can travel outside of the United States, and the fact that people can vote, and they have access to financial aid, and I was thinking that those are privileges but now I know that those are rights. Basic rights that people have, and the fact that I am glorifying the simple things that people have I think says something about like the state of mind that I was in back then. And then I said something along the lines of like “fall more in love with the country” Do I even love America? I wanna stay here and I wanna fight for my rights but like G—Jesus! It’s like it is crazy. What’s happening?

Through this self-reflection, Eugene exhibits the critical self-reflection that Antonio engages in Chapter 3 when discussing his dynamic bilingual writing practices. While sharing with me what it is like to write between, across, and beyond Englishes and Spanishes in the context of activism. Antonio directs his discussion to himself and says, “Antonio, homeboy, writing a little bit everyday makes you, you know, be a better writer.” In the segment above, Eugene turns to herself after reading her own writing from several months before, and she questions it. This becomes visible in her introspective self-talk, which moves beyond speaking with me as the researcher. Eugene asks, “Do I even love America? I wanna stay here and I wanna fight for my rights but like G—Jesus! It’s like it is crazy. What’s happening?” Eugene then turns to me, and tells me, “It is okay to be critical. It is more natural to be critical. It is dangerous to have blind patriotism.”

For Miguel and Eugene their writing participates in their everyday practices of languaging, sustaining, and re-inventing the self, and this includes their cultural and lived experiences as undocumented, of course. Writing, specifically academic and professional

writing, becomes an extension of Miguel's and Eugene's translingual activist practice, by which they reassert and contest their Americanness. This complex, dynamic, and critical engagement is testament to their emergent *conciencia bilingüe*, as they are racialized multilinguals navigating the manifestations of nationalistic boundaries via their language and writing practices, and they are self-reflecting on their own positionality and forming a stance—a stance that advocates and takes confidence in its unbalanced and complicated formations of bilingualism. Eugene and Miguel interrogate and subvert nationalist ideologies of language and cultural dominance. Miguel titles his discernibly English piece in Spanish and places the discernibly Spanish poem in his book first. Eugene critically translates a Korean conceptualization of courage and taking heart into her writing of a letter to her younger self, and she includes this letter in her final research paper for a political science college course—along with a statement for her activist space which she helped co-write. Furthermore, Miguel and Eugene turn this introspective lens on themselves as they question what it means to advocate for their bilingual practice, which is conscious of the ways in which their biculturality is unequally valued in the concept of nation as monolithic and homogenous. Miguel exhibits this critical awareness in how he sets up his Spanglish poems to follow the question he poses for the American person who invented “the illegal.” By making this invention an American problem, then America must turn to itself to understand how it has worked to dehumanize people. Eugene more forwardly concludes, “it is dangerous to have blind patriotism.” But Eugene's and Miguel's critical language and writing practices are not isolated in this study. Their emergent *conciencia bilingüe* as exhibited in these two examples is one manifestation of a patterned code that appeared for all participants in this study. That is,

their dynamic bilingual practices, which include an emerging *conciencia bilingüe*, should not be understood as their own alone or dissociated from other critical practices they also demonstrated in their discourse.

In forwarding what dynamic bilingual practice means for bicultural and minoritized youths, García and Wei (2014) explain that this is also a matter of fostering criticality. García and Wei define criticality as:

The ability to use available evidence appropriately, systematically and insightfully to inform considered views of cultural, social, political and linguistic phenomena, to question and problematize received wisdom, and to express views adequately through reasoned responses to situations. (p. 67)

The ways in which racialized multilinguals in this study engage languages and academic and everyday literacies concur with García's and Wei's definition of criticality. This is visible through Eugene's and Miguel's examples of contesting "Americanism," and Sandra's and Angie's ways of pushing against linguistic boundaries in their process of translation. At the same time, these young adults' introspective engagements appear more as a practice in constant development and reconstruction rather than a "skill" or proficiency to be measured in an abstracted form. Moreover, this critical language and literacy practice shows more as an ongoing reflexive process, by which multilinguals re-evaluate their positioning to sustain their stances which is why I argue for their emergent *conciencia bilingüe*. This critical aspect of their *conciencia bilingüe* becomes more overt in how racialized multilinguals view and discuss academic writing, and its relation to their languages, literacies, and lived experiences. Racialized multilinguals generally present metaphors of immobility and fixity in discussing writing for academic and

college spaces. In the following section, I discuss how Jung—as well as others—relate and discuss academic writing as not “resonating” or “doing” transformative or important work.

### **What Writing Does**

Jung: So, I learned English a little bit through school, and then also I took ESL classes when I first came here because I came on a student visa, and in order to maintain the visa you had to take, well, not take, but you have to go to these language schools. So, I went there for several months until my visa expired, so that is how I learned English. And also, when I went to high school here.

Sara: That is a lot of learning in a very short period of time.

J: I guess *I have a thing for language*.

In the exchange above, which I briefly discuss in Chapter 3, Jung sums up the practice in “I have a thing for language.” Very much like Victor, he critically pushes back on my seemingly imposing infatuation with multilingualism. Jung dismisses this accomplishment. In fact, Jung treats multilingualism as “a thing” that individuals either have or do not. However, Jung is not so easy-going in relating his learning of the English language, as for him English-learning is tied to documentation. As he notes, Jung had to “go to these language schools” to keep his student visa. Here, Jung offers several layers of critique. He does not call “these language schools” college. In this way, Jung presents his experiences of becoming multilingual as an occurrence but challenges how each of these languages has come into his life, in particular his way into the U.S. English

languages. This stands in sharp contrast with his positionality and view of Korean, the language tied with his family and the culture he identifies the closest with. Jung refers to Korean as his “nurturing language.” However, Jung’s positionality towards languages and his way of interacting with them appears most visible in our exchange below in which his coming into Spanish seems to carry an important intellectual pursuit and social aspect to his becoming of an American (by culture).

Sara: Spanish was something that came with friends?

Jung: So, I can read Spanish because I learned French. It’s a very similar language. But also, even though I never took any classes in school I actually learned it through books, on my own. That helped a little bit. And hanging out with friends. I had Spanish friends growing up, so learning words and their context with them. And after I came to New York City, I see a lot of signs on the train that are bilingual, so I am constantly learning from that as well. I mean it’s New York City.

S: That’s interesting that you said that the signs are bilingual. And that for you seeing two languages—in this case, English and Spanish—together, side by side, would be a sight of New York City.

J: Yeah. I mean before I did not know how to say tarjeta (Metrocard), but now I know.

Jung’s relationship to Spanish is more about his socialization with and in metropolitan sites. As Jung first meets friends from Spanish-speaking backgrounds in the U.S. South, Spanish for him later becomes a more normed language in New York, where as he explains he sees bilingual signs on an everyday basis. That Jung is interested in reading



and understanding these signs, and that he has picked up new terms, like MetroCard in Spanish, is a telling sign of his translanguaging and politicized practice. Jung confirms this when he tells me that learning Spanish has been very beneficial to his immigration work. Spanish has given him a window into how his Korean culture is similar to Latinx cultures, and it has opened an avenue for communication for immigration-related discussions and events. However, it is important to note that the Englishes that Jung has acquired by virtue of his American socialization have also shaped much of his multilingualism—though they are constantly tainted with his relation to U.S. undocumented. This is most visible in his writing.

Jung's relationship with writing in many ways mirrors his linguistic architecture (Flores, 2016). He does not claim it as extraordinary, but it exists beyond most people's everyday practice of writing. Like most participants in this study, Jung claims that writing in college interrupted his desire to write. He tells me,

I hated writing in college. I was writing about topics that I did not like. It was just very restrictive. It was not about any topic I want to do, one that mattered to me. It had to be about what they wanted, no matter how mundane. There is a lot more freedom and leeway that I like [in order to write]. Of course, at work [at the immigration non-profit where Jung worked for 3 years] I had to write professional pieces that were restrictive, that were not the most enjoyable, like press releases. But that writing was not as restrictive as it used to be in college—no professor checking this, marking this and that. [And the writing for work] were pieces that had an impact. We wrote about housing issues, immigration, things that mattered to our communities and [neighborhood].

Here, Jung offers a strong critique of his experience writing in college. Jung starts by making a general statement that he “hated writing in college,” and then he offers specific remarks as to how he developed this relationship to college writing (also academic writing). Jung notes the feeling of confinement in writing about topics that felt mundane to him and had no relevance to his lived experience. He also explains how professors’ ways of responding to his writing as “checking this, marking this and that,” alluding to syntax checking as opposed to perhaps more focused high-low priority feedback over arguments, influenced his dislike for writing. But Jung is a strong writer. His multilingual immigrant literacy practices and lived experience make him a rich writer, a language architect, and he hints at this by noting his successful professional experience with an immigration-related non-profit. Of course, implicit in Jung’s critique of college writing is that he is having to write in the English language, a language in which he is an emergent bilingual as he is learning and growing into it because of his forced migration. Jung’s expressed relationship with college writing in the English language—and via a monolingual orientation—also speaks to having to write in a way that restricts his dynamic ways of moving across and within languages, literacies, and subject-based knowledges. Jung’s experience with English writing in the college setting proved insufficient to his dynamic language and literacy practices. In fact, for Jung this experience in having to write in college seemed to hint that academic writing was about developing texts that were in English-Only or targeting English alone, and which carried “mundane” topics/arguments. Perhaps, more concerning is the fact that for students like Jung English becomes understood as an unchanging language that is consumed with rules over meaning. Jung’s writing in English outside of academia, however, shows that he

knows how to critically navigate and his rich and dynamic bilingualism, biculturalism, and undocumented experience for specific purposes.

In the beginning of 2016, preparing for an open mic in New York, in which the non-profit Jung worked for was hoping to raise funds and connect with other organizations, Jung chose to write in English as he evaluated that a great part of the audience would be English-speaking. A year later, when I ask Jung to annotate this piece and tell me what he remembers about it, and what he wants me to know about this writing, Jung notes that he remembers this writing as one that “impressed [him that he]

could write like this,” as noted in the handwritten notes he offered for text context (see Figure 9). Of course, implicit in Jung’s comment is that writing like this, meaning so effectively—to the extent of moving a large audience to tears and joy—was done moving through various forms of

**Figure 9: Jung Writing Self**

“We hereby sentence you for 11 years of incarceration and limitation”

That was the first sentence I’ve ever heard from this nation

Not a literal incarceration, but my shackles are called “illegal immigration” *→ Frustration about limitation*

For 11 years of my life in this country, I was a prisoner of my status

Forced, imposed, told, and conditioned to limit my potentials

Living in Atlanta, blazing summer sun wasn’t the only thing that was heating me up,

Inside me was a volcano, full of ideas, hopes, and also anger that were to blow up

Model minority myth, but I felt obligated to make it a reality *→ obligation I felt as a son of an immigrant*

90% grade point average, Student council, French honor society

But something about me quite didn’t fit in with the American society

While my friends talked about law school, med school, and grad school *→ uncertainty*

I had to think “How can I be useful, resourceful, and stay hopeful after high school?” *I felt after High School*

My teachers told me my college applications are late,

I want to explain to them why I never sent them, but I’m too afraid they cannot relate. *Even though teachers were understanding of my status, they couldn’t really help (or so I felt like)*

Fast forwarding 3 years, I am in the Big Apple. Life is looking better.

I’m in college getting degree, working with my EAD, paychecks not cash money.

Living my life half way out of shadow, but there remains sorrow, of my status, they couldn’t really help (or so I felt like)

Knowing that my mother never get to reap what she sow.

Overtime pay, vacations, less than 12 hours work day, nothing but dreams for millions like)

Our incomes are never forgotten by IRS, our human stories are laughable to USCIS,

And our families are torn apart by ICE RAIDS. *→ we pay taxes not tax knowing whether it’ll help us or not.*

That’s the reality that we live in, but it doesn’t need to be so grim.

Knowing that grass turns green after long winter, our dreams are never deterred.

wrote this for an open mic event last year June (2016) event was to celebrate Imm ~~the~~ Heritage Month. presented piece during the event and felt impressed that could write like this.

English, offering his undocumented story, and critiquing the very system that operates and benefits from the criminalization of vulnerable human beings. For instance, RAIDS, as part of ICE RAIDS, gets noted in capital letters—as well as other acronyms that ring loudly in Jung’s relationship with English languages.<sup>63</sup> This piece of writing is testament to Jung’s translingual practice with an activist end.

What is important to highlight in Jung’s stance and positioning towards writing for academic spaces or academic writing is that his stance is not unique to this study. Sandra and Eugene, as highlighted below, also explicitly addressed how they felt that college writing and “academic” writing was “slightly easier” and did not have the impact of the professional writing they developed in their activist communities. By professional writing, I mean writing that not only circulated in their offices and activist spaces and carried legal weight, but also generally faced larger audiences. For instance, in cases like Tony’s his immigration advocacy work with a national campaign asked that he engage his thousands of followers on social media daily and at least twice a day. For undocumented young adults in the immigrant rights movement, writing then is as vital and ongoing as it has become in most professional work spaces (Brandt, 2015).

### *Sandra*

In relating what was the most recent piece she had written, Sandra explained how writing her story in order to present it to a college audience of professors, students, and

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<sup>63</sup> Here, I want to note that while acronyms generally get capitalized it is peculiar that the terms implying papers and undocumented are the only ones to be capitalized in Jung’s text—along with “RAIDS,” which is not an acronym.

administrators of 300-plus people was very hard and intimidating. Sandra quickly shifted to comparing that form of writing with her college writing:

College-writing was a little bit easier. There was an assignment, points I needed to touch, one person who was reading it, and that was pretty much it. The structure of college writing made it a little easier, and I knew what I needed to do. Writing for this other thing, that was difficult... What I'm talking about is like I had to do a speech and that was terrifying. I thought I was going to say something wrong. Like unknowingly hurt someone. There are groups of people that are highly marginalized—that people don't think about in their language—and I was afraid I could end up offending them. For example, like if I make a pass about an LGBTQ person, or being Latina, or not being able to speak Spanish, sometimes those things are the only things that get highlighted. If I'm writing to convey a point. I haven't really written for just myself in that.

Here, Sandra draws a distinction about audience and how in her view writing for a large audience beyond the college writing classroom proved more difficult for her than writing her papers for college. The comparison that Sandra draws about audience and the relationship she expected to build with a large audience that would be mainly focused on her arguments is something I discuss in closer depth in the following chapter. This relationship also connects back to her conceptualization of translation. Sandra seems to have a strong sense and awareness of the importance of navigating and “resonating,” to use Angie’s term, her languaging with others. Sandra views professional writing as more difficult not only because the audience is larger but because the potential of not resonating is a matter of embodied identity in which she is inviting her audience into

learning about a vulnerable aspect of her identity, and within that argument she cannot afford to say something that may further marginalize other people. In many ways, one could argue that Sandra has to translate the boundaries of embodied lived experience, languages, and topic expertise. This form of embodied translation in which a bilingual must take a stance is something that Eugene has to face as well. And, in fact, taking this stance seems to prove a beneficial and self-reflexive opportunity for her, as Eugene is able to explicate to herself what is different about these forms of writing, college writing and advocacy writing.

### *Eugene*

In sharing the kind of writing that she is the proudest of, like the piece she wrote for *Elle* and which received thousands of retweets and views, Eugene tells me that the kind of writing she is proudest of is “the kind of writing that goes places.” Despite the fact that I do not ask about this topic, Eugene elaborates on this argument by noting: “to be honest, my academic papers are not going anywhere. They go to my professor, my grades, and my flashdrive. They are not like the kind I do at [ACNY].” Eugene reiterates Sandra’s argument about audience regarding college writing classrooms. In fact, she is quite literal about the physical ways in which her “academic papers” circulate rather restrictively. On the contrary, for Eugene, “writing that goes places” seems to be writing that achieves a purpose and can continue advocating for that message. Eugene then draws an important intersection between academic and professional writing and advocacy writing, and for her these are not dissociated. Eugene presents these as whole. In this manner, she once again presents her embodied language and literacy practices as tied to her activist and advocacy practice. Furthermore, Eugene clarifies that the writing is

writing she is proud of, not “successful” or “better,” but writing she feels confidence in. Interestingly enough Eugene seems to have figured out a way to merge the writing she is proudest of with her academic settings and immigration advocacy work. Eugene has developed a set of workshops and initiatives for the New York’s public university system which involve writing. This is something that she is still developing, and I hope to learn more about. Figure 1, in the opening to this chapter is an image of one of the first activities Eugene helped lead. Eugene asked undocumented young adults participating in this initiative to write about who they were beyond “their papers.” She also asked that they wrote in whatever language they wanted.

## **Conclusion**

Sandra’s, Miguel’s Eugene’s, and Jung’s experiences with professional writing for large audiences speak to how *conciencia bilingüe* also indicates the importance of learning to navigate one’s language and literacy practices from the perspective of racialized multilinguals. It shows how the added layer of “differences” as manifested in their writing proves to be successful in their need to communicate, resonate, echo, and connect with large and multiple audiences. This research supports Alexander and Jarratt’s (2014) argument about students’ rhetorical education through their political activism. The undocumented immigrant young adults I have worked with exceed the expectations of courses designed to “teach” students how to write academically, but their legal and cultural marginalization from academic spaces poses a conundrum for their desires and dreams, and to writing teachers hoping for a more socially just educational system. Additionally, while it is understandable that some scholars may feel that focusing on the

wide range of language and literacy practices of multilingual youths is a way to perhaps fetishize their everyday experiences, it is important to remember that for language-minoritized and racialized youths, movements across and between languages are more than just language matters and schooling-based literacies. The multilingual, embodied and racialized lived experiences of undocumented young adults in this study testify to how their language and writing practices are a nation- and monolingual-defying mechanism. These practices serve as important avenues to their self-advocacy and sustainability as bilingual and bicultural people seeking a more just society for their communities.



CHAPTER V  
IMPLICATIONS  
MULTILINGUAL WRITING AS A “NEW” PROFESSIONAL DEMAND IN A  
NATIONALIST CONTEXT

“Meritocracy, the idea that one’s destiny and path is largely determined by one’s actions, is a common explanation for success. *You deserve it! You worked so hard! Couldn’t happen for a better person!* And when we are told these things, we all enjoy the laudatory vibe, sometimes demurring with humility but rarely offering a different explanation other than hard work and sometimes luck. However, the flip side of meritocracy also implies, with grueling efficiency, that individuals don’t succeed because they haven’t deserved it, worked hard enough for it, or aren’t good people. Without ever being uttered aloud, these values are the ones that shape self-concept of immigrants [...] who struggle to understand why seemingly relentless obstacles dominate their lives.”

—Leigh Patel, 2013 from *Youth Held at the Border: Immigration, Education, and the  
Politics of Inclusion*

“I first met Tam, a bright-eyed, quietly energetic, young Vietnamese woman, when she enrolled in my US History since the Civil War honors seminar at Santa Ana College in 2002. She was the top student in the class, and her essays were models of clarity, logic, and insight...At the same time, I had not the slightest inkling that sitting before me was a young [undocumented and stateless] woman of extraordinary promise as a national leader who would one day be testifying before Congress.”

—Tom Osborne, 2012 from “What Tam Tran Taught a Professor of American History”

In *The Rise of Writing: Redefining Mass Literacy*, Deborah Brandt (2015)

presents her findings from a seven-year qualitative engagement that involved in-depth interviews with 90 people ranging from the ages of 15 to 80 years old, and predominantly working in professional and technical spaces (p. 4). Brandt persuasively argues that:

writing as a dominant form of labor has become a major form of mass literate experience. So rapacious are the production pressures on writing, in fact, that they are redefining reading, as people increasingly read from the posture of the writer, from inside acts of writing as they respond to others, research, edit, or review other people's writing or search for styles or approaches to borrow and use in their own writing. (p. 17)

Brandt poses writing as a "new" form of mass literacy, by which reading from a writer's perspective has become a synergetic tool to develop more writing—because writing is in high demand in most sites of work, but particularly in academic and professional settings. In other words, writing is transforming how we understand literacy, and how we position ourselves to write. But Brandt goes further, specifically addressing how she views what this "new" definition for writing—and its relationship to reading—means to the young adults in her study. Brandt explains that they

did not read *like* writers. They read *as* writers. So when they read they attended not merely and not always to micro-level, sentence-level craft technique (a matter inordinately emphasized in writing instruction and guidebooks) but rather to larger spheres of social interaction, craft membership, aspiration, and ambition. Indeed, these larger spheres motivated and buttressed technical reading by showing these young adult writers not how to imitate but how to stand out, how to

situate their own writing better, or how to act responsibly toward a community of other writers. (p. 126, emphasis original)

The writing demands of immigrant rights activism and experiences of undocumented young adults in this study concur with Brandt's argument about writing as a new mass literacy. These writing demands reassert that writing has indeed become a necessity and professional practice for undocumented young adults' advocacy work, and everyday life self-reflective experiences. Additionally, the writing practices of participants in this study also demonstrate that writing for various professional and personal self-writing purposes requires a keen degree of attunement with large but close communities in mind.

### **Undocumented and Writer Paradox**

Undocumented young adults constantly exhibit a careful awareness of writing *with* their communities, and an approach to writing that shows them to “read as writers.” For instance, Miguel's writing exhibits his reading of James Baldwin, Junot Díaz, Julio Cortázar, and others not merely to copy them, but rather to weave them into his writing style and translation of his own undocumented and bilingual lived experience. Similarly, Sandra's claim that she was well-liked at her new job at a federal agency because she could communicate well with others in writing—drawing from multiple interdisciplinary fields of geography and nationally-identified languages—establishes how important writing as a professional practice functioned for her. This study's findings simultaneously express a necessary embodied and lived experience layer to our understanding of writing. This layer speaks to the complexities and differences in writing from the perspectives of the 1.5-generation who are multilingual, racialized, and undocumented activists in the

U.S. context. The multilingual writing experiences of participants in this study then advances a crucial component to this “new” literacy engagement, specifically regarding how embodied language and cultural practices manifest in the production of writing.

As I argued in Chapter 1, this study advances our knowledge on how minoritized and racialized young adults can—and do—develop their bilingual potential, which includes writing *with* and *through* their scholarly and professional experiences as well as their political activism. Yet, in highlighting this potential and multilingual writing expertise—from the perspective of racialized multilinguals themselves—this study unveils the disparities and paradoxes imposed by a growing nationalist and meritocratic context, which seeks to subtract the language and literacy practices of already minoritized groups. The juxtapositions displayed in the quotes opening this chapter are meant to display these disparities. These quotes individually show how undocumented young adults are implicated in the capitalist oddities and discourse of meritocracy, and how their national leadership can often be undermined in educational settings. The quotes—posing two overtly unequal lived experiences as undocumented—also offer an important comparative lens that demonstrates how undocumented young adults’ experiences are diverse and differently navigated. Both quotes tie undocumented young adults in the discourse of educational attainment and success, and, of course, these aspects of their lives are also part of their lived experiences and educational trajectories.

Chapter 1 opened this study and community-based engagement with the stories of Tam Ngoc Tran and Cinthya Felix, highlighting these undocumented young adults’ force to “galvanize” a movement that has now taken multiple directions as it has worked to create a more socially-just society. The opening of this concluding chapter seeks to show

how these youths' voices should be discussed within the parameters of their lived experiences and the many measures of restriction, marginalization and educational disparities they face as undocumented persons. On the one hand, undocumented young adults can display outstanding practices as students, immigrants, dreamers, and family members. On the other hand, on an everyday basis, they face ideological and physical exclusion from the place they have learned to call home. This study situates itself in-between this juxtaposition, as it looks to the ways in which undocumented young adults in the immigrant rights movement negotiate these restrictions and sustain their emergent and culturally and ethnically rooted language and academic literacy practices.

In Chapter 5, I first offer a brief reminder on what population demographics indicate about the growth of multilingualism and ethnic diversity in the U.S. amidst the undocumented paradox I highlight above. I present these demographics with the attention to the cautionary tale offered by Sayu Bhojwani, founder of South Asian Youth Action (SAYA), during her 2017 keynote at the Mellon Emerging Scholars Conference on “Sustaining Diverse and Inclusive Communities” that “demographics is not destiny.” Second, I further discuss what this study reveals about multilingualism and writing when interrogated from a collective translingual, translanguaged, and raciolinguistic perspective. I focus this discussion within the context of what Rebecca Lorimer Leonard (2017) has presented as “deep contradictions” about multilingualism by which multilingualism is valued as “both personal and professional asset and condemned as ethnic, racial, or cultural deficit” (p. 125). I place this in dialogue with how undocumented young adults' perspectives on their own language practices—as multilinguals—signal what I introduced in this study as *conciencia bilingüe*, and how this

practice offers a view on how multilinguals challenge these monolingual and nationalist boundaries. I also discuss how the specific context of activism informs this emergent *conciencia bilingüe*, which is more apparent in some undocumented young adults in this study than others. Finally, I close with a brief contextualization for what the current national and political climate poses for undocumented young adults as part of the 1.5-generation. By doing this, I call us to consider how this work should be taken up and furthered by scholars invested in the social justice project of education.

### **“Demographics is not Destiny,” But It Matters for Bilingual Sustainability**

Given the results of the 45<sup>th</sup> U.S. presidency in which white individuals—in their majority—elected a candidate based on his outwardly anti-immigrant and anti-black discourse (McElwee & McDaniel, 2017), Nguyen and Kebede (2017) examined multiple intersecting factors of immigration and education as a way to offer some guidance on what could be expected of this election for immigrant students in particular. In their literature review of “immigrant students in the United States,” Nguyen and Kebede highlight the growing population demographic of immigrants in the country in the past three decades. They base this growing demographic on first- and second-generation immigrants. Specifically, Nguyen and Kebede (2017) write:

In 2014, this [immigrant] population stood at over 42.2 million (13.3% of the U.S. population), increasing by 1 million (2.5%) from 2013. Immigrants and their U.S. children were estimated at 81 million, proportioning 26% of the U.S. population...With the increasing number of immigrants in the United States

comes an increasing number of immigrant students enrolling in the nation's public school system. (p. 722)

As the authors note, the immigrant population is dramatically growing and shifting the face of the country. These changes become most salient in schools that now see the need to serve more diverse and multilingual students in their classrooms. For example, Nguyen and Kebede also mention what has now become a widely known factor to most people living in the U.S., that “Spanish is the most common language spoken at home in the United States after English;”<sup>64</sup> And, that multilingualism is not limited to the confines of the Spanish-English dichotomy; after Spanish, “Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, French, Korean, Arabic, German and Russian” are the languages most spoken in the U.S. aside from English, and the incidence of these languages of course varies from region to region (Nguyen & Kebede, 2017).

In Chapter 1, I described how the literature on children of immigration has examined the ways in which the 1.5-generation of immigrants has learned to strategically navigate a strict and marginalizing educational system, most times faring in more positive ways than the second generation—despite all odds including undocumentedation. In Chapter 2, I showed how this study points to the regional, class, national, and ethnic disparities among immigrant communities and how these disparities become more overt by interrogating the ways in which DACA has benefited undocumented young adults differently and sometimes not in particularly upwardly mobile ways. I drew on the multifaceted and large-scaled study of DACA beneficiaries by Gonzales, Terriquez, and Rusczyk (2014) to show how participants in this study, too, “from higher socioeconomic

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<sup>64</sup> Perhaps, what is not widely understood about this fact is the diversity that is captured within this Spanish statistic, which not only speaks to Mexican variations of Spanish and Spanglish.

statuses were more likely to access some benefits when compared to peers who grew up with fewer socioeconomic resources” (p. 1865). In fact, this study also concurred with immigration scholars who have suggested that these socioeconomic status variants also intersected with place of nationality, parents’ educational attainment prior to migration, and place of migration and networks in the place of migration, making immigrant communities diverse beyond ethnic and national difference (Menjívar, Abrego, & Schmalzbauer, 2016; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In fact, this is how Nguyen and Kebede’s (2017) discussion of the foreign-born statistical population demographic connects with the intersections of disparity and growing ethnic diversity in the U.S.

Because my study worked to examine the context of undocumented young adults in the city of New York, and how their navigation of more ethnic-based activist spaces led to seemingly more overt bilingual sustainability—as it also negatively re-inscribed particular issues of ethnicity and cultural and religious practice as monolithic—it is important to look at how New York is at the heart of this growing foreign-born immigrant population. As of July 2016, the U.S. Census reports that 37.2% of persons in New York City are foreign-born, and these foreign-born populations are densely concentrated in specific boroughs and neighborhoods in the city, making vicinities like Elmhurst, Queens 71% foreign-born. This means in one neighborhood alone only about 30% of the population was born in the United States, and even that population is likely to be immigrant-tied (*The Newest New Yorkers*, 2013).

This shift in immigrant population demographics is not meant to be overtly determinant, as Bhojwani (2017) has cautioned—since cities like New York have



historically seen how immigrant groups have become “assimilated,” begun to identify as white and monolingual, like Irish and Italian immigrants. However, it is important to point out that—as I mention in Chapter 1—we are at a moment in which multilingualism has become desirable even if for neoliberal and economic purposes (Flores, 2013; Heller, 2003), and this transnational shift is not just occurring in metropolitan sites. Additionally, unlike previous shifts in immigrant populations, this demographic shift is not just occurring in large urban cities. Take for instance the growth of the “Nuevo Latino South” (Diaz, 2014), which is also of relevance to this study since five of the participants in this study not only identified with the ethnic groups tied to their family’s cultures but with being from the South, implying a more regional culture.

Indeed, “demographics is not destiny,” but based on the experiences of undocumented young adults who are part of the 1.5 immigrant generation, demographics matters for bilingual sustainability. Population demographics have a lot to do with how schools and policy makers respond to immigrant populations, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. But they matter. These shifts, precisely, compel us to ask the questions that guided this study, specifically, what might the language and writing practices of the 1.5-generation multilingual undocumented young adults, and their understandings and views of their practices, contribute to current scholars’ understanding of the politics of language practices in writing?

### **Immigrant, Activist, and Emergent in *Conciencia Bilingüe***

As noted in the opening to this chapter, Brandt (2015) convincingly claims that “young adults writers [strategically consider] how to situate their own writing better, or

how to act responsibly toward a community of other writers” (p. 126). But, what does this mean when examined from the multilingual writer perspective? This study focused on this very aspect of writing or language in writing. However, unveiling the implications of the answers to this question becomes more manageable when considering what Evelyn Nieng-Ming Ch’ien (2004) poses in *Weird English* about Junot Díaz’s writing. Ch’ien interrogates the performative aspect of Díaz’s writing and finds that this multilingual writer’s success and practice “lies not simply in good writing but in intuitive musicality.” Ch’ien builds further on this. She explains,

his art comes in the delivery of this musicality, by exploitations and execution of the musical features of the languages he uses. The employment of Spanish, barrio speech, and English combines to form new rhythms and tones in English, a new kind of musical writing. Díaz makes us read and listen closely for the music inside his words. (p. 217)

Ch’ien’s point about the musicality of Díaz’s writing is something I will come back to in my discussion of the implications of how participants in this study offered “sonic” metaphors of translation, but here I want to focus on the reading and listening to Díaz’s language rhythms. Ch’ien’s argument about the “reading and listening for” in a multilingual writer’s text, Díaz in this case, loops back to the newly established reader-writer relationship that Brandt (2017) describes as part of a new mass literacy—specifically for young adults.

What is interesting is how Díaz himself discusses this multilingual perspective and practice of listening for community language as an embodied experience. Quoted in

Ch'ien's (2004) text, Díaz discusses what it is like to write as a person of color and thinking about or writing for communities of color:

Groups of color rarely write across to each other; they write for themselves or white people. Rarely do you see Asian American writers writing for themselves and African American writers writing for themselves and the Latino community...For me, it's easier to talk about how many Asian people I know. It confuses things and complicates things, and in some ways it's just easier if I focus on my Dominican community; but in some ways it's dishonest. There's a second level of complexity that writers of color have to step into. The reason most of us don't do it is because we don't get rewarded for it, or when we do do it, it's really fucked up. Fucked up appropriation. (p. 218)

Díaz brilliantly captures and pinpoints the complexities and demands of writing as a person of color, and the fine line between the attention to diversity and representation and appropriation. This fine line is a boundary that is rarely posed for white writers, but to some extent is more super-imposed for writers of color, who may be more attuned to racialization and stereotypes in writing. Here is how the language and writing practices of multilingual writers become crucial in understanding how such audience relationship is embodied and navigated differently.

### **Embodied Translation as Whole**

Undocumented young adults in this study revealed that they navigate the languages of their lives as embodied, tied to their literacies, and whole. For instance, in Chapter 3, Zulema described how her embodiment as Latina, Mexican, and Spanish-

speaker was racialized in her Southern context and added to the stereotyping of Mexican as undocumented. At the same time, Zulema highlighted her position as a woman and how this lived experience offers insight into her advocacy activism. What is important to note about Zulema's stance is that she presents it as embodied and whole. As she explicated:

I am a woman, and I bring a different perspective to what we do. [Being part of this organization] helps me learn. Over the years, I have developed a lot of skills that I wouldn't have learned without activism. And I guess [I've also learned] how to phrase what I've gone through, and I've gained support.

Zulema ties her embodied and racialized experience as an undocumented Mexican person as also woman and activist, not as added layers but a vision of what she does as both an activist and student. She describes "skills" and language of or "phrasing" of self-advocacy. This signals to Zulema's emergent *conciencia bilingüe* by which she self-reflects on embodied aspects of her language and communicative practices, informing her literacy practices as whole.

Similarly, Sandra demonstrates the careful multilingual and racialized writer relationship that Díaz speaks of. When preparing the writing and telling of her undocumented story for large audiences, Sandra establishes that she takes extra steps in her "language" because "there are groups of people that are highly marginalized—that people don't think about in their language—and I was afraid I could end up offending them." In this way, as a young adult writer, Sandra is not concerned with micro-level writing practices. Rather, she is concerned with macro-social concerns. More specifically, as a Latina, Sandra is deeply concerned that "her language" in writing does not cross the

fine line between representation and appropriation or discrimination. As a racialized writer, Sandra does not excuse not knowing the “language” of inclusivity and equity as ignorance, as she holds herself answerable to the communities she writes for. This is, perhaps, one of the larger implications of this study. Undocumented young adults as multilingual and racialized writers do hold themselves answerable and *en confianza*<sup>65</sup> to the communities they are a part of. Sometimes they do this by carefully omitting topics in their discussions that might show their ignorance about an issue that could hurt someone in their community, or they do so by strategically weaving such awareness into their language in writing. But this multilingual and racialized writer as reader or dynamic bilingual manifestation in writing does not just manifest itself in the attention undocumented young adults place on language, it also appears in the ways in which they theorize about language practice and language accessibility.

### **Language Rhythms: Translation as Sonic Metaphors**

Undocumented young adults in the immigrant rights movement all reported that part of their multilingual practice manifested itself in how they translated their embodied lived experiences into their writing, as if they were in a constant act of translation. At the same time, they described these strategic selections of language and maneuverings as a desire to communicate or deliver their arguments in the best way possible—to their specific communities. More precisely, they described the histories and processes of these politicized writings and texts as sonic metaphors. Angie, for example, used the word “resonate,” while Miguel used the term “echo,” thus, signaling how embodiment in

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<sup>65</sup> Here, I am drawing on Patel’s (2016) conceptualization of answerability, and Alvarez’s (2017b) conceptualization of *confianza* in community work and advocacy.

language writing as translation is also about a dynamic relationship with the audience. Multilingual and racialized writers emerge in their *conciencia bilingüe* as they self-reflect on their language and writing process as whole, while they also re-consider or reassess their proximity to and language translation with their audience. For undocumented activists, these languages and audiences change and shift in scales, sometimes they speak with predominantly white audiences, and sometimes they speak with predominantly communities of color and ethnic or ethnicized communities, neither is an easier or harder audience for them. This seems to speak to Díaz's point about the fine line of writing for writers of color. Additionally, this is an aspect of multilingual and translingual practice that calls for more inquiry, as it seems to engage directly with what Adam J. Banks (2011) discusses as an African American rhetorical practice of the DJ and griot: "DJ as digital griot and the digital griot as a model for multimedia writing instruction and for a new conception of the scholar activist working to build community" (p. 8). Indeed, undocumented and racialized young adults are building communities through their strategic and embodied translation practices, and the rhythms of language they have learned to navigate their "whole life," in Sandra's words.

### **(Trans)Languaging Ethnolinguistic and Ethnicized Difference**

It is important to note, however, that these processes by which undocumented young adults navigate audiences in their language writing, as they seek to "resonate" with them, do not always go well. In particular, when there are unequal numbers of undocumented people representing specific communities that have been historically marginalized, these issues of cross-cultural and activist work are hard to manage in large

scale. For instance, while this study did not examine the immigrant rights movement and the leadership of undocumented young adults in this movement as a whole, it could not avoid noticing moments of discrepancy in cross-cultural communication in which echoes of marginalization did not carry through. One overt example of this occurred when I attended the national and annual undocumented youth-led conference in the U.S. with AIRS.

I was familiar with this national non-profit organization, since I had worked with them—along with undocumented leaders in the South—to collaboratively arrange trainings for universities in these geolocations. During the conference, black undocumented communities called for a “mic-check, microphone check” on the conference’s antiblackness when one of the keynote speakers, a widely-known journalist, omitted facts on how the deportation and criminal-justice system criminalized black bodies (Morgan-Trostle, Zheng, & Lipscombe, 2016). The speaker celebrated the contributions of immigrants on the country and cited data that signals to how immigrant communities “improve” communities where there have been high levels of crime before. In this way, the keynote speaker added to the racialized discourse of crime and posed immigrants as not black or highly criminalized and tied to the criminal justice system. Undocumented black leaders—despite being a smaller group—placed the conference “in check” and “recalled” the speaker’s time by discussing these issues. In a large audience of more than 1,200 people, this was an onerous practice.

Members of AIRS like Akash and Jes applauded the black leaders’ “mic-check” practice, as this moment kept returning to AIRS meetings, especially when AIRS university affiliates and advocates constantly conflated undocumentedation with Latinx

events. Akash would often say, “we gotta hold them in check” about their immigration approach.

At the same time, this type of literacy and advocacy practice functioned very differently in smaller settings. As I noted in Chapter 3, Mark, for instance was often the only Asian and Pacific Islander person in his college undocumented meetings, which were predominantly directed and attended by Mexican Latinx and West Indian members in NYC. Mark, however, placed this group “in check” by having them become more attuned to how undocumented was not just a Mexican Latinx or Caribbean issue. He did this by constantly reasserting Tagalog and Korean in any activity the group conducted and trying to recruit new members to the group. However, as Mark individually recognized, he was placed in a difficult position because as he and other Asian undocumented young adults in this study explained, “Asian people have a harder time speaking openly about their undocumented status, even with other Asians.” And as Mark and most communities of color in metropolitan sites have learned to recognize, “Latinos aren’t so united either.” Here, I want to clarify that it is also not only that Latinx groups aren’t so united either only, but that Latinx communities have historically embedded issues of colorization, anti-blackness, and in the U.S. context anti-Mexicanness, and these issues are part of and play out in the politics of immigration and citizenship.<sup>66</sup> For example, as Preston and Alvarez (2016) highlight, the 2016 election year seems to have caused a rift in the usual Latinx Republican majority in Florida, where Latinx groups are largely Cubans, Colombians, and Venezuelans and have usually voted conservative. This means that Mark’s undocumented college group may also be facing issues of

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<sup>66</sup> See Mignolo on how “coloniality” functions in the modern world (2006).



undocumented or immigrant generation Colombians, Argentinians and other South American groups which are a largely-represented Latinx group in college classrooms in New York City that do not wish to engage with the politics of immigration in the U.S. from a dominant-Mexican U.S.-Mexico border perspective.

Tony's and Mark's experiences in the Northeast and Akash's and Victor's experiences in the South as not fitting in, or in Tony's words, "being a minority within a minority and undocumented," offer a crucial implication of multilingualism as manifested in the practice of writing from the perspective of racialized bilinguals, and that is that more research needs to pay attention to what I have posed as (trans)linguaging moments of difference within ethnolinguistic or ethnically diverse communities. This is an area of research in multilingualism that requires closer attention (Alvarez et al., 2017).

### **Undocumented, Bilingual, and Afraid—And Young Adult Activist**

What good is language and academic practice if one is physically excluded from state-sanctioned belonging? The current national and legal landscape exhibits overtly anti-immigrant discourse, and this has obviously affected undocumented young adults. As Goodyear (2016) has discussed, undocumented young adults are facing extreme anxiety and fear during these times. More concerning, the *American Psychological Association* (APA) (2008) was already anticipating high-levels of trauma among undocumented immigrant populations because of histories and lived experiences with border crossings and the mass-deportation scales during other presidencies.<sup>67</sup> This anti-immigrant and legal discourse of deportation can be increasing already existing levels of

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<sup>67</sup> See, Gonzales-Barrera and Krogstad (2014) on escalating deportations during the Obama presidency.

trauma among undocumented and immigrant populations. And although there was a time when many undocumented young adults in the movement may have felt compelled to claim that they were unafraid (Muñoz, 2015), most undocumented young adults in this study noted that they “were very afraid” and “sick to their stomach” after the 45<sup>th</sup> presidential election. This poses the juxtaposition with which this chapter opened up, by which it becomes clear that multilingual writers, in this case, undocumented multilingual writers, are leading very specific and successful practices in writing and language sustainability, but they are also facing extreme measures of exclusion.

This study reasserts that even under the direst of circumstances minoritized and marginalized youths exhibit great leadership and power for transformation. Furthermore, it documents their need for cross-cultural exchanges involving translanguaging and embodied translation practices to communicate their messages to their communities and communities invested in social change. In the national context, youth activism is no longer an oddity, as we can see how the voices of young people are becoming the leaders of dissent, for example in the guns debate, and how there are coalitions of young people across differences who are speaking to power and teaching teachers that we must listen and honor their experiences. More importantly, these youths who recognize their need for learning from one another are coming together to demand change. Immigrant and undocumented young adults have been demanding change for more than two decades, but change requires equity and answerability. This study highlights the power that undocumented young adults have to navigate dominant monolingual language theories and practices, challenging assumptions that nation corresponds with “a” language or “an” ethnicity, but this does not mean that they are not also facing extreme conditions of

exclusion and a cruel immigration system in which teachers and scholars—alike—are implicated and must demand change.

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- Young, V. A., & Martinez, A. Y. (Eds.). (2011). *Code-Meshing as world English: Pedagogy, policy, performance*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
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## CURRICULUM VITA

Sara P. Alvarez

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### EDUCATION

**University of Louisville** 2018  
Ph.D. English—Rhetoric and Composition

Dissertation: *Conciencia Bilingüe: The Multilingual and Academic Writing Practices of Undocumented Immigrant Activists*

Committee: Bruce Horner (Chair), Mary P. Sheridan, Susan M. Griffin, and A. Suresh Canagarajah

**University of Kentucky** 2014  
M.A. English—Rhetoric and Composition  
Concentration

**Queens College City University of New York** 2010  
B.A. English Literature, minor in Secondary English  
Education

### RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Multilingual and academic writing; translingual writing theory; transnational writing; qualitative research methods; transmodal and digital composition; culturally sustaining pedagogies; professional and technical writing; literature of immigration; Latinx literature.

## FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

<b>University of Massachusetts Amherst— English Department</b> Peter Elbow Symposium: Transnational Approaches to Language, Literacy, and Activism	June 2018
<b>Stanford University—Graduate School of Education</b> Smitherman & Villanueva Writing Retreat	August 2017
<b>Queens College, City University of New York (CUNY)</b> Multilingual Writing Fellowship	Spring 2017
<b>Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Research Initiative</b> “On Their Own Terms: A Study of Writing Discourses in Colombia, India, Nepal, and Romania” (\$10,000)	2015—2016
<b>University of Louisville—Graduate Student Council (GSC)</b> Research and Student Organization Engagement (\$400)	Spring 2016

## HONORS AND AWARDS

<b>University of Louisville—School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies</b> Guy Stevenson Award for Excellence in Graduate Studies	2017—2018
<b>University of Louisville—School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies</b> Graduate Dean’s Citation Award	2018
<b>Mellon Faculty Diversity Project: 2017 Conference</b> Sustaining Diverse and Inclusive Communities Travel Award (\$800)	Fall 2017
<b>Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)</b> Chairs’ Memorial Scholarship (\$750)	2016—2017

<b>National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)</b> Early Career Educator of Color Leadership Award (\$1,500)	2015—2016
<b>University of Louisville—English Department</b> Barbara Plattus Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching (\$400)	2015—2016
<b>University of Louisville—English Department</b> Gesa E. Kirsch Travel Award (\$300)	2015
<b>University of Louisville—Delphi Center for Teaching and Learning</b> Faculty Favorite: An Outstanding Professor Nominated by Students	2015—2016 2014—2015
<b>Queens College, CUNY—Department of Secondary Education,</b> Outstanding Student Achievement Award in the field of English Education	2010
<b>Queens College, CUNY—Department of Secondary Education</b> Honors in Secondary Education	2010

## PUBLICATIONS

### *Articles and Essays*

- “Reflexive Ethnography as Decolonial: Latina ‘Researcher Accountability’ in Translanguaging With and For Undocumented Students.” In *Nuestra América: Latinx Perspectives on Writing, Rhetorics, and Literacies*. Eds. Raúl Sánchez, and Iris D. Ruiz. National Council of Teachers of English Press, (forthcoming).
- “Transnational and Transmodal Community Alliances: Southern Latinx Students Digital and Culturally Sustaining Practices.” Co-authored with Steven Alvarez. In *Community Action for Social Change: A Digital Archive*. Eds. Victor del Hierro, Isabel Baca, and Laura Gonzales. Parlor Press, (forthcoming).
- “Trauma-Informed Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: Working with Rising Sixth Grade Black and Latina Girls and their Communities of



Struggle.” Co-authored with Michelle Day. *Community Listening*. Spec. issue of *Community Literacy Journal*, (forthcoming).

“On Multimodality: A Manifesto.” Co-authored with Rick Wysocki, Jon Udelson, Caitlin Ray, Amy Nichols, Jessie Newman, Laura Matravers, Ashanka Kumari, Layne Gordon, Khirsten Echols, Michelle Day, Michael Bauman, and Dánielle Nicole DeVoss. In *Multimodality: History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*. Eds. Jennifer Lee and Santosh Khadka. Utah State University Press, (forthcoming).

“Translingual Practice, Ethnic Identities, and Voice in Writing.” Co-authored with Suresh Canagarajah, Eunjeong Lee, Jerry Won Lee, and Shakil Rabbi. In *Crossing Divides*. Eds. Bruce Horner and Laura Tetreault. Utah State University Press, 2017, pp. 31—47.

“On Multimodal Composing.” Co-authored with Michael Bauman, Michelle Day, Khirsten Echols, Layne Gordon, Ashanka Kumari, Laura Matravers, Jessie Newman, Amy Nichols, Caitlin Ray, Jon Udelson, Rick Wysocki, and Dánielle Nicole DeVoss. *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 21. 2 (2017), digital.

“The Translingual Biblioteca: A Case Study of a Latin American Ethnolinguistic Community Library in the *Nuevo* US South.” Co-authored with Steven Alvarez. *Pedagogies of Resistance and Self-Determination*. Spec. issue of *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 49.4 (2016): 403—413.

### ***Book Reviews***

“Composition Rhetoric’s Translingual Turn: Multilingual Approaches to Writing.” Rev. of *Reworking English in Rhetoric and Composition: Global Interrogations, Local Interventions*. Eds. Bruce Horner and Karen Kopelson. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 241.1 (2016): 155—161.

### ***Manuscripts Under Submission***

“You know, India has like 132 languages”: Everyday U.S. Undocumented Activist Language Architecture as Critical Practice.” *Translinguistics: Negotiating Innovation and Ordinarity*. Eds. Jerry Won Lee, and Sender Dovchin. Routledge—London, (accepted).

“Pedagogies of Digital Composing through a Translingual Approach.” Co-authored with Cristina Sánchez-Martín, Lavinia Hirsu, Laura Gonzales, *Computers and Composition*, (in process).

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND TALKS

“‘Immigration and citizenship have always been an Asian American issue’: An Intersectional Argument for Delinking Undocumented from Latinx.” *Rhetoric Society of America*. Minneapolis, MN, (Accepted for May 2018).

“Researcher ‘Accountability’ in (Trans)Languaging With and For Undocumented Students.” *Conference on College Composition and Communication*. Kansas City, MO, 2018.

“Undocumented, Trilingual, and ‘Unapologetic’ Joy: When the State of Insecurity has Always been Present for Undocumented Bilingual and Culturally Rich Students.” *Modern Language Association*. NY, NY, 2018.

“‘Not Your Model Minority’: Undocumented Asian Students in the Immigrant Rights Struggle.” *Mellon Faculty Diversity Project: Sustaining Diverse and Inclusive Communities Conference*. NY, NY, 2017.

“Trauma-Informed Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: Working With Rising Sixth Grade Black and Latina Girls and Their Communities of Struggle.” *Conference on Community Writing: Engaging Networks and Ecologies*. Boulder, CO, 2017.

“Negotiating, Contesting, and Transforming US-based Writing Practices in Colombia.” Featured Panel at the *Conference on College Composition and Communication*. Portland, OR, 2017.

“La Escritura Académica en Colombia: Engaging the Public on Why Writing Matters.” *Writing Research Across Borders IV*. Bogotá, Colombia, 2017.

“Critical Teacher Reflexivity: On ‘Participating’ and Writing About Justice.” *National Council of Teachers of English*. Atlanta, GA, 2016.

“Languaging in Qualitative Research with a Bluegrass Ethnolinguistic Community.” *Thomas R. Watson Conference*. Louisville, KY, 2016.

“Autoethnography of Multilingualism from a Bilingual Perspective: Needed Change in the Rhetorical Study of Translingualism.” *Rhetoric Society of America*. Atlanta, GA, 2016.

“Transnational Youth and Affect: Ethnographic Narratives of Emerging Practices and Polymedia.” *Conference on College Composition and Communication*. Houston, TX, 2016.

Co-organizer and Chair—“Engaging the Global in the Teaching of Writing: Critical and Multiperspective Approaches.” Workshop at the *Conference on College Composition and Communication*. Houston, TX, 2016.

“Activists Citizens: DREAMers (Re)Imagining Citizenship.” *National Council of Teachers of English*. Minneapolis, MN, 2015.

“Agentive Translanguaging: Emerging Practices and Polymedia.” *Conference on Community Writing: Building Engaged Infrastructure*. Boulder, CO, 2015.

“Shuttling Identities and Linguistic Repertoires: A Case Study of Two Middle School Age Emerging Bilinguals in the *Nuevo New South*.” *Conference on College Composition and Communication*. Tampa, FL, 2015.

“Activist Citizens: Transforming the Social Conscience: DREAMers.” Latinx Caucus Workshop at the *Conference on College Composition and Communication*. Tampa, FL, 2015.

“Crossing Monolingual Borders: Looking Back to the Translingual Poetics of Kenneth Burke to Move Forward.” *Rhetoric Society of America*. San Antonio, TX, 2014.

“Nuestros Sonidos: Strengthening Heritage Language Usage Through Bilingual Service Learning.” Latinx Caucus Workshop at the *Conference on College Composition and Communication*. Indianapolis, IN, 2014.

“A ‘Babel’ of Voices”: A Burkean Approach to Translingual Rhetoric in the Writing Classroom.” “‘Papers, Please’”: *Theorizing Border Discourses after Arizona House Bill 2281 & Senate Bill 1070 Conference*. University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, 2013.

“Celebraciones Bilingües: Service Learning and Preschool Literacy Practices Through Literature and Music.” *College Language Association Convention*. Lexington, KY, 2013.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Queens College, CUNY Part-Time Adjunct  
Department of Linguistics and Communication  
Disorders**

Spring 2018

Worked with Linguistics and TESOL student-teachers in the development of academic writing practices while interrogating and analyzing bilingualism's history, policy and its diverse forms of practice.

- LCD 206 W: Bilingualism  
<https://bilinguallcd206.wordpress.com/>

**University of Louisville Graduate Teaching Assistant  
Program in Rhetoric and Composition**

2014—2016

Guided students in the development of academic inquiry through ethnographic methodology and community engagement.

Devised and implemented syllabi merging communities, translanguaging, and academic research as its main focus.

- ENG 303: Science and Technical Writing-WR  
<https://eng30301sciencetechnicalwriting.wordpress.com/>
- ENG 102: Intermediate College Writing  
<https://eng10210spring2015.wordpress.com/>
- ENG 101-88: Introduction to College Writing,  
Designed for Emergent Bilingual and International Students, and in-line with the revision made to the NCTE Ethnic Studies Statement on Language Plurality and Difference.  
<https://eng10188fall2015.wordpress.com/>
- ENG 101: Introduction to College Writing  
<https://eng101fall2014.wordpress.com/>

**University of Kentucky Graduate Teaching Assistant  
Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies**

2013—2014

- WRD 110: COMMUNICATION AND COMPOSITION I
- WRD 111: COMMUNICATION AND COMPOSITION II

**English Language Arts (ELA) Student-Teacher** 2008—2010  
East-West School of International Studies, P.S., Flushing,  
NY

**English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher Assistant** 2007—2008  
Information Technology, P.S., Long Island City, NY.

## ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Research Assistant to Dr. Bruce Horner** 2015—2017  
University of Louisville

- Conducted research and edited writing for faculty scholarship on translingual theory and English-only ideology; managed editorial process for two collections focusing on academic writing, multilingualism, and writing program administration.

**Multilingual Writing Fellow** Spring 2017

- Studied institutional and curricular documents tied to the discourse and teaching of academic writing to develop a translingual-oriented framework that centered the language practices of language-minoritized youths in the teaching of writing.
- Proposed specific revisions to the writing curriculum stipulated for academic writing, working to equitably include and address the local multilingual and international student body at Queens College.

**Translator and Spanish Language Editor** 2015—2016  
Louisville, Kentucky.

- *Living Out Loud, Volume 2: Writings by the Latino Outreach Leaders*  
[http://www.amazon.com/dp/1497496543/ref=rdr\\_ext\\_tmb](http://www.amazon.com/dp/1497496543/ref=rdr_ext_tmb)

- Writing Tutor and Consultant** 2012—2014  
 University of Kentucky, Center for Academic and Tutorial Services (CATS)
- Worked with and mentored 35 writing tutors assigned to student-athletes enrolled in more than 15 different writing courses in the university.
- Writing Consultant** 2012—2013  
 University of Kentucky Writing Center
- Private Tutor for Preschool Age Children** 2008—2012  
 Upper East Side, Manhattan, NY.

## SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

### *Editorial*

- Article Reviewer for** *Lenguas Modernas*, Universidad de Chile
- Special Issue Reviewer for** *CrossPol Journal*: “Language Difference Across and Within Borders”
- Stage 1 and Rainbow Strand Reviewer** for the *National Council of Teachers of English Convention*.
- Stage 1 Reviewer** for the *Conference on College Composition and Communication*
- Reviewer** for the *Cultural Rhetorics Conference*
- Review Board Member** for *Constellations: A Cultural Rhetorics Publishing Space*

### *Committee Work*

- Appointed Social Media Committee Member** 2015—  
 Current
- Led and founded a digital coalition with scholars (within and beyond the United States) in fields related to the

teaching of writing in post-secondary education, to foster and promote transnational scholarship.

- Transnational Writing at CCCC  
<https://transnationalwriting.wordpress.com/>

**Research Consultant—NCTE Policy Report on Latin@ Students in Kentucky**

2016

- Collected and cross-analyzed educational reports, ethnographic data, and historical pieces on the growth of Latinx communities in the state of Kentucky, to formulate a set of policy-driven suggestions and markers of need for these communities to access higher education.
- Report available here: <http://www.ncte.org/policy-analysis-initiative?reportid=435>

**Co-Sponsor & Researcher—NCTE Position Statement on Ethnic Studies**

2015

- Co-led coalition among scholars in Ethnic Studies, English Education Rhetoric and Writing, and Urban Education to address the impact of ethnic studies education in the lives of minoritized youths.
- Developed a research-based statement—later adopted as a position statement by the National Council of Teachers of English—on the importance of working *with* and *for* the sustainability of students' pluralistic language practices in educational settings.
- Statement available here:  
<http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/ethnic-studies-k12-curr>

**INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

**Cross-Cultural Writing Circle Designer & Teacher**  
University of Louisville First-Year Initiative

2015—2016

- Designed and launched a translingual-oriented cross-cultural writing circle focusing on

examining diverse writing identities and positionalities and writing difference.

- Met with multi-ethnic and multilingual first-year students and local community members over the course of a semester (in one-hour sessions), to examine and discuss how bicultural and translingual writers shuttle and strategize to tell their stories and “This I Believe.”
- Guided and provided feedback to students and community members in crafting their own “This I Believe” essays.

**Undocumented Students Resource Council (USRC) at UofL**

2014—2016

- Co-founded and organized an institutional university council to serve and advocate for undocumented youths and students in the Louisville area.
- In collaboration with *FIRE* and *United We DREAM* led two undocutrainings and trained University staff, as well as administrators, on how to recognize and address the struggles of undocumented youths seeking to obtain a college degree in the state of Kentucky.

**Co-Organizer & Teacher—Digital Media Academy (DMA)**

Summer—  
2015

- Designed curriculum for the University of Louisville DMA.
- Taught middle school girls digital image manipulation, video editing, and collaborative transmodal composition and rhetoric.
- Participated in institutional assessment of DMA’s pedagogy.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Advisor and Volunteer for  
Fighting for Immigrant Rights & Equality  
(FIRE)**

2014—2016

University of Louisville

- Attended weekly meetings to discuss the educational needs of immigrant youth in the region the potential options to attend college.
- Planned Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) workshops for the immigrant community in the area.
- Assisted and participated in training for DACA legal clinics in region.

**Bilingual Homework-Help Tutor**

2012—2014

Village Branch Public Library

- Assisted elementary and middle school students with homework completion.
- Encouraged and supported students with reading every day for at least 20 minutes.

**Volunteer for the Immigrant Community in  
Kentucky**

2013

Oficina del Inmigrante Solidaridad e Información  
(OISI)

**Mentor and Tutor, Mexican American Students’  
Alliance (MASA)**

2009—2012

- Tutored and mentored Mexican and Mexican American children on a weekly basis as part of an after-school program that aims to promote literacy for Mexican families.

- Worked with Mexican parents and their children, to help them better understand the American school system and its expectations.
- Planned and held annual tutor training and follow-up meetings.

### ***Community Lectures and Workshops***

“Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies for Institutional Community Engagement” Pedagogy Workshop, Rhetoric and Composition Program DMA Camp. University of Louisville, KY, 2016.

“Connecting Students with Communities.” Pedagogy Workshop, Rhetoric and Composition Program. University of Louisville, KY, 2015.  
 “Representations of Latin@s in the U.S.” Teach-In College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Louisville, KY, 2015.

Organizer and Speaker—“Navigating the New York City School System: How to Escape Our Children’s Failing Schools.” For families of the Mexican American Students’ Alliance (MASA). Queens, NY, 2011.

Organizer and Speaker—“Culture Nurturing Mentors: Methods for Best Serving a Minoritized Community,” presented for new and returning tutors of MASA. Baruch College CUNY, NY, 2010.

### **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

- American Educational Research Association (AERA)
- College Composition and Communication (CCC)
- Modern Language Association (MLA)
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- Rhetoric Society of America (RSA)

### **LANGUAGES**

Spanish (academic reading, professional writing and speaking)  
 Portuguese (academic reading, functional writing and speaking)

## **SPECIAL INTEREST AFFILIATIONS AND INVOLVEMENT**

- Latinx Caucus at CCCC and NCTE.
- Transnational Writing at CCCC.