

2014

In College and Undocumented: An Analysis of the Educational Trajectories of Undocumented Students in North Carolina

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In College and Undocumented: An Analysis of the Educational Trajectories of
Undocumented Students in North Carolina

by

Alessandra Bazo Vienrich

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Research Committee

of Lehigh University

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Sociology

Lehigh University

25 April 2014

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Thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Sociology

IN COLLEGE AND UNDOCUMENTED: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORIES OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS IN NORTH CAROLINA

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my mother; for teaching me by example and for nurturing my inquisitive nature. To Priscilla and Marissa, for giving me a reason to keep going. To my dear friend Kieran, for always believing in me. To Teri, for teaching me that hard work will always pay off. To my Lehigh family- Natalya: The amount of passion and dedication you put into everything you do, has forever changed me and the way I look at the world, Maria: Our conversations and your support throughout this process gave me the sanity that I needed to complete this thesis, Noelle: I will forever cherish you and your input during our final year at Lehigh.

To Dr. Judith Lasker, for going above and beyond to help me at every stage of my time at Lehigh. To Dr. Hugo Ceron-Anaya, for deepening my understanding of sociology and for his support throughout this process. To Dr. Heather Johnson, for taking me in and sharing her wealth of knowledge with me, for shaping my sociological imagination, and for helping me find my true passion through A, B, C, and D.

Last, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the students who shared their life histories with me. Because of you this was possible, and for that, I am forever grateful.

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ABSTRACT

In 2012 implementation of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) allowed for more than 1.5 million undocumented youth to become eligible for work authorization and to qualify for institutional and in some cases, state financial aid (Passel 2012). With these changes, access to higher education became a realistic possibility for undocumented youth all around the United States. Nevertheless, a generation of undocumented students who managed to navigate the college application process and successfully enrolled in institutions of higher education remained.

My research focusses on this generation in relation to their experiences as undocumented students in North Carolina. In conducting interviews in the cities of Winston-Salem and Raleigh, North Carolina, I identified three primary themes, (1) Paying for College, (2) Lack of Guidance, (3) Discrimination, and three secondary themes (1) The Cinderella Effect and the Junior Year Crash, (2) Lack of Continuity, (3) Patriotism and Desire to Join the Military, that contributed to the obstacles these students encountered in their journey to higher education.

Key words: *Undocumented youth, higher education, Latino students, immigration*

INTRODUCTION

Currently, an estimated eleven million undocumented persons live in the United States; 2.1 million are undocumented students (U.S census 2010). Every year, approximately 65,000 of these students graduate from high school and are either banned from enrolling in colleges and universities or are forced to pay out-of-state tuition. As a result only 5 to 10% of the undocumented youth that graduates from high school move on to institutions of higher education (Golden Doors 2012).

In the last two decades, North Carolina's foreign-born population reached unprecedented numbers, and in the process its undocumented immigrant population also increased. As a state with a large agricultural industry, North Carolina had for decades been dependent on migrant workers to satisfy its labor needs. The economic growth that North Carolina exhibited during the early 1990's attracted many of the regular migrant workers to permanently settle in North Carolina, with the knowledge that they could find additional work in other industries such as in manufacturing and construction (Bailey 2005). When in 1996 the implementation of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) made circular migration difficult to execute for migrant workers, a large number of men and women opted for permanently settling in North Carolina. According to the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), between 1990 and 2000, North Carolina was one of the states with the highest increase in unauthorized residents (Thangasamy 2010). Moreover, the implementation of increased border security as a result of September 11, 2001, contributed to the large number of Mexican migrant workers that made up this new undocumented immigrant population of North Carolina.

The men and women who settled in the state between the early 1990's to mid-2000's no longer made the trip alone, but brought with them their families, including a high number of children. It was this shift in migration pattern that made North Carolina the 9th most populated state of undocumented students, with an estimated 31,000 undocumented students (Golden Doors 2012). In 2000, the two areas of North Carolina with the largest concentrations of recent immigrants were the Piedmont Triad and Triangle areas (Bailey 2005).

In 1982, the U.S Supreme Court found it unconstitutional (Plyler v. Doe 457 U.S 202 [1982]), for any state to deny school aged undocumented children free public education. As a result, the undocumented children brought to North Carolina by their migrant worker parents were eligible to receive free public education from kindergarten until the 12th grade. However, Plyler v. Doe's provisions did not extend beyond the 12th grade and once undocumented students graduated from high school, they were faced with a higher education system that prevented them from being eligible for in-state tuition and federal financial aid. Currently, sixteen states have legislations that allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition and be eligible for some financial aid; North Carolina is not one of them. In addition, states like Alabama and South Carolina prohibits undocumented students from enrolling in public colleges and universities (see appendix 6).

Previous studies show that state legislation that allows undocumented students to move on to higher education plays a key role in increasing the college enrollment rate of Latino students. Nevertheless, the small number of states with such policies poses an ongoing problem for students who reside in states without tuition policies for undocumented students. In an effort to make higher education accessible for undocumented students nationwide, in 2003 the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act was introduced to Congress. The DREAM Act would have provided a federal policy in which undocumented

students were allowed to pay in-state tuition and be eligible for federal financial aid. Despite bipartisan efforts and multiple introductions to congress since its initial proposal, the DREAM Act was stalled in Congress and lacked enough votes when it was last introduced in 2011.

In an attempt to make current immigration policy more comprehensive and to lift the threat of deportation from undocumented youth, in June 2012 the Obama administration released a memorandum granting consideration for Deferred Action to certain undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children. The following statement by Secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, illustrates some of the provisions needed to benefit from this memorandum:

“Certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several key guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal, and would then be eligible for work authorization. Deferred action is a discretionary determination to defer removal action of an individual as an act of prosecutorial discretion. Deferred action does not provide an individual with lawful status.” (USCIS)

It should be noted that the eligibility guidelines for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) were essentially the same that were proposed for the federal DREAM Act. While the implementation of DACA was extremely beneficial for undocumented students, many of the educational hurdles they experienced, such as eligibility for federal financial aid and in-state tuition, remain present in their lives.

Moreover, despite the newly implemented measures to ameliorate the legal and educational barriers that undocumented youth face, a generation of undocumented students who navigated the higher educational system without Deferred Action remains a part of North Carolina’s undocumented immigrant population. Janet K. Lopez was the first scholar to bring attention to this group in her book, *Undocumented Students and the Policies of Wasted Potential*. In this case study of 5 undocumented students in Benson Guthrie High School, in Sunder

Crossing*¹, North Carolina, Lopez reveals themes related to these students' experiences with race, inequality, and the inferiority imbedded in their undocumented identities as they are unable to continue on to higher education.

This master's thesis adds to what is already available on undocumented students in the Southeast, but more importantly to the literature on undocumented students in North Carolina. Through interviews with undocumented students who were able to navigate the college application process and successfully enrolled in college, this thesis unearths the trials and tribulations that this group of ten students underwent during their last years of high school. In asking questions about their educational trajectories as well as questions related to their lives as undocumented youth in North Carolina, I intend to provide an informed profile of their lives as undocumented youth with aspirations of moving on to higher education.

In addition, by using Latino/as Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) I was able to dissect the educational trajectories of undocumented students as they were shaped by the intersectionality of factors such as race, ethnicity, immigration status, and in some cases language. In utilizing the argument that racism is deeply ingrained at the core of American society, I argue that the participants I interviewed were subject to discrimination based on race in addition to being subjects of other layers of oppression, as is argued by Latino/as Critical Race scholars.

The Research

My interest in undocumented students in North Carolina originated from my own experiences as an immigrant living in the state when anti-immigrant policies were on the verge of becoming enshrined in state law. As a high school student in the Piedmont Triad I had first-hand encounters with talented Latino undocumented students who were being robbed of their

¹ *Denotes pseudonym

educational dreams. It was this encounter with the inequalities experienced by undocumented students as a result of their immigration status that sparked my interest in this particular subset of the undocumented student population.

As a graduate student at Lehigh University, I saw the opportunity to take my personal observations of this population and turn it into empirical research. After discussing the idea with key faculty in the Sociology & Anthropology Department, and with the help of a Dale Strohl Summer Research Fellowship, I traveled to North Carolina in July 2013. During my two weeks in the field, I recruited participants who were undocumented at the time that they applied to college and who had been successful in enrolling in institutions of higher education. At the end of the data collection period, I returned to Pennsylvania with 10 interviews of undocumented students from Raleigh and Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

A Note on the Participants

In an effort to abide to the confidentiality and anonymity clauses of my IRB proposal, I reached out to various community members involved with this population and asked them to circulate information about my research, in hopes to have students contact me to become participants in the study. As a result, the students in my sample were willing and in some cases eager to share their life histories, and each of them brought unique depth to the understanding of the role that their undocumented status played in shaping their identities and their opportunities in higher education. In order to understand these students' journeys to higher education, it is important to look at various aspects of their lives. The following passages provide a brief overview of the participants and their lives as they became undocumented youth in North Carolina.

Maria

After Maria's parents decided to make their journey to the United States, Maria went to live with her grandparents. Three years later once her parents were able to save enough money to pay for a Coyote*, 7 year old Maria, accompanied by her aunt, attempted to cross the United States-Mexico border so she could be reunited with her parents. Maria's recollection of the events include her being involved in a car accident the first time they attempted to cross and being detained by the Mexican police during the second attempt. Finally, after walking for 6 hours and at one point being carried by one of the coyotes, Maria and her aunt were able to make to the United States on their third try.

In high school Maria excelled academically and was approached by many universities in North Carolina and from neighboring states. However, all of the universities that recruited her recanted once they found out the truth about Maria's immigration status. At the time that I interviewed her, Maria was 20 years old and was enrolled at Quaker Mills Community College* in the Piedmont Triad.

Martha

The first time Martha came to the United States she was 9 years old. She remembers a long walk and taking turns carrying her 3 year old sister. After what appeared to be days of walking, Martha and her siblings arrived in the United States. In high school Martha served as an interpreter to newly arrived immigrant students and helped many of her peers adapt to their new lives in America. When time to apply to college came, Martha's 3.8 GPA and high SAT scores were not enough to get her a scholarship, and she and her family were faced with high monthly tuition payments. The financial and psychological burdens that came with having to work two jobs to be able to afford tuition at Rural College* is what pushed Martha to withdraw after her first semester of college. With hopes of starting her journey in higher education as a documented

student, Martha returned to Mexico and applied for a student VISA to another country. When things didn't go as planned, a desperate Martha attempted to cross the Mexican border, and this time her journey was quite different. After periling in the dessert for days she was forced to give up and make her way back to Mexico. After waiting in Mexico for 2 years, she was able to adjust her status through marriage. At the time of the interview, Martha was preparing to re-enroll at the same college from which she had to withdraw after her first semester of freshman year.

Nancy

Nancy was one of the siblings that Martha helped walk through the dessert. Unlike Martha, Nancy's memories of her journey to America were less vivid and some of her first memories were from when she was already in school in North Carolina. She remembers her family's struggles as they settled in North Carolina and recalls how she and her family shared one mobile home with two other families. In school, Nancy excelled academically despite the fact that at times she felt like the ESL program acted as a double edge sword and didn't always allowed her to push herself to her fullest potential.

As she left middle school, Nancy was forced to make the difficult decision of either going to a regular public high school or to a charter school that would allow her to complete two years of college while still in high school. Even though going to this charter school shattered her dreams of joining the high school soccer team and the ROTC program, she opted for taking the opportunity to get two years of college at no cost. Although at the time that I interviewed Nancy she had already benefitted from Deferred Action from Childhood Arrivals, she was still undocumented when she was going through the college application process. Despite having a 4.2 GPA, Nancy decided to enroll in her 'safe school' because it was the most affordable choice

for her. At the time of the interview, she was preparing to start her freshman year and was looking forward to pursuing a physical therapy major.

Dulce

When Dulce journeyed to the United States she was only 7 years old. Her passage through the U.S-Mexico border was “not that bad” until she and her sister were able to cross the border, but her parents were detained in Mexico. After waiting for days on the U.S side of the border, Dulce and her parents were reunited and made their journey to small town near the North Carolina coast. In Tookersville, NC*, Dulce had a small town upbringing and considered herself a normal kid until she was in high school and began to look for jobs. Being in the top 10% of her graduating class, Dulce began to feel the effects of her immigration status when college after college began to close the doors on this brilliant student with a 4.3 GPA.

After being accepted by all the schools she applied to, but not being able to afford the tuition, her parents were able to take out a \$13,000 loan to cover the expenses of tuition for her freshman year. Dulce was able to attend Rural College* for two years but eventually was forced to withdraw because she could no longer afford to cover the cost of tuition. At the time that I interviewed Dulce, she was back at Rural College* after an anonymous donor who had heard about her story, offered to sponsor her and cover her educational costs for the rest of her college career.

Rachel

Like many children before her, 9-year-old Rachel made her way to the United States pretending to be asleep in the back of a car. After years of working in the United States, Rachel’s parents had been able to save enough money to pay for the safest passage for Rachel and her brother, so they were able to come to the United States posing as the children of an American couple. Rachel considered herself lucky, for all she had to do was cut her hair to resemble the couple’s

daughter and pretend to be asleep whenever they were stopped at the border. After living in California for a year, Rachel and her family migrated to North Carolina in search of more opportunities.

Rachel describes her experience growing up in North Carolina as being “really bad at times, and really good at others.” In high school, Rachel always knew she was different and remembers not being able to do certain things, like get a driver’s license or get a job. By the time she was ready to apply to college, she was faced with the realization that in order to go to a 4 year college or university, she would have to pay thousands of dollars as an out of state resident. As a result, Rachel opted for enrolling in a community college in the Piedmont triad in order to pursue her dream of becoming an architect. When I interviewed Rachel, she had been able to enroll in a 4-year college after finishing her Associates degree in architecture and was pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Theology.

Mario

Mario was the only participant who didn’t have to make the journey across the U.S- Mexico border in order to immigrate to the United States. When he was 9 years old he and his family were able to get a tourist visa and travel to the United States, where they settled in a small town west of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Growing up Mario was always grateful of being able to live in and go to school in the United States. He shared that the fact that he remembered what schools were like in Mexico, made him feel appreciative of the “luxuries” provided to him by the public school system in Rossville, NC*.

By the time he reached high school, Mario was a high achieving student who took as many honors and AP classes as his high school offered. Despite being ranked #5 in his graduating class, Mario’s journey to higher education was obscured by the lack of information and misinformation he received in regards to his options as an undocumented student. As a result, by

the time Mario reached his senior year of high school, he had not applied to any colleges or universities. When I asked him what had prevented him from doing so, he shared that he truly believed that despite his brilliant academic record, his undocumented status would prevent him from enrolling in any college or university and from receiving any scholarships. It was only after a chance encounter with a former ESL teacher that Mario was rightly informed about his options and began the college application process. When I interviewed Mario, he was enrolled in community college and was planning to transfer to a 4 year college or university to major in biomedical engineering.

Cecilia

Though Cecilia was only one and a half years old when she came to the United States, and had no recollection of this experience, at 21 years old, her life had been filled with hardships often caused by her undocumented status. After her parents' divorce, her mother and siblings left California and settled in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Cecilia remembers her childhood as being difficult and described her experiences as an undocumented immigrant, as being part of a subculture where she felt like she was not on the same playing field as documented non-Mexican students.

At 15, Cecilia found out she was pregnant and married her high school boyfriend one month before their baby was born. Despite her new responsibilities as a mother, Cecilia excelled academically and graduated in the top 20% of her class. She later applied to college and was accepted and offered a partial scholarship. Unfortunately, as a result of domestic violence, Cecilia had to leave college during her first semester, and was forced to turn attention to her and her son's wellbeing. When I interviewed Cecilia, she had filed for divorced and was preparing to go back to the same college from which she had to withdraw her freshman year.

Bonnie

Bonnie's journey to the United States exemplifies the transition out of circular migration that many migrant workers underwent during the 1990's. In 1999 when Bonnie was 13 years old, her father who had been working in North Carolina, sent for his family so they could finally join him in the United States. After being stranded at the border and being separated from their mother, Bonnie and her brother were able to find help and called their father who was able to pick them up and take them to a safe location. Despite the fact that Bonnie's mother was able to make passage a few days later, being stranded at the border and spending the night in the U.S Mexico border, was an experience that remained vividly ingrained in Bonnie's memory 13 years later.

As a teenager in Raleigh, North Carolina, Bonnie had trouble adapting to her new life in the United States, and she remembers struggling to learn English and thinking about her time in the United States as something temporary. When Bonnie was in high school, legislation preventing access to college for undocumented students, put a dent on Bonnie's college application process and despite her promising academic record, she opted to not apply to college. After working for some years and realizing that North Carolina would become her permanent home, Bonnie began the college application process when she was 23 years old and was able to enroll in a 4 year college where she received a partial scholarship. At the time I interviewed Bonnie, she was on her second year of college and remained undecided about her major.

Carmen

After her mother migrated to the United States, Carmen and her brothers were sent to live with her grandmother in Veracruz, Mexico. Six years later, Carmen's mother was able to save enough money and when Carmen was 15 years old she arrived in Troy*, NC. Unable to speak English, the first months of high school were challenging for Carmen, and she remembers trying to make many Hispanic friends since they were the only ones she could communicate with.

When Carmen was a junior in high school, she realized that college might be an option for her when one of her undocumented friends was accepted to college. She shared that after this, she worked twice as hard in school and that she enrolled in honors and AP classes and was the first female to take AP calculus in her high school.

When she was a senior in high school, Carmen applied to two colleges but because of her inability to fill out the FAFSA form, both colleges considered her application incomplete. After she had lost all hope, Carmen was approached by someone with connections at a nearby 4 year college who encouraged her to fill out an application at that school. Thanks to academic scholarships she received from that college and thanks to the support of her county's board of education and from churches and other community members, she was able to raise the remaining \$10,000 that she needed to cover tuition during her freshman year.

Jaime

Having left Mexico when he was only 5 years old, Jaime's incorporation into the American educational system was a smooth transition. Because of his inability to speak English, Jaime was held back for a year in kindergarten, but thanks to his great ESL teacher, he was able to move forward in school without further delays. In 3rd grade, Jaime's teachers recognized his academic potential, and he was placed in the AG (academically gifted) program. From then on Jaime went on to the college track in high school and began taking AP classes his freshman year, graduating with a total of eight AP classes and having scored 4's and 5's in all of his AP exams.

As an academically gifted student, Jaime was exposed to many more opportunities than the rest of the students in this sample. Every year he attended conferences at local universities in the Research Triangle and was able to develop relationships with various members of the community. Despite his gifted potential, Jaime worked as an agricultural worker picking tobacco every summer from the time he was 14 years old. As time to apply for college neared,

he was fortunate enough to be able to apply to a newly implemented scholarship program exclusive for undocumented students, which covered all college costs for up to 4 years. At the time that I interviewed Jaime, he was preparing to start his freshman year at the school of his dreams, and had been a recipient of the outside scholarship which covered his tuition, room and board, etc for the duration of his undergraduate career.

Purpose of Research

This thesis emerges from my efforts to understand what factors contributed to the underrepresentation of undocumented students in higher education. More importantly, these interviews aim to discover how the North Carolina undocumented student population navigated the college application process during a time when tuition policies for undocumented students were constantly changing. Through the use of Critical Race Theory and Latinas/as Critical Race Theory, this master's thesis explores the obstacles set by anti-immigrant legislation as undocumented students aimed to access the higher education system.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Some of the recurring themes encountered in the literature revolve around immigration policy, the socioeconomic barriers that undocumented youth face, and the lack of scholarship on undocumented youth in higher education. While there is a growing number of articles and dissertations on the topic (Rincon 2008), only a handful of books on undocumented immigrants and higher education could be located. The nature of the research on undocumented students also proved to be limited, and often lacked the ethnographic depth that difficult to access populations, such as undocumented immigrants, require. Thus, the literature leaves many questions about this group of the population unanswered. The paragraphs that follow illustrate the current state of the literature on undocumented students in higher education. The most relevant themes surrounding undocumented students in higher education include: Educational policies and access to higher education for undocumented students, methodological approaches to studying this population, and lack of scholarship on undocumented students and higher education in new immigrant destinations.

Undocumented Youth: The Past, The Present, and The Future

While much of the literature is in the form of articles and dissertations, the breadth of themes explored within the life trajectories of undocumented students, reaffirms the relevance of analyzing the state of undocumented youth in higher education. Dissertation titles such as, “Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Undocumented Youth” and “In the Shadows: The Struggles of An Undocumented Immigrant”, show the direction that scholars are taking in exploring the social and legal barriers that undocumented students currently face.

Despite the promising nature of the research on undocumented students and higher education, the current literature on this group appears to be concentrated on more traditional

immigrant destinations, such as Texas, California, and New York. Ethnographic studies on undocumented Latino college students have been conducted in such states, and their findings have provided important insights into the educational experiences of undocumented Latino students (Perez and Douglas 2011). Nevertheless, the recent changes in immigrant destinations and the rapid and vast increase of Latino immigrants in Southeastern states, has created a need for empirical attention to new populations of undocumented youth.

As Williams Perez and Richard Douglas emphasize in their book, *Undocumented Latino College Students: Their Socioemotional and Academic Experiences* (2011), “Unauthorized immigrants are now spread more broadly than in the past into states where relatively few had settled two decades ago, including Georgia, North Carolina, and other Southern states.” (Perez 2011). As this excerpt illustrates, the current literature on undocumented students has left a gap in regards to states that in the past two decades have become immigrant destinations. This is problematic because it is precisely in these new immigration ‘hubs’ that undocumented students who were brought to the United States as children are coming of age.

As mentioned earlier, the need for ethnographic accounts by undocumented immigrants remains present in the literature. Much of what is known about the education of undocumented immigrants is through statistics reported by think tanks such as the Center for American Progress and The Pew Hispanic Center. Longitudinal studies such as Alejandro Porté’s & Ruben Rumbaut’s Children of Immigrant Longitudinal Study (CILS) have provided survey data on the life course of immigrant youth and served as a starting point for further quantitative approaches in the study of immigrant youth. As a result, the need for incorporating life history narratives as a complement to survey data and statistics about immigrant youth has become apparent. As Phillip Kasinitz notes when discussing the difficulty in assessing the educational attainment of the 1.5 and second-generation children of immigrants “Excellent case studies of particular

communities provide some indications about the adult second generation, but not broad evidence” (Kasinitz et al, 2008:11).

Over the past decade, qualitative approaches to studying the undocumented youth population have become more commonly used among those who seek to create a fuller understanding of undocumented students’ experiences in higher education. Books such as Jason Irizarry’s *The Latinization of U.S Schools: Successful Teaching and Learning in Shifting Cultural Contexts* (2011), serve as an example of the power of using testimony-based approaches to tell the realities of the American educational system and the structural limitations for the educational attainment of Latino students. As he mentions when discussing his choice of methodology,

“In this case, *testimonies* were used to foreground the perspectives of Latino youth, a group whose perspectives in schools and educational needs have been largely overlooked and undervalued; they were narrated by the students themselves; and they aimed to transform practice and policy and to make a unique, valuable contribution to the emerging body of literature for Latino education and youth participatory action research.” (P. 9)

Dissertations such as Karla Sanchez’s (2010) are also great examples of the value that using qualitative methodology can add in terms of richness of data. In her dissertation, Sanchez clearly states that the purpose of her thesis is to,

“Add meaning and a story line behind the issue of illegal immigration (as well as to) discuss the difficulty in being undocumented, especially in an education system unknowledgeable about the issue.” (Sanchez, 4)

Through the use of narratives, Sanchez provides the reader an informative and powerful account of the struggles and journeys of undocumented youth. Additionally, Sanchez’s approach adds meaning and a voice to the issue of ‘illegal’ immigration, while incorporating a dialogue on the realities of an educational system unaware of the needs of undocumented youth.

Sources such as Janet K. Lopez's *Undocumented Students and the Policies of Wasted Potentials* are examples of the need that exists when it comes to studying the undocumented youth of North Carolina. Lopez's book is the only one that exclusively focusses on the experiences of undocumented students in this state. Through ethnographic research and interviews with 5 participants and 6 educators, the book describes the struggles that undocumented students undergo in their pursuit of higher education. In reading Lopez's work we can see the value in using qualitative methodology to study this population.

Educational Policy: The Legacy of IRCA and IIRIRA

Another theme found in the literature is that which focuses on state and national policies surrounding undocumented immigrant youth and higher education. While the current state of U.S policy towards undocumented immigrants is not limited to the undocumented student population, the bipolar nature of the nation's anti-immigrant policies affect this population the most. In order to understand the roots of the current immigration debate, one must first examine the events that led to the restrictive and unresolved immigration policy currently in place in the United States.

In November of 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). In doing so, an estimated 3 million undocumented persons who had either resided in the United States since before January 1st, 1982 or were employed as seasonal agricultural workers in the year prior to May, 1986, were able to regularize their immigration status (USCIS). While popular amongst the Latino community, for an estimated 2.4 million of those who benefitted were from Latin American countries, the true legacy of IRCA became apparent in the anti-immigrant policies that were put into place in the years to follow.

After Pete Wilson's re-election as governor of California in 1994, the undocumented immigrant population of California was struck with a series of anti-immigrant practices implemented under proposition 187 (ACLU 1999). With this initiative, the state aimed to limit the use of public services to U.S citizens and permanent residents, in an effort to take away basic services such as public education and healthcare from undocumented immigrants. In addition, this measure encouraged government workers to denounce perceived undocumented individuals who attempted to apply for public benefits. At the time, the state's undocumented population was primarily comprised of Latino immigrants, therefore, it was this group that was most affected by the discriminatory practices put into place (Flores and Chapa 2009). While eventually proposition 187 was overturned, the hyper vigilance of undocumented Latino immigrants exhibited in California, set a model for many states to come, and it was not long before states such as Florida, Arizona, and Texas, adopted similar anti-immigrant policies.

By the time the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) was passed in 1996, the anti-immigrant politics that originated in California had already reached policy makers in Washington, D.C, and the legacy of proposition 187 had been deeply imbedded in this new piece of legislation. The passage of IIRIRA is particularly relevant to undocumented students because it incorporated the clause that would lead to the current state of undocumented students' access to higher education. Under IIRIRA's section 505, unauthorized aliens were deemed,

“Not eligible on the basis of residence within a State (or a political subdivision) for any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such benefit (in no less an amount, duration, and scope) without regard to whether the citizen or national is such a resident.” (Feder, 2006)

The DREAM Act: State v. Federal

In an effort to counteract the effects of IIRIRA's section 505, members of congress introduced the DREAM Act in 2003. Under the DREAM Act, undocumented youth who came to the United States before they reached 16 years of age, lived in the United States for at least 5 years consecutively, graduated high school, and demonstrate good moral character, would become eligible for conditional immigration status. The literature indicates that passage of the DREAM Act at the federal level, would provide a solution to the educational disparities that undocumented students currently face. While reasons such as economic and tax-based advantages are emphasized when discussing the advantages and disadvantages of passing this piece of legislation, more humanitarian reasons are also taken into consideration when discussing the passage of the DREAM Act. In his book, *Right to DREAM: Immigration Reform and America's Future (2013)*, William Schwab suggests that when looking at the DREAM Act, the principles imbedded in Plyler v. Doe should be considered as a basis to support the debate in favor of college access for undocumented youth (p. 8). While Plyler v. Doe, provided access to K-12 education for undocumented youth, a gap currently exists in regards to the educational future of undocumented students once they graduate from high school. Schwab argues that adopting the DREAM Act at the national level would close this gap in educational access for undocumented students.

It is important to mention that while the DREAM Act has not been passed at the national level, currently nineteen states² have policies that allow undocumented students³ to attend college and pay in-state tuition (Schwab 2013). Some of the arguments in support of adopting state-by-state DREAM Act like policies align with the principles of the Plyler v. Doe decision in

² California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, and Washington, Wisconsin.

³ Who have graduated from a high school in the state in which they seek to qualify for in-state tuition.

regards to equal access to public education. The desire to spare undocumented students from paying for the “crimes” of their parents also appears to be another argument in support of the DREAM Act. In addition, concerns such as Latino high school drop out rates serve as an incentive for state officials to implement their own versions of the DREAM Act (Schwab 2013).

Stella Flores and Jorge Chapa, bring up an interesting view to the current state of legislation surrounding undocumented students. In their article, “Latino Immigrant Access to Higher Education in a Bipolar Context of Reception”, the authors make the distinction that despite the idleness of the federal DREAM Act since it was first introduced to congress, individual states have taken a more proactive approach in attempting to resolve the issue of college access for undocumented immigrants (p.90). In looking at the states that currently provide in-state tuition for undocumented students, it is difficult to identify which factors contribute to the implementation of such progressive educational policies. It seems that the size of Hispanic population in a state is not a good predictor for progressive policies for undocumented students (Passel 2006). However, the literature does show that a policy explanation that takes into consideration the different interest groups with public officials, and the influence of these interest groups on policy making, could have the power to create a more comprehensive higher education policy making process for undocumented students in many states (Irizarry 2011).

North Carolina Through the Years

The literature also shows that there is a great divide between state and federal mandate. While it is not unconstitutional to ban undocumented students from enrolling in public universities, presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, have expressed their support for the passage of the DREAM Act, and have repeatedly voiced their opposition to drastic measures

such as banning students from institutions of higher education. Therefore, another common theme in the literature revolves around the divide between those making state educational policies and the opposition from those in Capitol Hill.

Moreover, the literature also shows that there is a divide between those who make the state policies and those who have to enforce these policies (2008). David Pluviose's article, "Learning While Undocumented: North Carolina Community College Students are caught in the Cross Hairs of Illegal Immigration Opponents" (2008), illustrates the divide between policy makers and school administrators. Dr. Stephen C. Scott, president of Wake Technical Community College, best explains it: "As an educator, it's difficult to deal with the politics because we're in the business of teaching students. Community colleges are not the immigration police. That's not what we signed on to do" (Pluviose 2008:27).

Moreover, much of what is published in terms of political implications for undocumented youth is fragmented by state. This can be problematic in that often generalizations are made, when in reality the policy in discussion is only applicable to that specific state in question. This can be seen in Caleb Kim's article, "Lost American DREAM of Undocumented Students: Understanding the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act" (2013), in which he states, "Currently no federal or state law prohibits the admission of undocumented students to public or private colleges, and no federal or state law requires a students to prove legal residency status to enter a college, although admission policies may vary depending on the college" (p. 57). Despite the fact that at one point this statement was true for North Carolina, state-by-state policies on undocumented students' admission to public universities, have been know to fluctuate, especially in states such as North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina.

One example of this lack of consistency in access to higher education for undocumented youth can be seen in what took place in North Carolina from 2006 until 2009. While initially, North Carolina only banned undocumented students from qualifying for in-state tuition, in 2008 the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges banned undocumented students from enrolling in any public community college and/or four-year university in the state (Lee et al). This back and forth between policies is only one example of the schizophrenic situation that has taken place in the state over the last decade and explains the sentiment among undocumented youth and their allies. In his article Pluviose (2008) interviews Tony Asion, the executive director of the Raleigh-based Hispanic advocacy group, *El Pueblo*. The excerpt that follows voices the frustration of many undocumented students and allies on the state of educational policy in North Carolina. According to Asion, “Four years ago, we were battling for our kids to get in-state tuition; now we’re battling just to get them into school... We’re actually going backwards instead of forward. And we feel that this is a sad day in America” (p.28). In 2010, North Carolina state policy changed and allowed undocumented students to enroll in public community colleges and universities. Nevertheless, the fact that for a period of ten years the state policy constantly fluctuated, is what can makes the generalization of one policy across states problematic.

Need for Expansion

One of the biggest gaps in the literature is in relation to the need for expansion on undocumented immigrant youth. While the emergence of scholarly articles and dissertations is certainly an asset in the development of the literature on undocumented students, the fact that only a handful of books on the topic could be found, suggests that there is a need for expansion on the topic. According to Alejandra Rincon, her book *Undocumented Immigrants and Higher Education* (2008) was the first of its kind:

“Participant accounts by students, parents, educators, and supporters would help to document and provide greater understanding of the protagonists... more in depth analysis of the economic background to the issue, the constitutional arguments, or the situation in other countries would also be important contributions” (Rincon, 2008, xii).

Not only does Rincon advocate for an increase in scholarship on undocumented students, but she also emphasizes the need for qualitative approaches to studying the educational trajectories of undocumented youth. Much like Rincon’s, Janet K. Lopez’s book poses the same argument in that it was the first and only book about undocumented students in North Carolina, demonstrating the need for expansion on this topic as it relates to this population. Moreover, a large portion of the articles and dissertations available on undocumented immigrant youth were authored by social workers, educators, and political scientists. While this does not diminish the sociological impact that scholars in other disciplines have, and may even be an advantage in creating a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration on the topic, the lack of attention on undocumented youth, has left a gap in sociological scholarship.

In addition, students who grew up and sought access to higher education in new immigrant destinations, such as North Carolina, require the attention of scholars. Their stories, and life trajectories may be similar to those of students in other states, yet the geographic location of North Carolina, along with the rapid growth of its Latino immigrant population, and its history of racial and ethnic oppression, makes the study of North Carolina’s undocumented students worthy of expansion.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Latino/a Critical Race Theory (LatCrit)

LatCrit, with its roots in Critical Race Theory, was born as an attempt to highlight certain legal and social issues particular to the Latino population. Developed in the mid 1990's, LatCrit, was a response to the longstanding issues of Latino/as that had not been addressed by the traditional Critical Race Theory ideology. One of the main characteristics of LatCrit is that it allows for a discourse on the multiple forms of oppression that Latino/as students experience. In utilizing LatCrit as a theoretical framework, issues of race, class, gender, language, and legal status, as they relate to the Latino population in the United States, can be unearthed. In order to examine the educational trajectories of undocumented students in a way that reveals the multiple layers of oppression that this population experiences, it is necessary to apply the LatCrit approach.

As it is evident in the following section, the experiences of the 10 undocumented students interviewed for this study, reflect the ideology that Latino/as experience added layers of oppression because of issues that are applicable to this population only. Moreover, the undocumented status of these participants adds a different layer of oppression that must also be taken into account. For the purposes of this research, the use of LatCrit will shed light on the intersectionality of the different types of oppression and obstacles that these students experienced. Most importantly, because of the important role that immigration status plays on this research, utilizing this theoretical approach will ensure that issues related to the role that immigration status plays on these students' educational trajectories, will be emphasized.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

At its core, Critical Race Theory conceptualizes racism as a prominent basis for stratification where those at the top strata of American society experience privilege. The top strata is defined as those who inherently benefit from White privilege and White superiority, which in turn perpetuates the oppression of people of color. Despite the eradication of previous systems of structuralized oppression in society, such as slavery and later on segregation, today other forms of oppression, such as institutionalized racism, are still ingrained in American society (Taylor 1998).

Critical Race Theory operates under the assumption that racism are so deeply ingrained into the current social structure that it is invisible to the majority of the population. In their article, *Maintaining Social Justice Hopes Within Academic Realities: A Freirean Approach to Critical Race/LatCrit Pedagogy*, Daniel G Solorzano and Tara J. Yosso, lay out the 5 principles of Critical Race Theory: (1) the centrality and intersectionality of race, racism, and other forms of subordination; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the importance of experiential knowledge; and (5) the use of interdisciplinary perspectives.

These 5 principles are evident throughout the interviews with this group of students. First, the intersectionality of more than one form of subordination is evident in the participants' experiences as disadvantaged by race, immigration status, socioeconomic status, and language. In addition, the challenge of the dominant ideology can be seen in the enactment of agency over structure that these students exhibited throughout the process of 'making it' to college despite their immigration status. The commitment to social justice is an overarching theme that is present not only in the undocumented students' rhetoric, but also closely imbedded in the lives of each student, and in mine as a the researcher who decided to embark upon this research as a result of my commitment to social justice. Moreover, experiential knowledge is perhaps the

most important characteristic of this research in that it allows for this population's experiences to be told through their own voices. In narrating the experiences of undocumented students through their own voices, in the form of excerpts, the individual stories of these students are acknowledged and validated as authentic ways of understanding.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

The city of Winston-Salem is located in the Piedmont Triad region of the state of North Carolina. In 2010, Winston-Salem had the largest Hispanic population out of the largest cities in the state, with residents of Hispanic decent accounting for 14.7% of the state's population (Chesser 2014). Consequently, in 2005 Forsyth County, where Winston-Salem is located, had the 3rd largest public school Hispanic enrollment in the state (Zota 2008). It is evident that the demographics for the city of Winston-Salem have drastically changed in the past 15 years. In 2000, Hispanics in North Carolina only accounted for 4.71% of the state's population and as of 2011, this figure had almost doubled, and Hispanics in North Carolina made up 8.6% of the population (Chesser 2014).

Raleigh, North Carolina, the capital of the state, is located in what is commonly referred to as the Research Triangle—an area composed of the cities of Raleigh, Durham, and the town of Chapel Hill. In 2010, Raleigh's Hispanic population reached 11.4%, making it the city with the 4th largest number of Hispanic residents in the state of North Carolina (Chesser 2014). In 2005, Wake County, where Raleigh is located, had the highest percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in public schools, with an enrollment of 9.3%. This figure made Wake County the 2nd county with the highest Hispanic enrollment in the state (Zota 2008).

As a former North Carolina resident, I was able to reach out to community members and leaders, in an attempt to recruit participants for this study. I used convenience sampling by sending out emails and using other social media avenues to explain the nature of my study and to specify what I was looking for in potential participants. I asked people connected to the undocumented student community to reach out to possible participants and ask them to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study. I explained that I was looking for

undocumented students who were able to enroll in college while they were undocumented. I also specified that their current immigration status was not in question, but that what was relevant to this study is that they had to have gone through the college application process while they were undocumented, as the purpose of my research was to study their educational trajectories as undocumented students.

Despite my original intension to interview Hispanic undocumented students of various nationalities, all ten participants were born in Mexico. The sample was composed of 2 males and 8 females, ranging in ages from 18 to 26 years old. Six of the participants identified as being from Winston-Salem, NC (for they had either lived or gone to college there), and four of the participants identified as being from Raleigh, NC. All of the participants had above a 3.5 GPA and had taken at least 2 honors and/or AP classes in high school. Of the 10 participants, 2 were enrolled (or had been enrolled) in community colleges, 6 in 4 year private institutions, and 2 in public research universities. All participants were eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood arrivals (DACA).

The interviews were in depth, semi structured interviews and the interview protocol was split into 4 sections: *Overall familial questions, educational questions, community factors, and employment related questions.* The first section focused on establishing rapport with the participants by asking basic questions about their personal background, such as how old they were when they moved to the United States, how old they were when they moved to North Carolina, and what their overall experience growing up in North Carolina was like. The second section asked a series of 25 questions about their educational experiences throughout their lives as undocumented students. Touching on aspects such as how and when they realized that they did not have documentation, whether their teachers and school administrators were aware of their immigration status, when they started thinking about college, and whether being undocumented

affected their educational dreams and goals. The third set of questions aimed to explore the participants' experiences in their communities, and some of the questions touched on themes such as their experiences as undocumented youth growing up in North Carolina, and their opinions of the laws in North Carolina in relation to undocumented students.

DATA COLLECTION, LIMITATIONS, & ANALYSIS

Data collection for this project took place during July 2013. The data was comprised of 10 individual interviews with students who had been undocumented while they were applying to college⁴. This ethnography began as an attempt to explore the college application process for undocumented students in North Carolina and evolved into an inquiry about their experiences inside and outside of an educational setting. The interviews bring attention to some of the themes introduced in the review of the literature and provided a clearer understanding of the role that state policy played on undocumented students' educational trajectories.

One of the biggest limitations I encountered in embarking upon this project was in relation to my interaction with the Internal Review Board at Lehigh University. I submitted my original IRB proposal at the end of May 2013, with the intention of launching my project by mid June 2013. After a number of delays, I finally obtained IRB approval on July 8th 2013. I believe that this delay from the IRB severely set back my timeline for the project. Initially I intended to interview 10 participants in the Winston-Salem and Raleigh communities and 10 participants in the Reading, PA area, with the idea of doing a comparative analysis between these two communities. However, as a result of this month and a half delay, I was only able to begin recruiting participants 1 week before I officially began conducting interviews, on July 17th, 2013. Consequently, I was only able to interview 10 participants during a span of 2 weeks and had to forego my efforts to interview undocumented students in Reading, PA. In addition, because of

⁴Some of the participants had been legalized since then, others remained undocumented, and others had applied for DACA

the relatively small sample size and the group of undocumented students I studied, my findings cannot be generalized to the entire undocumented student population of North Carolina.

Finally, during the Fall 2014, I transcribed half of the interviews and analyzed the transcripts by free coding in order to identify emerging themes. During the Spring semester, I proceeded to transcribe the remaining 5 interviews and concluded the analysis uncovering 3 primary themes, and 3 secondary themes.

FINDINGS

The main focus of conducting these interviews was to learn about the participants' educational trajectories in a state with a fluctuating conservative tuition policy for undocumented students. In the course of the ten interviews I conducted, the participants' experiences in educational, community, and labor settings, revealed several themes that explained how these students' trajectories and identities were shaped by their undocumented student status. In sharing these experiences, I hope to illustrate the obstacles that these students faced, the resilience that they embodied, and how they ultimately managed to navigate a system that set them up for failure. The findings reveal two types of themes: primary and secondary. I will begin the following section by introducing the participants in depth and by illustrating the primary themes they exhibited. Following this discussion, I will hone in on the secondary themes and explain their importance within the participant's narratives.

PRIMARY THEMES

Paying for College

Maria is a 20-year-old student at one of the community colleges in the Piedmont Triad. When she was 7 years old her parents decided that it was best for the family to be reunited, and they brought Maria to the United States so she could join them. Maria aspires to be a nurse, and shared her experience with her inability to afford college in the following excerpt:

“Well, I couldn't go to the college I wanted to go to. I wanted to go to Holly Springs College* even though it's in the middle of nowhere; I really liked it. The faculty to student ratio was 1 to12, so that was one thing I liked about it. And the nursing program was great, I probably would've finished in 3.5 years. But I couldn't go there because of the money, I got a scholarship for \$11,000 for 4 years, but I still would have had to pay \$16,000 a year. It wasn't that I was undocumented, it was that I didn't have the money.

They told me that they couldn't give me any more aid because of my status. I couldn't do work study or get financial aid because I didn't have a social security number.”

As it is evident from Maria's experience, one of the main obstacles in her journey to higher education was financial support. Because the state of North Carolina currently requires undocumented students to pay out of state tuition at any of its 16 public universities, the financial burden that this group faces makes going to a state institution nearly impossible. Community colleges alike also require that undocumented students pay out of state fees, which in some instances increase the cost of a class by up to 5 times. While private colleges and universities are seen as the best alternative for undocumented students, financial aid packages often leave these students and their families with financial commitments they cannot afford.

Maria's interview is a clear example of the barrier that finances played on the undocumented student experience. During the interview, Maria also revealed that while initially her first choice had been a private college, she ended up enrolling in a community college:

“Once I knew how much it would cost to go to Holly Springs College* and I knew how much scholarship money I had gotten and how much I had to pay by myself, I realized that even if I had 2 jobs I still wouldn't have been able to do it. So I talked to a couple of people and actually one of my best friends, she is also undocumented, met a guy that worked at Quaker Mill Community College*, and he told her that he could get her into school, and its way cheaper and then you can transfer out after 2 years. So I asked her, can you help me out? And she was like yeah, let's go. I actually got lucky and they told me I could pay in-state tuition, because most of us have to pay out- of state. So I actually ended up paying \$1,050 for 15 credits during my first semester.”

Maria was 'lucky' to be charged as an in state resident at her local community college, yet in the process she also had to give up her dream school because of her inability to pay the remaining \$16,000 tuition balance. Her undocumented status prevented her from qualifying for financial assistance in the form of need-based aid, federal grants, work study opportunities, and even loans. While Maria did 'make it' to college, her dream of going into a 'great nursing program' was shattered in the process.

Another example of the role that finances played on these students' educational trajectories can be seen in Martha's experience. Martha, a 23 year old college student, was 9 years old when she was brought to the United States. In high school she excelled academically and aspired to be a doctor. In the following excerpt she describes the toll that money took on her and her family as she was going through the college application process.

“It was sad going to all these schools [college visits] with my parents and seeing their faces...it was really sad whenever they would bring in the tuition and how much they were going to have to pay. Not to me, but seeing my parents thinking, “We won't be able to afford it”.

Martha's description of the frustration and grief experienced by her and her parents was not uncommon in the interviews. While most of the participants were grateful that they were able to attend college, their experiences did ignite a feeling of frustration and a realization that North Carolina's policies for undocumented students were 'unfair'. Towards the end of the interview I asked Martha what her views on the state policy for undocumented students were, her response was the following:

“I think it's unfair because the state doesn't want us to go to school and do better so we can get jobs, but they also don't want us to live off the government? So, I'm confused, and I'm kind of mad about the situation, it just doesn't make sense. It's stupid because there are other countries in which all of the state schools are free, so I don't get it, why do we have to be treated differently. And I understand, ok we're here undocumented, but it wasn't my choice, it wasn't my 3 year old sister's choice. So if we're trying to be better, than why not give us the opportunity? And I know that now it's different with DACA, but I mean, yeah you're given a student permit, but you still can't apply to FAFSA. You have a work permit, but you can't devote your time to school because you have to work as much as you can to pay for your tuition. From my point of view, I think they [the laws] are unrealistic and unfair”

Martha clearly felt that North Carolina's legislation pertaining to undocumented students had punished her for something that she had no control over. All Martha wanted was an opportunity to go to college, but instead all she got was obstacle after obstacle throughout her journey to higher education.

Mario's educational trajectory is a true example of the resilience that all of the students in this sample exhibited. In talking about his experience with paying for college, Mario revealed an element that played a detrimental role in his educational future as an undocumented student. When I asked Mario about the role that money played in his ability to go to college, he responded in a way that showed how his perception of his own imitations as an undocumented student, led him to make educational decisions that he later on regretted:

“At the time, money was the biggest obstacle and that's why I wanted to go to community college... just because I knew I had a more likely chance of raising enough money to pay for that. I guess that's something that I can blame myself for—that I didn't look hard enough—because now I know that there is plenty of scholarships that don't require citizenship or permanent residency. During those days I didn't apply to any scholarships just because I was like 'ok well, I gotta be a citizen for that'”.

Mario's experience with looking for financial resources to pay for college is a common narrative found among this group of students. While some students were successful in their search for scholarships and in knowing how to navigate the college application process, there were instances in which students did not seek out help because they didn't think the help was available. This lack of guidance or in some cases misguidance about the college application process for undocumented students is one of the secondary themes that I explore later on in this chapter.

In addition, Mario's resilience throughout the college application process is a clear example of what these students underwent and overcame as they attempted to achieve their dreams of going to college. In the following excerpt Mario discussed how he remained positive throughout the college application process and how he was able to overcome the obstacles set upon him as a result of his immigration status:

“In the long run being undocumented influenced me positively. At first I was just really mad at the world, and little by little through people that I met, through books that I read, it's just undeniable that everyone in the world has a

circumstance that they wish they didn't have, but at the end of the day is what you choose to do with that, what your perspective is and how you're going to get through it in order to get to where you want to get, and pursuing that with perseverance. So it led me to meet amazing people and to forming good work habits.”

In this excerpt we see how Mario chose to turn his difficult experience as an undocumented student applying to college into a positive experience.

The excerpts in this chapter illustrate how influential the role of finances was in these students' access to higher education. Their inability to access financial resources only made available to U.S Citizens and permanent residents, made this group of students—all of whom under different circumstances would have had much more generous financial aid packages—take alternative routes to get a college education. Some opted for going to community college, others started at the school of their dreams but were forced to leave after a semester or two because they could not continue to afford it, and others were forced to take every other semester off so they could work and save enough money to pay for their classes the following semester. The sections to follow expand on some of the effects of not being able to access financial resources.

Lack of Guidance

One of the most prominent themes revealed in the interviews was that the participants did not receive the proper guidance on how to approach the college application process. The students I interviewed expressed that they were guided by their parents or by guidance counselors and school administrators. There was not a single instance in which these students received both parental and school guidance. In addition, some of the students manifested that they believed their high school counselors and school administrators were quick to withhold resources from them because of the stigma associated with their immigration status. Others revealed that they did not make their high school counselors aware of their undocumented status because they believed that their counselors' lack of knowledge about this population would make

it difficult for them to offer college counseling and that their interactions would more than likely lead to nothing.

Furthermore, the findings in this chapter are closely tied to one of the main themes discussed in the review of the literature: Need for expansion. The literature shows that when it comes to undocumented youth, there is a lack of scholarship available on this population. It is my belief that the shortage of resources available on undocumented youth is closely related to the lack of knowledge that guidance counselors and school administrators have in relation to these students' opportunities in higher education. This section is dedicated to illustrating how students were guided (or misguided) as they made life changing educational decisions.

Bonnie was 13 years old when she moved to the United States. Her experience was slightly different than that of most of the participants. Having arrived as a teenager, her knowledge of the college application process was more limited than that of students who arrived in the United States at a younger age. When I asked Bonnie about her experience with her guidance counselors throughout the college application process, her response was that she didn't have any help from her guidance counselors because she never went to them. When I asked her why she didn't reach out for help, her response was that, "I never went to them because I didn't want to talk about it. Because going to them meant telling them what I was going through and telling them why I was having those problems..."

It is clear that Bonnie wanted to go to college; she had been thinking about college ever since she was in middle school. However the lack of guidance from her parents and guidance counselors set her up for failure. In the beginning of the interview she mentioned that once she realized that her parents wouldn't be able to afford to pay for college, she gave up. Nevertheless, with intervention from her guidance counselors this perceived inability to afford college may have been debunked and she may have started her journey to college earlier than she did. While

it is true that she was not proactive in reaching out to her guidance counselors, her skepticism towards them was connected to the stigma associated with her immigration status. Asking for help from her guidance counselors meant that she would have to reveal her undocumented identity.

Mario's experience with his guidance counselor is another example of the misinformation these students received throughout the college application process. In the following excerpt, Mario describes his reluctance to share the truth about his immigration status, and what followed once he reached out to his guidance counselor:

“I didn't have help from teachers, mainly because they didn't know [about his immigration status], they just expected me to apply to college and follow what I had told them (doing the 2 years at a community college and then transferring to a 4 year university). I never told anybody except for that pre-calculus teacher, because at the end of the day, they really don't know how to handle the situation. And then a couple of people that I did speak to they didn't know how to handle the situation either. I finished in school ranked #5 in my class and when I went to my guidance counselor all she said to me—and I don't have any grudge for her because I don't think she knew any better—but all she said was, ‘You know you can't go to a 4 year university, all you can go to is a community college’, and it was disappointing because I was #5 in my class you know, and they just didn't know what to do and it's sad because you're hoping that since she's your guidance counselor and your parents have no idea how to apply to college, that your guidance counselor will help you. Just to know that my guidance counselor couldn't help me either was very disappointing.”

Although Mario was successful in getting into a 4-year public research university in the Triangle, his journey was tainted because of the misinformation he received from his guidance counselor. During the interview, Mario shared that after he was told that his only option was to follow the community college route, he contemplated suicide. The thought of having worked so hard in high school, being ranked #5 in his graduating class, and yet feeling like he was being punished despite his accomplishments, took an emotional toll on him. It took a chance encounter with a former ESL teacher for Mario to realize that there were options for him. After being out of school for 1 year, and after his parents borrowed \$15,000, Mario was able to enroll in college. While in the end Mario was able to go to college, what he endured as he attempted to find

resources that would allow him to apply, pay, and eventually enroll in college, could have been avoided had he received accurate information from his high school guidance counselor.

In discussing this theme, it is important to note the complexity that undocumented students as a population represented for guidance counselors. One of the main issue with counseling this population, was that the state and by default the guidance counselors as its agents, were not educated on what undocumented students could and could not do regarding higher education. In addition, the interviews revealed that in some cases once the guidance counselors became aware of these students' immigration statuses, their immediate response was to give up on them, as opposed to looking for alternatives regarding access to higher education. Finally, the fact that some students chose to maintain their undocumented status secret, posed an additional layer of difficulty for guidance counselors. Even if they were willing to look for alternatives for these students, they were not able to do so because of their lack of knowledge regarding these students' immigration statuses. Despite all of the intricacies presented by this population, the interventions of high school guidance counselors may have had a positive effect on this group of students. Lack of information on the guidance counselors' part is understandable, yet their reluctance to find resources for these students is not.

Martha's experience in receiving information from her guidance counselor was different than Mario's and Bonnie's. Martha never explicitly told her guidance counselor that she was undocumented, nevertheless, she received information that directed her in a way that did not align with her plans of attending a 4-year college or university:

"I was the first one in my family to go to college in the U.S, so my parents had no idea, so it was mainly me just asking around. I didn't really have a good relationship with my counselor, we didn't see eye to eye on a lot of things. She wanted me to go one route, and I wanted to go a different route. She wanted me to do a 2-year college degree or something like that, and then go straight to work. Because you had a to do a questionnaire to figure out which route you should go, and I guess a lot of my answers were contradictory, but it wasn't like... it was what I wanted and the reality, so that's why I think the results from my questionnaire turned out like that. I

didn't want to go the 2-year route, but then she was like, 'it seems like you want to work', and I was like, 'well, yeah—I have to work!' So she gave me information, and she gave me scholarship information, and out of the 1,000 scholarships on that list maybe I applied to 2 or 3, because they were the only ones that I could apply to, because on the description it tells you, U.S citizen or permanent resident. So, that's how I got scholarships. In terms of schools I applied to, I just picked schools. For the SAT, the teachers prepared you for the SAT; I think there was a class. So I was being pulled by what I wanted to do at the time, and sometimes I would close my eyes to reality but reality would catch up with me really fast."

Despite the lack of assistance that Martha received from her guidance counselor, she applied to 7 colleges and universities and was accepted by 6 of them. Yet, the lack of financial support she received from these schools led her to have to work two jobs while being a full time student, in order to cover her \$1,000 monthly tuition payments.

Until now, the excerpts in this chapter exemplify the power of agency over structure. The students in these interviews were forced to rise against a higher educational system structured to set obstacles against them. Each excerpt illustrates the struggles that these students underwent, but most importantly, the resilience that they embodied in the process. The final excerpt for this theme is Maria's account of her experience in applying to college, the resilience she embodied, and the role that her resourcefulness played in her successful enrollment in an institution of higher education:

"My counselors tried to help me, but like I told you, once I told them that I was undocumented they just pretty much told me that I couldn't apply without a social security number, that was it. They said I couldn't apply for FAFSA and for school. But I grew up knowing a lot of people because I had met a lot of people during the time that I was interpreting and doing everything else, so I had met a lot of Hispanic students that were undocumented and actually going to college. So I already knew some of the loopholes to get into college. And some of those people helped me"

Maria's experience with her guidance counselor reveals the same type of misinformation that the other participants in this section experienced. While Maria successfully enrolled in a community college, she was only able to do so because of her connections in the community. For reasons that are unknown to her, Maria was charged tuition as an in-state resident and only had to pay

\$1,050 for 15 credits each semester. While she still had to raise the money to cover the tuition costs, she was able to enroll in community college in the Piedmont Triad the Spring semester after she graduated high school.

Discrimination

Perhaps the most confounding discovery throughout these interviews was the surfacing of these students' experiences with discrimination. Participants brought up this theme despite the fact that the interview protocol didn't explicitly ask them if they had ever experienced discrimination. Though some labeled these experiences as "racist", the context in which these experiences were mentioned showed that what they were describing could be categorized as discriminatory practices. Moreover, while this theme came up in every interview, some participants shared these experiences in a more covert nature and described instances that were discriminatory in nature without actually labeling them as such. In addition, through various avenues, all participants brought up this theme as it pertained to them inside and outside of an educational setting.

The findings in this section are divided in two parts: Discrimination in school and discrimination outside of school. In reading this section it is important to consider that all participants were Mexican students whom at the time they experienced discrimination, were also undocumented immigrants. Although their undocumented status was in many cases an identity that they purposely maintained hidden, their Mexican identity was something that they generally could not disguise. Thus, there is an argument to be made in relation to these two identities and the role that intersectionality played in these experiences with discrimination.

Finally, by exploring these experiences with discrimination inside and outside of an educational setting, the findings reveal the overtly strong presence that discrimination had on these students' life course. Although I cannot attest to the lasting effects that these events may

have had on this group of individuals, it is important to consider the possibility that these encounters may have had an effect on the participants' selves as students, but more importantly as Mexican individuals.

Discrimination Outside of School

Once again, we look at Mario's life history in an attempt to illustrate the presence that discrimination had on the lives of these participants. In his interview Mario shared the following thoughts when asked about his experience as an undocumented student in North Carolina:

“I guess like most people I kept being illegal quiet, I kept it a secret. So in a way since people didn't know, I didn't really get a reaction from them. But once in a while there was discrimination for being colored, for being Hispanic, for being Mexican... and those words from time to time would get to me, and in a way little by little it did make me feel inferior to them, just because I didn't have as many rights as they did.”

Mario's description of his experience with discrimination is a clear example of the different levels of oppression that Mexican undocumented students in this sample were subjects of. Although in this excerpt Mario attributes being discriminated to his Mexican identity, he later on mentions the feeling of inferiority that was tied to not having the same rights as someone with documentation. Covertly, Mario's account reveals that his Mexican identity was very much connected to his undocumented identity. While he kept his immigration status hidden, the excerpt shows that he associated the fact that he was discriminated against to the inferiority brought upon him for not having the same rights as someone with documentation.

Unlike Mario, who did not believe that his immigration status was the subject of his discrimination, Cecilia recognized the intersection of her Mexican and undocumented identities in her experiences with discrimination. In the following excerpt Cecilia describes her experience with the law when she was 13 years old and learning how to drive.

“I was learning how to drive... in high school I think this was in 9th grade, yeah I was 13 years old when I was a freshman. So I was learning how to drive and my

step dad was teaching me, we were coming from soccer practice and I didn't really hit the breaks in time and I hit a car. It was a little fender bender, like nothing happened to the other car. But they called the cops and I was like what's going to happen, I don't have a license, and I think at this time it still wasn't an issue to drive without an ID as much as it is now, but the cop didn't believe me that I was 13 because I was really tall. He was like 'I don't believe you that you're 13, I think you're lying to me, I think you're 17 or 18', and he took my information, handcuffed me, and put me in the back of his car. And it was crazy because traffic had to be stopped and I felt like everybody was looking at me. It was traumatizing and I was like what am I doing here, I felt like a criminal."

Cecilia's experience with discrimination can be directly tied to the racial profiling practices that the state of North Carolina adopted in the mid 2000's. In discussing this incident, Cecilia added that she did not believe this would have happened to her had she been a White or even African American 13 year old. Cecilia's handcuffing may have been the result of a misunderstanding about her age, nevertheless feeling criminalized because of her Mexican identity and undocumented status was a recurring experience for Cecilia.

One of the main goals throughout the interviews was to explore the experiences of undocumented students as they came of age. In asking undocumented students about their experiences in high school, questions related to their abilities to obtain drivers licenses were included in the interview protocol. As a result of North Carolina's restrictive laws in regards to driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants, many undocumented youth did not share in this experience of coming of age that is getting a driver's license. Instead, some of them were taught how to drive by family members (as in Cecilia's case) and out of necessity turned to driving without a driver's license.

In further discussion Cecilia expanded on her experience with local law enforcement as a result of driving without a license. She described her multiple run-ins with local police as a result of driving without a license and brought up the systematic targeting of undocumented immigrants by way of setting up checkpoints in Hispanic neighborhoods. Additionally, Cecilia

described the financial and emotional burden that being constantly targeted by local police for not having a driver's license as a result of her immigration status brought upon her and her family. The following excerpt illustrates the emotional consequences of her recurring experiences with discrimination:

“In the beginning when I first started driving I was always scared, it was a horrible feeling knowing that a cop was right behind you, I would shake... I would turn up the radio really loud to pretend that the cop wasn't behind me, and it was just the most terrifying experience and maybe a year or a year and a half ago after all that stuff with my ex, I was like ‘you know what? I'm done being scared’. I'm done of being scared of my ex, being scared of his family, being scared of the police, being scared of everything in my life... I was always conditioned to be scared and tiptoe through my life.”

Cecilia's experience with discrimination through racial profiling had a life changing effect on her. After spending years in fear, Cecilia decided that she would no longer be afraid. The lasting impression that her experiences with discrimination had on her led her to come to terms with her immigration status and become involved in an immigrant rights group. Through activism, Cecilia was able to overcome all of the fears associated with being an undocumented immigrant in North Carolina.

Martha's experience with discrimination was different than that of Mario and Cecilia. While both Mario and Cecilia had firsthand encounters with discrimination, Martha's experience with discrimination was not direct. In her narrative, Martha describes an incident that occurred when her 5-year-old sister had to be rushed to the emergency room after her gallbladder ruptured. At the time, the family did not have health insurance, so finances seemed to play a significant role on whether or not Martha's sister could have the operation that would save her life. The following excerpt reveals Martha's recollection of the discrimination that her family experienced as a result of their immigration status:

“We found out that my mom was telling the interpreter something and the interpreter was telling my mom and the financial counselor something else. The

interpreter was telling the financial counselor ‘these people are illegal, these funds belong to U.S citizens, you shouldn’t be giving these people financial help.’ Thankfully the financial counselor approached my mom with a different interpreter and they were able to figure out a payment plan, but if it had been up to that other interpreter, my sister may not have been able to get her surgery and she might have died. I believe that that was racism.”

Martha’s vivid recollection of her mother’s experience with the interpreter is a clear indicator of the impact that this event had on her. Watching her family’s ordeal as they attempted to save her sister’s life is a memory that to this day she associates with ‘racism’⁵. More importantly, Martha added that her family never attempted to ask for financial benefits, that all they wanted was the chance to make a payment plan.

Despite the multiple instances of discrimination that these students encountered, the idea of counteracting discrimination by rising above the situation was a shared ideology among the participants. Mario, Cecilia, and Martha all expressed that having to face discrimination sparked their interest in activism, and that they used these negative experiences as motivation to show the world that they would not be victimized by their circumstances.

Dulce’s account of her experience with discrimination clearly exemplifies the resilience that these students embodied despite the constant reminders of their inferiority as students and as individuals. When describing her experience growing up in North Carolina, Dulce added the following:

“I think being undocumented adds to the whole aspect of being different. North Carolina is a pretty red state, and being a red state is not very immigrant friendly. I mean just racism for being a different color then adding to the mix your personal story it just doesn’t make it a very nice place to live. When applying to a driver’s license, from colleges themselves, from banks, you see it everywhere. And after a while it becomes the norm, so it doesn’t really bother me anymore. And this might sound like I’m showing off, but I know I’m going to do great things. I mean its just 9 digits, I know that there are a lot of students who are U.S citizens and they’re wasting the opportunity to go to college, they don’t even graduate from high school. And me with my parents not graduating from high school, and not even going to college, and now I’m trying to go to dental school, that’s way

⁵Some participants used the word ‘racist’ to describe instances of discrimination.

above whatever they did. I feel like in a way I'm showing that their 9 digits don't mean anything."

In sharing her encounters with discrimination as they made a mark on various aspects of her life, Dulce provided us with a deeper understanding of the extent to which discrimination was present in her life. Dulce chose to counteract the discrimination she experienced by striving to be better and by doing as much as she could to excel academically. This attitude of resilience through academic dominance was exemplified by all of the participants.

Discrimination in School

Similarly, a number of students expressed their experiences with discrimination within an educational setting. In discussing experiences with discrimination in school, students were more reluctant to label such experiences as discriminatory. A number of students described events that were discriminatory in nature, yet never labeled them as such. In addition, in some of the interviews, students framed their encounters with discrimination in a way that allowed them to diminish these experiences. By following their accounts of these events with phrases such as, "but I was already used to that", "it wasn't their fault, they didn't know any better", students attempted to justify or rationalize these close encounters with discrimination in school. It is my belief that this response was an attempt to disassociate their educational experiences from the discrimination that was already present in other aspects of their lives.

One of the most important sections of the interview protocol, focused on the participants' experiences as newly arrived immigrants in this country. Being that most of the participants I interviewed were placed in ESL classes soon after they began school in the United States, many of their first memories of the American educational system were tied to the events that they experienced as newly arrived immigrant children. Consequently, some of their most significant experiences with discrimination took place during these first years as they were learning to be

“Americans”. The following excerpts feature some of their experiences with discrimination as it relates to their educational trajectories.

Martha was only 9 years old when she arrived in the United States. After walking across the desert with her 5 year old and 3 year old sisters, Martha was finally able to reunite with her family in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. When asked about whether she was aware of the fact that she was undocumented, Martha confessed that although her parents never talked about their immigration status, her surroundings let her know that she was undocumented. In the following excerpt Martha explains how the fact that she was discriminated in middle school reaffirmed her suspicions about her undocumented identity:

“It was very hard. It was completely different from what I had experienced in Mexico. The skin color was different, the language, the food, the culture, that kind of stuff. But I was fine with that. But even as a kid, we were very very very segregated at the middle school that I went to. I went to Reynolds Middle School* for the first three months, and all of the Hispanic kids were in the same class, and some blacks too. No whites, maybe one or two but that was because they were special ed. With learning disabilities. And everybody else was in the honors classes; there were no blacks or Hispanics in the honors classes. And it wasn't that the Hispanic kids weren't smart enough to be in the honors classes, I mean even I was put in honors classes after I left that school and that was when I didn't even know that much English. I was put in honors classes because I could do the work.”

Martha's account clearly shows that it wasn't long after she arrived in the United States that she became aware that her identity as Mexican and undocumented were associated with the discriminatory treatment she experienced in school. Martha's experience with discrimination clearly exhibits the intersection among race, immigration status, and in her case language, and the role that it played on how she experienced discrimination.

While some of the most compelling accounts of experiences with discrimination are told from the memories that these students experienced as newly arrived immigrant children, it was also common to see how discrimination in school was a recurring theme in these students' lives. Maria described it best when talking about her experience growing up in Winston-Salem, North

Carolina. Earlier on in the interview, I asked Maria if she had ever had a negative experience when she was growing up. Her answer revealed how deeply ingrained in her educational experience the effects of discrimination were. Maria's words were simple: "I think everywhere I've been, everywhere I've lived—I've always faced discrimination."

Maria shared a slightly different account in which discrimination followed her throughout her educational trajectory. Her first memories of discrimination were from when she was a newly arrived immigrant student. She remembered being 7 years old and being the only student who didn't speak English at her elementary school. She recalled being told that she would only have 2 months to learn English so she could pass her end of year exam, and that if she did not pass she would not move forward to the 3rd grade. Although Maria passed both sections of her EOG, she remembers the derogatory comments that her teacher made when she missed a number of questions in the English section. Later on Maria shared her experience with discrimination as a high school student. When I asked her if any of her teachers knew about her immigration status, Maria mentioned that her French teacher became aware of her legal situation. She remembered her teacher's sudden change in attitude once Maria told her she was undocumented. Maria described her teacher as becoming 'defensive' after learning about Maria's lack of documentation.

As a prospective student at Holly Springs College, Maria also experienced discrimination. In the following excerpt she describes being invited for scholarship weekend and the events that took place once she was there.

"When I went to my scholarship interview and I was the only Hispanic in the group and there was a teacher (a Spanish teacher) and he started talking to me in Spanish and everyone was just looking at us like what are they doing... but by this point I was already used to that. They would ask me question about what I wanted to do with my life, or what I wanted to learn or something like that, and I think I remember saying that I really wanted to go into the air force, but that even though I could go into it, I really couldn't do much there because I wasn't a U.S

citizen. And everybody just turned to look at me like ok, so what are you? So at that point I felt like the kids didn't react positively to the fact that I wasn't a US citizen."

Although Maria doesn't explicitly label this experience as discriminatory, her description of the event shows the prejudicial reaction that the other students had when her immigration status was in question.

As it is evident, the educational experiences of these students were plagued with experiences of discrimination. Their early encounters with discrimination in school only reinforced the already disadvantaged existence that they experienced outside of an educational environment. Accounts of discrimination by teachers and fellow students were most prominent in these students' experiences with discrimination in an educational setting. Nevertheless, descriptions of institutionalized discrimination are also present in the discussions of their educational trajectories, and Dulce's recollection of it is a clear example of what most of these students had to deal with as they attempted to successfully enroll in institutions of higher education. In her interview, Dulce discusses the process of applying to college and like many of her peers she shared the obstacles that she encountered along the way. In the following excerpt Dulce discusses her experience as an undocumented Mexican student growing up in a small North Carolina town:

"I come from a small town and it's a pretty close minded town, and Hispanics were the minority, so that was the only bad thing. So when I started to apply to college a lot of doors were closed, even when I would call colleges and ask them "Do you accept students like me?" and they would say, "Sorry, we don't accept students like you." I had a 4.23 GPA, I was in the top 10% of my class, and when I would talk to them, they would say "Oh my God, yeah we can probably work something out, you can probably get a big scholarship.", and I would wait until the very end to tell them about my immigration status, and of course that would be when they would be like, "Oh, I'm sorry, we can't do anything for you."

Despite the fact that Dulce was a stellar student, colleges and universities denied her admission based on her lack of documentation. The fact that they were enthusiastic about her chances as a

prospective student until she revealed the truth about her immigration status is proof that the barriers she had to face were a result of discrimination because of her undocumented status.

SECONDARY THEMES

In this section I have included themes that emerged during the interviews in a way that was more covert or perhaps themes that were not as prominent among the participants yet had an influence in shaping their journeys to college. In addition, this section includes themes that I did not anticipate would emerge during the course of the interviews, and that are important to mention.

The Cinderella Effect & the Junior Year Crash

Sociologist Robert C. Smith conducted what he described as a “life course ethnography” of Mexican immigrants in New York City (Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting 2014). In the process of interviewing one hundred participants from the time that they were in their mid-teens until they were in their early 30’s, Smith noticed a trend among the participants in the sample who were undocumented. Based on his observations, he concluded that those students who were undocumented faced two critical moments as they became aware of their immigration status and the meaning tied to it. Smith refers to these moments as the *Cinderella Effect* and the *Junior Year Crash*. Students experience the Cinderella Effect once they turn 18 years old and their undocumented status becomes a reality as they lose the ability to navigate the educational system with the protections of being undocumented minors. The threat of deportation becomes real and with this transition into adulthood they become adults who must be fully aware of and responsible for their own immigration status. Similarly, the junior year crash refers to the fact that typically it is during their junior year that most high school students begin the process of applying to college. For undocumented students, this means that it is then that they must come

to terms with the fact that college may not be a reality for them. This disillusionment is what Robert C. Smith refers to as the ‘crash’.

As a result of Plyler v. Doe, all children, regardless of their immigration status are not only allowed to, but also required to enroll in k-12 education. For undocumented students this implies that as long as they are in high school, their lives, as it pertains to their education, are notably similar to the lives of students with documents. This section focuses on what happens once undocumented students can no longer be a part of this haven that becomes high school and on their experiences as they come to terms with the effects that their immigration status will have on their plans to go to college.

When sharing her experiences with k-12 education, Maria described how the fact that she always knew she was undocumented helped her better prepare for the college application process. In the following excerpt she shares her opinion about the realization of being undocumented and what effect she thinks this experience has on undocumented students’ educational trajectories:

“I think the older you are and the older you find out that you are undocumented, the harder it is for you to face real life once you get out of high school. Because when you’re in high school, you don’t see a big difference, but once you get out and you try to find a job or try to go to college, or try to pay for college, that’s when you see it all... how much different it is between you and a US citizen.”

In describing her own experience, Maria established that she believed her own awareness of her immigration status played a key role in helping her prepare for what the Cinderella effect. Nevertheless, all undocumented students are as prepared and some of the participants in this study had more drastic transitions into adulthood.

Mario is an example of someone who was not aware of his immigration status until he was already in high school. He was the only student in the sample who had come to the United States with a VISA, therefore his somewhat unclear conception of having overstayed his tourist

VISA became clear when he realized he couldn't do the same things as his U.S citizen counterparts. In the following excerpt, Mario talks about what the Cinderella effect and the junior year crash were like for him:

“I realized I didn't have papers when I was in high school. I wouldn't know exactly the date, but it was around sophomore or junior year, when I realized that not having a social security number would determine that I couldn't get a job like everyone else, I couldn't go to university like everyone else. And up until high school, I think that everything was the same, everything as far as opportunities go, I was able to do whatever they [documented people] would do. But like many people, I think it really hits them after high school when they see how different it is to be undocumented, that sort of drastic change. That's where the realization hit me of just how different my life would go after that.”

In Mario's case, he described both the Cinderella effect and the junior year crash. In many instances these two events were interconnected and often participants described having experienced one in conjunction with the other. For Mario, realizing his undocumented status at a later age, took a toll on his educational trajectory. Despite the fact that Mario had a 4.3 GPA in high school and scored highly on the SAT, his lack of awareness of the consequences that his immigration status would have on his desire to go to college, prevented him from seeking scholarships and community support early on during the college application process.

In some cases the junior year crash manifested itself a year later, when the participants were already seniors in high school. Tying this to one of the primary themes, *lack of guidance*, the delay in the junior year crash can be connected to the lack of guidance or misguidance that these students experienced as they attempted to prepare for the college application process.

Martha's experience with the junior year crash is a clear example of this. In the following excerpt Martha describes the process of realizing what being undocumented meant for her dreams of going to college.

“I knew that I really wanted to go to college, but I didn't know how to get there and I didn't know how hard it was going to be until I was a senior in high school and I started applying, no maybe I was a junior and I took the SAT and I got really good scores, and I started applying to a lot of schools, and they would say,

‘Well, we can’t offer you this funding because its federal, etc.’”

Martha’s lack of knowledge on applying to college as an undocumented student certainly played a role on her delayed realization of what it would take to get there. The fact that she wasn’t fully aware of what she had to do to make it to college as an undocumented student until she was already a senior in high school, is a clear indicator of this.

In all instances, the junior crash was described as a negative experience from which students could not turn back from once they opened their eyes to the realization that came with becoming a junior in high school. In some cases this crash was followed with an attitude of resilience and students faced this experience with a defeating attitude. Nevertheless, some students described the experience as being more detrimental and described what this process was like for them.

In Bonnie’s case, the junior year crash had a more negative effect that caused her to lose hope in the fact that she could go on to college:

“It was frustrating because I always knew I wanted to go to college and I just kind of didn’t want to be here (in school) anymore... there was no point. In this was when I was a junior because that’s when you start applying and looking at schools. That’s when I realized that there was no point of me going to look at any colleges because I wasn’t going to be able to go”

Until this point in her educational trajectory, Bonnie had been a hard working student who maintained a 3.8 GPA in high school. However, the realization that all her hard work may not be enough to get her to college is what led her to stop trying and she opted for not going through with the college application process during her senior year in high school.

Similarly, Dulce describes her experience with the junior year crash and the Cinderella effect. She adds that all her life she thought she was a normal kid, and that in retrospect, she didn’t think she had any obstacles until she started trying to get a job and until she began to

apply to college. The following excerpt illustrates what Dulce went through when she experienced these two events as she transitioned into adulthood:

“I didn’t tell many people that I was undocumented so it wasn’t a big deal to me. I think it became a big deal when I started to want to go to college, that’s when everything changed. I think I would’ve chosen a different route if I did (had papers), but in a way it helped me grow up and made me fight for what I want. And not be so complacent, you know, like ohh it will be handed out to me. I don’t think I would changed it at all.”

Despite Dulce’s ordeal as the realities tied to her immigration status became obvious, she saw the junior year crash and the Cinderella effect as opportunities to push herself even further and continue her journey towards higher education. Eventually Dulce was able to enroll in college and at the time I interviewed her she was a junior majoring in math and psychology with a minor in chemistry.

Lack of continuity

When discussing the events that took place once they were accepted into college, all participants described money as being their biggest concern and obstacle as they pursued their dream of higher education. Moreover, a number of participants discussed their inability to remain enrolled in college and attributed this to the fact that they often had to take off a semester to work and save money so they could afford to pay the tuition for the following semesters. In some instances students were accepted into college but still had thousands of dollars to pay out of pocket. While they and their families were initially able to make the financial sacrifice, many were forced to leave college because they could no longer afford the high tuition payments. Despite the fact that all of the participants I interviewed had always managed to go back to college, there were consequences to their inability to remain continuously enrolled in college. The following excerpts illustrate what these students experienced as they had come to terms with their inability to remain enrolled in college.

After Maria was forced to give up her dream school because she couldn't pay the \$16,000 of yearly tuition, she decided to enroll in a community college in the Piedmont Triad. In order to raise the \$1,050 dollars to pay for the community college tuition, Maria had to get a full time job and was unable to enroll in classes for the fall semester after her senior year in high school. The following excerpt illustrates Maria's journey as each semester she scrambled to raise money to make tuition payments:

“I actually had to skip a semester. I skipped my first fall semester so I could save up the money to pay for tuition. And I actually worked at a Hispanic store that my neighbor owned, because he paid me cash. So I saved up the money and bought the books and started school. And then I took the summer off, and then when I tried to apply again the fall semester, I did it and I paid for it too. But then I had to skip this spring semester because I didn't have the money.”

As we can see, despite the fact that Maria was able to raise the money and enroll in college during her spring semester, she once again had to take another semester off in order to save enough money for the following semester. Maria later on shared that as a result, she had missed many of the classes that were considered pre-requisites for the nursing program. Although she was able to keep going back to school, her inability to continuously be enrolled took a toll on how quickly she was able to complete the pre-requisites to apply to the nursing program at Quaker Mill Community College.

In some instances the inability to continuously stay in school was more detrimental and some students had to pay as much as \$1,000 per month for tuition. While this number may not sound like much, the reality is that most of these students were working making minimum wage jobs where coming up with that kind of money was a struggle. Martha shared her experience as she did everything in her power to remain enrolled at Rural College:

“It was a lot of money that I was paying every month, a lot of gas money, I was driving a really old car at the time. And on top of that I was so tired, I never attended any of the school events, socials, anything like that, that was like a luxury, you know. And then my grades started to drop, and I talked to the

professors and I told them what was happening, that I was working two jobs, and that that was why my grades were dropping. So I told them that I loved that school but that I had to leave, and that they were going to see me back. So after I left Rural, I enrolled in Livengood Community College*, and it was really hard because by that time they had already changed the laws and they asked for a social security number, so I took some classes, like the interpreting course, because I didn't want to not be going to school, I wanted to keep going to school.”

Eventually Martha was able to fulfill the promise she made to her professors, and when I interviewed her in the summer of 2013, she was preparing to start college once again that Fall. Nevertheless, the fact that she was not able to continuously stay in school, made her journey to higher education even more arduous and she wasn't able to meet her expected graduation date of May 2011.

Although Dulce's family was able to take out a private loan to cover the tuition expenses for her sophomore year, her junior year tuition costs brought the family financial difficulties that they could not continue to patron. By the time Dulce got to Rural College in the Fall of her Junior year, she didn't have the money to cover the tuition payments for that year and was forced to withdraw from classes a few weeks after the semester began. In the following excerpt Dulce describes her experience as she was forced to leave school and go back home:

“I withdrew and got W's for all my grades. At first I was a mess, I didn't get out of bed. I know it sounds bad to say this, but I came home, I had all my stuff in my car, and I didn't even unpack my car, and there wasn't even a bed in my room, and I just laid there on the floor and slept there for like a month. All I did for a whole month was sleep and eat, sleep and eat. After that I started working as a waitress and then when I was waitressing I met a doctor who offered me a job as a nurse assistant, and then another doctor (he was a Vet), he offered me a job as a Vet tech, so I was working both jobs and then I saved up a bunch of money, pretty much all my money went to buying a car (because I needed a car to move around) and saving for school.”

After spending time at home trying to save money to go back to college, Dulce was approached by a member of her community who offered to cover her tuition costs for the rest of her college career. When I met with Dulce in the summer of 2013, her 'sponsor' was still in the picture and they had discussed the possibility of him covering her medical school tuition in the future.

Patriotism and Desire to join the Military

While this theme was only present in 3 out of the 10 interviews, its unexpected nature led to its inclusion in this chapter. Once again, it should be mentioned that the students in these interviews were all Mexican undocumented students whom through different avenues navigated an educational system that did everything to hinder their educational attainment. Despite the many difficulties set upon them by state and federal legislation, 3 of the participants mentioned their desire to join the military.

When asked about their reasons for wanting to join the military, the students added that it was because this was their country and that they wanted to protect it. Three of the participants who were following healthcare careers, talked about their desire to join the military once they had completed their training in physical therapy, medicine, and dentistry.

In the following excerpt, Martha talks about how her immigration status changed her educational plans as well as her plans to join the military.

“What I would’ve done if I hadn’t been undocumented. If I hadn’t been undocumented, I would’ve gone to college and maybe gotten different scholarships, maybe through FAFSA to pay for school. I would’ve definitely, I don’t remember at the time exactly what I wanted but I always wanted the medical field. I wanted to be a Physician assistant, now I want to be a dentist. But I don’t think I wanted that back then, I wanted to be a P.A... but I would’ve done that, because I’m still pursuing the medical field. I probably would’ve joined the military... I actually did, I just joined the National Guard.”

Similarly, Martha’s sister, Nancy, mentioned her desire to join the army and her frustration with the fact that even after she received Deferred Action, she would still not be able to join the armed forces:

“I always wanted to be a physical therapist and I always wanted to join the army as well. No, I still can’t even though now I have deferred action. If I could, that’s what I would do. But I want to go into the military after I complete the physical therapy program, which should take me about 5 years”

Finally, Maria also mentioned that she had seriously considered joining the military when she was in high school. She speaks of how she was even approached by a recruiter, whom after she told him about her immigration status, remained persistent about her joining. Eventually, the same recruiter informed Maria that although he really wanted her to join, he couldn't do anything for her because of her lack of documentation.

DISCUSSION

As I have shown in the previous chapter, there are several factors present in the lives of undocumented students as they make their journeys to higher education. The findings reveal that when it comes to higher education, these students' educational trajectories were primarily hindered by (1) their inability to pay for college, (2) the lack of or misguidance about the college application process as it was associated to their immigration status and their options for higher education, (3) the discrimination and inequality they experienced as a result of their immigration status and Mexican identities. Moreover, the interviews also revealed secondary themes about (1) the students' transitions into adulthood and their experiences with the *Junior Year Crash* and the *Cinderella Effect*, (2) their inability to remain continuously enrolled in college, and (3) their desire to join the armed forces.

These themes, though present in the lives of these students in various degrees, played a key role in the participants' educational trajectories. The themes revealed what the process of applying to college was like for these students, as well as the intricacies tied to their undocumented status. In addition, the findings indicate how much more difficult the college application process was for this group of students and how despite all the obstacles they encountered, they managed to make it to college. More importantly, some of the themes that emerged throughout the interviews shed light on the realities of North Carolina as a state without a tuition policy for undocumented students and with anti-immigrant legislation in place.

The first theme, *Paying for College*, described these students' struggles as they looked for ways to pay for college. Their experiences with high tuition rates, inability to receive federal financial aid, and unawareness of scholarships available to them, were all parts of this overarching theme of paying for college. Additionally, this theme was directly tied to the absence of state or federal legislation that would allow undocumented students to pay in state

tuition and qualify for federal financial aid. In exploring the financial obstacles present in the students' lives, it was evident that money was a recurring concern for those students in the sample. With the exception of one participant, all the students were responsible for covering tuition costs to some extent. Therefore, while for the most part students managed to come up with the money to cover their tuition costs, there were instances in which students could no longer continue to work two jobs or continue to borrow money, and they saw their educational goals and ambitions affected by this.

The second theme, *lack of guidance*, described the lack of guidance regarding the college application process that undocumented students experienced as a result of their immigration status. This theme directly connected to the lack of scholarship on undocumented students in North Carolina, as well as to the changing legislation in regards to tuition policies for undocumented students. The interviews reveal that while in some cases students did receive guidance from the high school guidance counselors or from the parents, no single participant received information about this process from both parents and school personnel. In addition, in analyzing the findings pertaining to this theme, the problem of misinformation was discovered. While it is difficult to identify the causes for this, the reality was that the high school guidance counselors that interacted with these students often misadvised them about their educational prospects and opportunities.

The third and most central theme throughout the findings was *discrimination*. Regardless of whether it was inside or outside of an educational environment all students in the sample revealed experiences with discrimination. Needless to say, the effects that discrimination had on the students were life altering and appeared to have made a lasting impact since the students' initial encounter with it. Although I cannot speak to the emotional and/or psychological effect that experiences with discrimination had on the participants, as the person who conducted every

interview, it was clear that the students struggled to share their experiences with this theme and became emotional in the process.

Additionally, discrimination was a recurring theme for many of the participants. Some participants who had immigrated to the United States as young children could remember having experienced discrimination as children, as well as in other instances throughout their lives. While discrimination inside and outside of an educational environment were different in nature, the negative effects that both types of discrimination appeared to have on the participants were similar.

When it came to secondary themes, some of the themes in this category could be directly tied to themes found in the primary themes section. One of those themes was the presence of the *Cinderella Effect* and the *Junior Year Crash*, which could be directly tied to the lack of guidance theme that was introduced earlier. By experiencing the *Cinderella Effect* and the *Junior Year Crash*, high school students transitioned into adulthood and out of the protection offered to them as minors by the public education system.

Similarly, another secondary theme revealed during the interviews was that of *lack of continuity*. In the course of the interviews, it was obvious that a pattern was emerging among the participants. Despite the fact that all participants were successful in making it to college, the findings indicated that remaining enrolled in school was a constant struggle that these students experienced. Closely tied to this secondary theme, was the primary theme of *paying for college*, as most students could not remain enrolled in school because of their inability to pay for college. As a result, they were forced to take time off from school to work and save money to pay for the tuition costs. This one semester on, one semester off system, took a toll on the participants' academic progress and it delayed the completion of their associates and bachelors degrees.

The last of the secondary themes was that of *Patriotism and Desire to Join the Military*. Although the presence of this theme throughout the interviews was not as prominent as others, I was surprised by its surfacing among this group of students. Three out of the ten participants mentioned having the desire to join the armed forces and added that their reasons for doing so were that they wanted to defend ‘their country’. The emergence of this theme reveals several layers associated with the participants’ need to shape their identities as ‘Americans’. Through their induction into the military, the participants attempted to become members of the American society that they had for so long lived on the margins of.

CONCLUSION

When I began this research, I was interested in exploring North Carolina's anti-immigrant policies as they affected undocumented students' educational trajectories. Through the course of this study, I gained insight into the lives of these ten undocumented students and my focus deviated from its original goal of analyzing the ramifications of anti-immigrant legislation. In learning about their resilience, exemplary work ethic, and the multiple obstacles they encountered, my focus turned to the experiences of undocumented students. By learning about their experiences with discrimination and the second class citizenship they experienced, I began to see that the problem was not rooted in the anti-immigrant legislation but in the systems of oppression imbedded in the state's history.

The narratives these students shared provided an opportunity to delve into the lives of a population that is seldom explored. Despite some concerns regarding my ability to recruit individuals who were willing to share their stories, I was able to find a group of students who were eager to 'come out'. The participants in my sample had indeed experienced a number of injustices as a result of their immigration status, yet after years of being afraid, they exhibited a desire to embrace their undocumented status. The toll that that living in the shadows had taken on them had reached its limit and thanks to deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, they no longer had to hide their immigration status because of the threat of deportation.

Through the three primary themes and the subsequent secondary themes, I was able to unearth the degree of adversity that this group of students faced in their pursuit of a higher education. In examining the current state of immigration policy as it pertains to the undocumented student population, I can conclude that many of the themes exhibited throughout these interviews, could be eradicated.

In the passing of the DREAM Act, the theme of *Paying for College* would be eliminated, as federal financial aid, loans, and work study opportunities would become available to the undocumented student population. In addition, the lack of continuity theme would also be addressed, since the primary cause of interruption in students' educational trajectories was the inability to continue to pay for college.

Furthermore, in examining the *lack of information and misinformation* theme, the stigma associated to the students' immigration status proved to be relevant. A number of participants reported not being open about their immigration status when interacting with their guidance counselors, because of the repercussions associated with being undocumented. The implementation of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) has allowed for these students to be further incorporated into mainstream American society. Nevertheless, the recent implementation of DACA has not allowed for further analysis nor to conclude whether this memorandum will eliminate the stigma associated with these students' immigration status, and in turn the lack of information and misinformation tied to their undocumented identities.

In addition, the *discrimination* theme that arose in every interview shed light to the particular issues of Latinos, as it is described in Latino/as Critical Race Theory. The participants experienced discrimination because of a variety of factors associated with race, ethnicity, language, and immigration status. Despite the fact that discrimination based on race is an issue deeply ingrained in North Carolina's history of racial segregation, the discrimination that this group of students experienced was beyond race. While the students had no control over any of the factors that led to their discrimination, immigration status was the only factor that could be changed. Despite the fact that these students had no choice on determining their immigration status, they were constantly subjected to discrimination as a result of it. In implementing the DREAM Act at the federal level, the issue of immigration status would no longer be a cause for

discrimination, and although other factors like race, ethnicity, and language would be present, one of the contributors to their experiences with discrimination would be eliminated.

In the last theme, *Patriotism and Desire to Join the Military*, it could be argued that those students who expressed a desire to join the military closely associated this with proving their allegiance to the United States. In declaring allegiance to the country that they consider their 'home', they are exhibiting the ultimate proof of their American values. In addition, the patriotism these students exhibited could also be considered an expression of their desire to veer away from the margins of society and gain entry into mainstream American society.

Finally, the experiences these students shared during the course of the interviews are only a fraction of what is imbedded in the undocumented student experience. The limited size of my sample does not allow for the generalization of these findings to the entire North Carolina undocumented student population. Nevertheless, the findings expose some of the obstacles that students within this population experienced throughout their educational trajectories. In order to fully understand the undocumented student population of North Carolina, further scholarly research must be conducted on this group of the population.

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Appendix 1: Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Country of Origin	Age of Arrival	Type of Institution	Current City	GPA in High School	AP/Honors classes	Field of Study	GPA in college
Maria	20	Mexico	7 years old	Community College	Winston-Salem	3.8	Yes	Nursing (wants to be NP)	--
Martha	23	Mexico	9 years old	4 year private institution	Winston-Salem	3.85	Yes	Pre-med/dental	3.58
Dulce	23	Mexico	7 years old	4 year private institution	Winston-Salem	4.26	Yes	Math and psychology double major, chemistry minor **1	3.6
Nancy	18	Mexico	4 years old	Public Research University	Winston-Salem	4.2	Yes	Physical Therapy	
Rachel	24	Mexico	9 years old	4 year private institution	Winston-Salem	3.0	Yes	Religion and Practical Theology	3.9
Mario	22	Mexico	9 years old	Community college	Raleigh	4.3	Yes	Biomedical Engineering	3.9
Cecilia	21	Mexico	1.5 years old	4 year private institution	Winston-Salem	3.5	Yes	Business Administration	
Bonnie	26	Mexico	13 years old	4 year private institution	Raleigh	3.85	Yes	Undecided	--
Carmen	23	Mexico	15 years old	4 year private institution	Raleigh	3.8	Yes	Spanish, minor in Math, Web Development, and Psychology	--
Jaime	19	Mexico	5	Public Research University	Raleigh	5.0	Yes	Economics and Global Studies with a minor in entrepreneurship	

Appendix 2: IRB Approval



Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
526 Brodhead Avenue
Bethlehem, PA 18015-3046
(610) 758-3021 Fax (610) 758-5994
<http://www.lehigh.edu/~inors>

DATE: July 8, 2013

TO: Heather Johnson
FROM: Lehigh University IRB

STUDY TITLE: [476651-2] In College and Undocumented: A Comparative Analysis of Undocumented Students' Educational Trajectories in North Carolina and Pennsylvania

IRB REFERENCE #: 13/229 T

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: July 8, 2013

PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE: July 7, 2014

INITIAL APPROVAL DATE: July 8, 2013

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of materials for this research study. The Lehigh University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission. This approval is valid for one year.

This submission has received an Expedited Review based on the Lehigh University Policy on the Protection of Human Subjects in Research.

Reapproval and Progress Report: The current approval will expire on July 7, 2014. If you wish to continue beyond that time, you must submit a renewal request and progress report on the Continuing Review form via IRBNet. This protocol will be due for continuing IRB review **60 days** before the expiration date of July 7, 2014.

Informed Consent: Please remember that INFORMED CONSENT is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of subject understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and the research subject. The Lehigh University policy requires each subject receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Changes or Amendments: If during the year you propose significant changes in your approved protocol, please submit these changes for review using the amendment/modification form

through IRBNet. The proposed changes may not be initiated without IRB approval (except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to subjects).

Adverse Events: All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms through IRBNet for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed. Any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to research subjects and others resulting from this study must be reported promptly to the Lehigh University IRB. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending further review by the committee.

Non-compliance or Complaints: Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Completion of Study and Record Retention: Please notify the Lehigh University IRB as soon as the research has been completed. Study records, including full protocols and signed consent forms (originals) for each subject, must be kept in a secured location by the investigator for 3 years following the study's completion.

If you have any questions, please contact Susan E. Disidore at (610)758-3020 (email: sus5@lehigh.edu) or Troy Boni at (610)758-2985 (email: tdb308@lehigh.edu). Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Appendix 3: Consent Form

Oral Consent Form: Statement of Research Purposes

Title of Project: In College and Undocumented: A Comparative Analysis of Undocumented Students' Educational Trajectories in North Carolina and Pennsylvania

This study is being conducted by: Alessandra Bazo Vienrich, Sociology & Anthropology, (Lehigh University) under the direction of Professor Heather B. Johnson, Sociology & Anthropology (Lehigh University)

Explanation of Research Project

I am conducting research as a graduate student of the Department of Sociology & Anthropology, at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA. The name of my research is "In College and Undocumented: A Comparative Analysis of the Educational Trajectories of Undocumented Students in North Carolina and Pennsylvania". The purpose of my study is to gain an understanding of the educational journeys of undocumented students, by closely examining their unique experiences, obstacles, and achievements. During my summer research, I will be interviewing a total of 10 undocumented students from North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

We have chosen you as one of our participants, since you are (or have been) an undocumented student. You will receive no personal benefit from being part of this study; however your participation will help us better understand the process that undocumented students undergo as they apply to college.

We have some questions that we would like to ask you. These questions are about your life story and your educational experiences as an undocumented person in America. Some questions that we are about to ask you might bring memories that are upsetting to you. While this may not occur, we would like you to be aware of this possibility.

We will be recording your answers to our questions on a tape recorder. Any information you may provide will be confidential. This means that while we may publish and share the information you provide for research purposes, your name and identity will not be provided. You can stop being a part of the study at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. There is no compensation made for your participation in the study. If you wish not be part of this study, please inform us so.

Do you have any questions about the project? **[Action: researcher will be in no rush and wait approximately 10 seconds for a response]**

If you want to talk to anyone about this research project, I am leaving you the contact information for the principal investigator for this study **[Action: A flyer stating Dr. Heather B. Johnson's affiliation, address, telephone number, and email address will be provided at this time]**

If you agree to be in this study, please let us know by saying YES
[Action: Interviewer] Please circle YES or NO

In case NO (not wishing to participate in the study) could I ask you the reasons? _____
[Action: Interviewer please end HERE]

[If YES] Thank you for your agreement in participating in this study. Next, we would like to obtain your agreement to tape-record our questions and your responses.

If you agree to be tape-recorded, please let us know by saying YES

[Action: Interviewer] Please circle: YES or NO

In case NO (not wishing to be tape-recorded) could I ask your reasons? _____

Participant's signature

Signature of investigator

Place

Date & Time

Appendix 4: Interview Protocol

Overall Familial questions

- 1) Where are you from and how old were you when you moved here?
- 2) How old are you now?
- 3) So tell me a little about how you/your family moved here? Do you remember that process?
- 4) Do you remember how you came to the United States?
- 5) Have you always lived in NC since you moved to the USA?
- 6) What was it like for you growing up here?
- 7) Would you say that overall your experience was good/bad?
- 8) Can you think of any negative experiences that you've experienced as a result of your immigration status? Whether it was in school or outside of school

Educational Questions

- 9) When did you realize you didn't have documentation? Were you always aware?
- 10) What was your reaction?
- 11) Are you currently undocumented or have you been able to adjust your status?
- 12) Were your peers aware of your immigration status?
- 13) Were your teachers and school administrators aware of your immigration status?
- 14) What high school did you go to? Was it public/private?
- 15) *Tell me a little about what education means to you?*
- 16) Do you remember what your educational goals were when you were in high school?
- 17) When did you start thinking about college?
- 18) How did you prepare to apply to college?
- 19) Did you take AP or honors classes?
- 20) What was your GPA in high school? What it is now (what it would have been at the time of the interview in July 2013)
- 21) How did being undocumented affect your educational dreams/goals?
- 22) Can you describe the whole process of applying to college?
- 23) Did you have help from your high school counselors?
- 24) Did you have help from your family?
- 25) Did anyone help you with applications, essays, etc.?
- 26) Was money a concern for you?
- 27) Did anyone help you with college costs? (applications, SAT fees, registration, books)
- 28) What role did your family play in your desire to go to college? Were they supportive?
- 29) How many schools did you apply to?
- 30) Would you like to tell me the names?
- 31) What school did you end up enrolling in?
- 32) Why did you decide to enroll there?
- 33) How did/do you pay for college?
- 34) Did you receive any scholarships or grants?

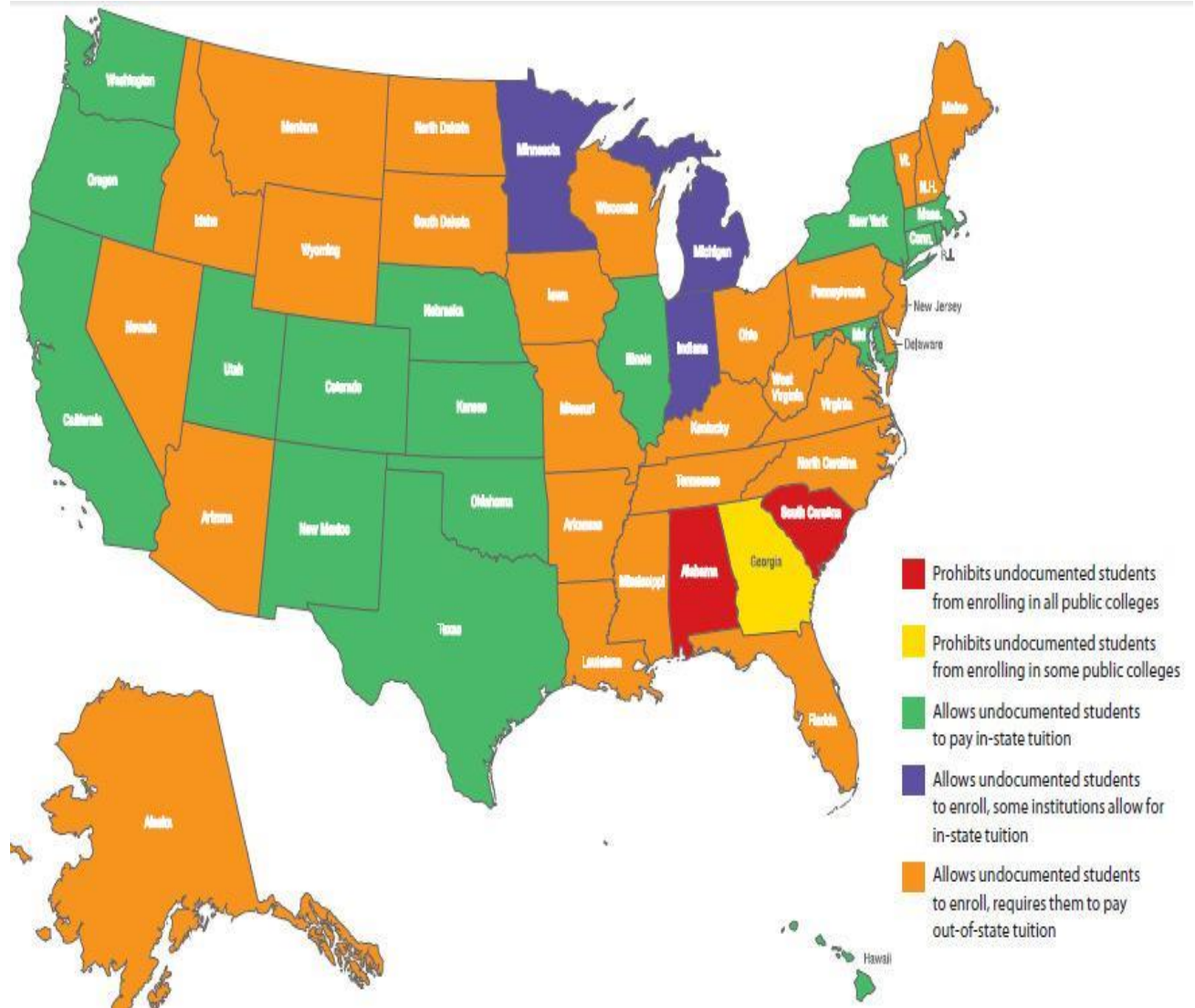
Community Factors

- 35) What was your experience as an undocumented youth growing up in North Carolina?
- 36) Would you say that your experience was pretty similar to that of a young person with documents?
- 37) Were you able to take driver's education? Were you able to drive as a teenager?
- 38) Were you ever concerned that you may not be able to attend college?
- 39) Are you familiar with the laws in terms of in-state tuition for undocumented students in North Carolina?
- 40) What do you think of the laws in NC in relation to undocumented students?
- 41) Do you think NC is a good state to be undocumented in?
- 42) Did you ever wish you could move to a different state?
- 43) Why did you decide to stay in NC?

Employment related questions

- 44) Did you work while you were in high school?
- 45) Did you work during college?
- 46) How many hours on average did you work while being in school?
- 47) Can you describe what it was like to work and go to school at the same time?
- 48) Did you find it difficult to manage your school work and workload?

Appendix 6: State by State Tuition Policies (Washington Monthly Magazine 2013)



VITA

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Education

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY
Masters of Arts, Sociology; GPA 3.48

Bethlehem, PA
May 2014

SALEM COLLEGE
Bachelor of Arts, Sociology, Not-for-Profit Management; GPA 3.0

Winston-Salem, NC
May 2011

Research Interests

Undocumented youth, the immigrant experience, higher education, qualitative methodology

Awards

EASTERN SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY TRAVEL GRANT (\$300) 2014

Funding for travel to the Annual Meeting in Baltimore, MD

EAST-WEST-CENTER INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE

TRAVEL GRANT (\$200) 2014

Funding for travel to the student conference in Honolulu, HI

GRADUATE SUMMER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP, LEHIGH UNIVERSITY (\$4,800) 2013

Dale S. Strohl '58 Award for Research Excellence in Humanities and Social Sciences

Scholarly Presentations

In College & Undocumented: An Analysis of the Educational Trajectories of Undocumented Students in North Carolina. 84th Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting, Baltimore, MD. February 2014.

In College & Undocumented: An Analysis of the Educational Trajectories of Undocumented Students in North Carolina. 13th East-West Center International Graduate Student Conference, Honolulu, HI. February 2014.

The Effect of Language and Maternal Education on Latinas' Higher Educational Attainment. 73rd Annual Meeting of the Southern Sociological Society, Atlanta, GA. April 2010.