



2019

## Understanding Views on Undocumented Students' Access to Higher Education: A Critical Review and Call for Action

Elizabeth Jach

*Colorado State University - Fort Collins*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ecommons.luc.edu/jcshesa>



Part of the [Higher Education Administration Commons](#)

### Recommended Citation

Jach, E. (2019). Understanding views on undocumented students' access to higher education: A critical review and call for action. *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs*, 5(1), pp. 51-63.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals and Magazines at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact [ecommons@luc.edu](mailto:ecommons@luc.edu).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).



Volume 3, Issue 3

Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs

# Understanding Views on Undocumented Students' Access to Higher Education

## A Critical View and Call for Action

Elizabeth Jach

### — Abstract —

This review critically examines previous literature on opinions of undocumented immigrants in the United States as well as undocumented students' access to higher education through a consideration of the context of the current political climate, and interrogates going beyond raising consciousness towards taking action, as invoked by Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis and postcolonial feminism.

Keywords: undocumented students, higher education, liberatory praxis

ISSN 2377-1306

© 2019

All rights reserved for the authors of this study. Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs is an open access journal and all pages are available for copying and distribution under a Creative Commons Attribution/Non-Commercial/No Derivative works license. Any authorized work must be properly attributed to the author(s). Work cannot be used for commercial means or changed in any way.

Since the Trump administration's rescission of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in September 2017, undocumented students in the United States remain in limbo. Today, DACA provides limited protections for undocumented students who met qualifying requirements. Since the Obama administration's implementation of the Executive Order in 2012, the courts have debated the future of DACA and there are current cases ongoing. Recently, the Supreme Court refused to bypass an appellate court's review of a challenge to the DACA rescission forcing the Trump administration to resume renewals of DACA (Kopan, 2018). With Congress yet to solidify an alternative for DACA or agree on immigration legislation, the immense stress of an unknown future and negative political climate will continue to impact the undocumented student experience on college campuses across the country.

Previous research has named the difficulties undocumented students encounter at institutions of higher education (Bjorklund, 2018). Indeed, undocumented students encounter numerous barriers to their pursuit of higher education especially when coupled with intersectional minority identities, including race and first-generation status (Muñoz, 2015; 2016). In a survey of 909 undocumented undergraduates from 264 institutions of higher education, more than two thirds of students reported experiencing discrimination based on their legal status within the past month (Suárez-Orózco et al., 2015). Such challenges also are prevalent at the K-12 level. Lee (2005) demonstrated the complexities immigrant youth must navigate being "up against whiteness", as described in the title of her book. Recent research has deemed that local action for undocumented students may be the best option under the Trump administration (Serna & Cohen, 2017). Furthermore, research on the experience of undocumented students during the Trump administration has demonstrated an exacerbation of student stress and heightened risk for "stopping out of their studies" (Andrade, 2017, p. 12). These realities make it imperative to understand how people with

legal status, specifically Whites, construct their support of undocumented students' access to higher education. In addition, Whites with legal status have the opportunity to become allies and counter the master narrative of undocumented students' access to higher education, a narrative which renders these students as "illegal." The purpose of this literature review is to critique current research on understanding majority opinions of undocumented immigrants, as well as undocumented students, through the lens of Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis and an incorporation of post-colonial feminism. This review critically examines research to date and identifies opportunities for action towards improving undocumented students' access to and persistence in higher education.

### Theoretical Framework

The present critique employs Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis and postcolonial feminism to analyze previous literature on majority opinions of undocumented students' pursuit of higher education. Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis entails raising consciousness and engaging with others (such as students and teachers) towards action informed by critical systemic analysis. Agents of institutions of higher education can define and work towards action steps to support undocumented students' pursuit of higher education. This review critiques previous literature through this lens of opportunity. Although previous research has illuminated ignorance, ambivalence, and even malice regarding the plight of undocumented immigrants and undocumented students, much of this literature fails to consistently design action, recommend action, or take action towards building advocacy for - and allyship with - undocumented students. This review critically examines previous literature on opinions of undocumented immigrants in the United States as well as undocumented students' access to higher education. This critique occurs in the context of the current political climate towards raising consciousness and, most importantly, taking action as called for by Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis. As described

by Cabrera (2012), “it is insufficient to simply criticize systemic oppression; one must also take action against it that is informed by theory, thereby developing praxis” (p. 381).

This critique also employs postcolonial feminism to examine the binary surrounding the rhetoric between “illegal” immigrants and Dreamers. The term Dreamers refers to individuals who were brought to the United States as minors through no choice of their own (these individuals are also known as the 1.5 generation). As described by Bhattacharya (2017), postcolonial feminism is “especially conscious about the binary relationships formed when we create a line of division between two ideas” (p. 82). Postcolonial feminism challenges existing frameworks, including feminism, by seeking to incorporate intersectionality, including identities such as race, ethnicity, and gender, to dismantle and complicate the binary of feminism versus cis patriarchy, as well as intersectional systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). Anzaldúa’s (2012) seminal work considered identities, such as identifying as Chicana, a lesbian, an activist, in a more nuanced way. That is, Anzaldúa (2012) suggested that rather than identities creating categories of “us” and “them,” binaries create borderlands which are lived, inhabited spaces. This review employs postcolonial feminism as a means of interrogating binary views about immigration and undocumented students’ pursuit of higher education. In this analysis, Anzaldúa’s (2012) notion of borderlands complicates the framing of immigration in current political rhetoric: supporting Dreamers versus barricading “illegal” immigration (such as through building a wall along the border of United States and Mexico). Together, Freire’s (2000) notion of liberatory praxis and postcolonial feminism invite the complication of the binary which currently dominates the immigration debate with an emphasis towards engaging in action.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework considers the use of the terms “illegal” and citizen, as well as aspects of

Whiteness. These concepts comprise important tenets for a critique of the literature about majority opinions of undocumented immigrants and undocumented students’ access to and persistence in higher education.

### Use of Terms

This review employs the use of the terms “illegal” as well as citizen. Negrón-Gonzales (2013) asserted that the term “illegal” frames immigrants as criminal which functions as a means of dehumanizing others. For this reason, this paper uses the term “illegal” in quotes to reference the term as used in previous literature as well as how it is used within the current rhetoric surrounding the immigration debate in the United States. Indeed, Haney-López (2006) argued that the United States has a history of legalizing Whiteness as equivalence to citizenship status. Postcolonial feminism and Anzaldúa (2012) provide a valuable critique of the binary between Dreamers seeking access to higher education and Whiteness as a requisite for citizenship status within the United States.

This analysis considers citizenship a form of legal status. Ong (1999) contended that globalization has more complex implications than economic consequences, in that globalization also motivates individuals and groups towards flexible citizenship. Thus, postcolonial feminism can also be applied to the binary between “illegal” and “citizen,” as Ong’s work demonstrates that there is more complexity to such a binary. For undocumented students, previous research has examined the rhetoric surrounding the use of terms such as “alien” and “undocumented,” finding through values analysis that using the term “alien” was associated with perceptions of the importance of legality and use of the term “undocumented” was associated with perceiving someone’s status as circumstantial (Caicedo, 2016). These findings demonstrate how everyday language used within conversations and written works evokes contextualization. In turn, the contextualization created using such terms contributes to frameworks which constitute ideas, view-

points, and ideologies.

The terms access, persistence, and majority also play a role in this review. The term access refers broadly to “the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure—or at least strive to ensure—that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education” (Great Schools Partnership, 2014, para 1). At the time of this writing, DACA continues to be debated in the courts and only 18 states have legislated in-state tuition for undocumented students. These realities constitute a lack of consistent policy for undocumented students’ equal and equitable opportunity to attend institutions of higher education. Persistence refers to “continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any institution” of higher education (National Student Clearinghouse, 2015, para. 3). This broad definition suggests that consistent progress toward undergraduate degree completion can be a measure of success. The term majority is a term that refers to individuals with majority identities in the United States, such as identifying as White with legal status. Since not all studies reviewed delimited samples by these two factors, this review uses the term majority to encompass dominant identities. As identity involves multiple factors, applying Anzaldúa’s (2012) borderlands perspective to majority identified individuals could suggest that individuals may identify with their privileged identity in order to “pass” or associate with the status quo by associating with privilege through a borderland. Although beyond the scope of this review, future research needs to continue to dismantle the ways in which terms such as majority perpetuate the binary and decentralize issues of privilege.

### Whiteness

Research on Whiteness provides important context for understanding White citizens’ opinions of undocumented students’ access to higher education. Since legalized Whiteness has defined citizenship status in our country’s history (Haney-Lopez, 2006) and previous research has found that racial minori-

ties reported more support for undocumented students than their White counterparts (Garibay, Herrera, Johnson-Guerrero & Garcia, 2016), this review briefly considers a critique of Whiteness to raise consciousness towards liberatory praxis (Freire, 2000). DiAngelo (2011) defined White fragility as:

a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. (p.1)

Matias (2016a) used DiAngelo’s (2011) definition of White privilege to be a socially-just educator when teaching by not permitting conversations to end without challenging her students’ preconceived ideologies. She also argued that White fragility can affect students of color. She further pointed out that if educators do not unpack their own Whiteness, understand White privilege, and address White fragility, they cannot encourage students to begin a racial healing process (Matias, 2016b). In addition, Spanierman and Smith (2017) pointed out that White allyship is an ongoing effort rather than a competence to be achieved. Considering White fragility and White allyship matters when seeking to understand how Whites with citizenship or legal status in the United States make sense of undocumented students’ access to higher education.

Although a review of the literature on Whiteness is beyond the scope of the present study, research on Whiteness provides important insight into majority views. Cabrera’s previous work has extensively researched Whiteness among college students which helps to clarify Whites’ views of minoritized groups within higher education. Cabrera’s findings identified the perception that racism against Whiteness is on the rise (Cabrera, 2014a), White male undergraduates believed minorities were overly sensitive about racial jokes (Cabrera, 2014b), and White males minimized

issues of race in college and their racial views changed minimally during college (Cabrera, 2014c). Thus, previous research exposed how White cis patriarchy is part of the social fabric of White students' views of minoritized individuals.

In addition, Cabrera (2012) called for White allyship in which Whites can become racial justice allies by working with People of Color (as opposed to for People of Color). The importance of working with those of a marginalized group is integral to employing Freire's (2000) concept of liberatory praxis. Considering White fragility, White privilege, and White racial justice allyship are critical for an examination of the literature on majority views of undocumented immigrants as well as undocumented students' access to higher education to help inform consciousness raising towards Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis.

### Review of the Literature

Literature on majority opinions of undocumented immigrants and undocumented students misses the opportunity to consistently recommend action, design action, or act to make substantive change towards developing praxis. This review provides a critique of literature regarding opinions about undocumented immigrants, as well as undocumented students' access to higher education which currently fails to: (a) sufficiently employ Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis, and (b) consistently identify exemplars of research in praxis which recommend, design, or report on how to advocate for and ally with undocumented students in their pursuit of and persistence in higher education.

### Studies on Majority Opinions of Undocumented Immigrants

Previous research (Cowan, Martinez, & Mendiola, 1997; Diaz, Saenz, & Kwan, 2011; Haubert & Fussell, 2006) has examined opinions of undocumented immigrants within the United States often failing to sufficiently employ Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis to design, recommend, or take action towards developing praxis. In a survey of college students at

a state university and community colleges near Los Angeles, CA, researchers examined attitudes toward "illegal" immigrants in response to a news story about recent beatings of two undocumented immigrants. Researchers found that "negative attitudes toward illegal immigrants are related to the stereotypes held about illegal immigrants, a humanitarian-egalitarian value system, and negative attitudes toward legal Mexican Americans" (Cowan, Martinez, & Mendiola, 1997, p. 412).

Opinion research has also unpacked negative views about undocumented immigrants related to views on employment. One such study identified an association between views about the economy and views about undocumented individuals (Diaz, Saenz, & Kwan, 2011). The authors concluded that "immigrants may become scapegoats of social discontent and thus be seen as potential usurpers of governmental and private resources" (Diaz, Saenz, & Kwan, 2011, p. 309). Such views suggest that resources are limited and competition is inherent to accessing the available pool of resources. To analyze how immigrants impact the economy and society based on measures of group threat, labor market competition, and cosmopolitanism, Haubert and Fussell (2006) conducted regression analysis using data from the General Social Survey, carried out by the National Opinion Research Center. Findings identified higher levels of perceived group threat, higher levels of labor market competition within low-skill level jobs, and parochialism (as opposed to cosmopolitanism) as having an association with more negative views of immigrants (Haubert & Fussell, 2006). These results expose how majority opinions can be formed through a lens of fear within one's tradition. However, these results fall short of taking the next step to identify clear ways to move towards action to counteract negative view formation.

More recent research has also examined factors associated with negative views of immigrants. A study identified that group threat perceptions were lower when job growth was expected in a specific occu-

pation or sector, and education was associated with lower levels of perceived group threat as people in an occupation are more likely to have similar levels of education (Kunovich, 2013). In a study which included both college students and local community members, researchers found that higher levels of endorsing nationalism have also been associated with higher levels of endorsement of punishing immigrants, rather than the citizens employing undocumented immigrants (Mukherjee, Molina, & Adams, 2012). The authors also found that patriotism and nationalism significantly predicted support for apprehending and punishing undocumented immigrants. Such findings shed light on the outcome of the 2016 presidential election and the current rhetoric about building a wall along the border with Mexico. That is, the attitudes of White U.S. citizens perpetuate stereotypes and negative attitudes against undocumented immigrants. These findings demonstrate how previous research has uncovered the majority's bias against undocumented immigrants, and leave a gap for identifying action steps to increase support for undocumented immigrants.

Nationalism and political views have continued to be found to be related to views on undocumented immigrants. One such study found a significant interaction between high levels of group narcissism and national in-group identification, which negatively predicted attitudes toward undocumented immigrants who were also Latino (Lyons, Coursey, & Kenworthy, 2013). More recently, Stupi, Chiricos, and Gertz (2016) found that political ideology and education were the strongest predictors of perceived criminal threat, which in turn had the greatest influence on support for more punitive controls of undocumented immigrants. Although outside of the United States, an examination of university students in Spain which assessed subtle and blatant prejudice towards "illegal" immigrants who had crossed the border found that students' culture of origin was significantly associated with attitudes about migrants (Segura-Robles, Alemany-Arrebola, & Gallargo-Vigil, 2016). These findings demonstrate how con-

structs of "the other" are defined by divisive lines, both ideologically and politically. Ong's (1999) work suggested that globalization contributes to the flexibility individuals and groups press upon such divisions. Anzaldúa's (2012) premise of borderlands complicates such binaries by creating space within the boundaries for ideas and individuals to exist. Although the studies considered in this section help to unpack the nuances of how majority groups view undocumented immigrants, they neglect to consistently take action towards developing praxis on how to support undocumented immigrants. As delineated in Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis, consciousness raising is insufficient but must be followed by action.

### **Studies on Majority Opinions of Undocumented Students' Access to Higher Education**

Literature examining people's opinions of undocumented students' access to higher education has also insufficiently contributed to praxis as defined by Freire (2000). Using cross-sectional data from The Freshman Survey and The College Senior Survey, two studies demonstrated the association between student identities and experiences with views of undocumented students' access to higher education (Garibay, Herrera, Johnson-Guerrero & Garcia, 2016; Herrera, Garibay, Garcia, & Johnston, 2013).

Specifically, Garibay et al. (2016) used multilevel modeling to examine data from The Freshman Survey and the College Senior Survey to examine factors that may be associated with supportive views of undocumented students' access to higher education. For individual characteristics, the authors found that: racial minorities were more supportive of undocumented students than Whites; women were more supportive than men; native English speakers were less supportive than non-native English speakers; having a home address in a left-leaning congressional district was associated with greater support; and positive cross-racial interactions, supportive views at the start of college, and liberal views were associated with more supportive views of undocumented students' access to higher

education. Institutions receiving federal aid, private institutions, and students in states with an in-state tuition policy for undocumented students also predicted higher levels of support. Factors associated with less support for undocumented students' access to higher education included: concerns about obtaining employment after college, negative cross-racial interactions, and residing in a place without in-state tuition policies for undocumented students. These findings suggested that certain undergraduate student attributes were associated with support for undocumented students.

In a related analysis, Herrera et al. (2013) found that students' participation in an ethnic studies course, cultural workshop, and a cultural student organization were each positively associated with views supporting undocumented students' access to higher education. Conversely, higher levels of endorsement of beliefs in hard work as well as satisfaction with present levels of diversity within an institution's student body were associated with less support for undocumented students' access to higher education. Although Herrera et al. (2013) called for future research to investigate how interactions with undocumented students may be associated with majority views of undocumented students, these studies fail to sufficiently address how to take action on the issues related to undocumented students' access to and persistence in higher education. Herrera et al.'s (2013) findings suggested that undergraduate student experiences were also associated with support for undocumented students' pursuit of higher education, suggesting that future research could investigate whether intervening to create such student experiences could build support for undocumented students.

Other studies have also examined majority opinions of undocumented students' access to higher education. A mixed methods dissertation examined the opinions of leaders of institutions of higher education in nine states, which included places with and without in-state tuition policies for undocumented students (Feranchak, 2007). The study found significant

differences in opinions based on leaders' ethnicity, political affiliation, institutional type, and state status on in-state tuition; however, no differences were found based on gender, position, age, or years of experience (Feranchak, 2007). Feranchak's (2007) results underscore the importance of political and ideological differences in constructing views about undocumented students' access to higher education. Palmer and Davidson (2011) also reported factors associated with higher levels of support for undocumented students' access to higher education, such as supporting bilingual education and holding the belief that immigrants support the economy. Conversely, higher family income was associated with less support of undocumented students' access to higher education. In addition, an analysis of the 2006 Immigration Survey conducted by the Pew Research Center investigated the association between forms of nativism and attitudes about whether children of immigrants should be able to access education (Davidson & Burson, 2017). Findings revealed that economic and cultural nativism significantly predicted individuals' opposition to education for undocumented students (Davidson & Burson, 2017). Factors related to opinions of undocumented students' access to higher education including ethnicity, higher family income, and forms of nativism underscore the importance of critiquing and understanding Whiteness. These findings provide important insights into understanding what individual and contextual factors are associated with supporting undocumented students' access to higher education. However, the studies do not consistently design, recommend, or take action towards developing praxis to support undocumented students' access to and persistence in higher education.

### **Research Recommendations for Designing and Taking Action**

Some studies have made recommendations for designing future research and taking on issues related to undocumented students' access to higher education. In an updated literature review of academic success



outcomes for Latina/o undergraduate students, Crisp, Taggart, and Nora (2015) identified the need for future topics and more consistent use of terms and measures. In a dissertation examining leaders of Catholic universities' approach to undocumented students' access to higher education, Parrish (2015) found that leaders expressed an obligation to protect undocumented students and their families through Catholic identities and making sense of leadership. Parrish's (2015) findings unpack how people in positions of power make sense of a topic often perceived as a binary in which an individual or an entity is either for or against undocumented students' access to higher education. Applying postcolonial feminism to these findings presents an interesting dimension. That is, perhaps, protection from Catholic priests perpetuates cispatriarchy, yet simultaneously serves as an action step towards undocumented students' access to higher education. In an ethnographic narrative detailing experiences of political fallout following a town hall meeting about "illegal" Latino immigration at a two-year college in North Georgia, the author called for engaging explicitly with contemporary political issues (Salas, 2012). The article demonstrated how the use of the derogatory language of "illegal" immigrants continues to uphold systemic oppression in which undocumented people are less than citizens. The study also placed a spotlight on the parochial. Given that previous research has found parochial views to be associated with less support of undocumented immigrants (Haubert & Fassell, 2006), the need for understanding what might nuance the binary of such views is an opportunity for future research. An incorporation of understanding and critiquing Whiteness also relates to future efforts towards raising consciousness, as called for by Freire (2000). Crisp, Taggart, and Nora (2015), Parrish (2015), and Salas (2012) provided positional illustrations of possible forms of designing and taking action to support undocumented students' access to and persistence in higher education.

More recently, Serna and Cohen (2017) reviewed the policies of 17 states which provide in-state tuition

for undocumented students, as well as six states prohibiting in-state tuition benefits for undocumented students. They also reviewed system-wide actions of six state systems of institutions of higher education. The authors concluded that local action to work towards supporting undocumented students' access to higher education may be the best option under the current Trump administration. Thus, Serna and Cohen (2017) provided recommendations for a place to start working towards praxis on an issue that has yet to be resolved on the national level. Their recommendations also inhabit Anzaldúa's (2012) notion of inhabiting a borderland: creating space against the master narrative which renders undocumented as "illegals."

### Research which has Documented Acting on the Plight of Undocumented Students

Studies have also recorded taking action on the plight of undocumented students. These studies serve as exemplars of Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis in which consciousness raising also involves developing action. In a case study of three community colleges in borderland Texas (located near the border of Texas and Mexico), Jauregui and Slate (2009) identified non-institutional factors impacting undocumented student success, as well as institutional factors promoting undocumented student success. Institutional factors which promoted undocumented students' success in the areas of retention and achievement included admission policies, pre-requisite course requirements, communication, institutional commitment, and financial aid. Jauregui and Slate's (2009) work provides institutions of higher education with tangible issues that can be addressed to promote success for undocumented students. Crawford and Arnold (2016) identified personal factors which motivated individuals to decide to advocate for undocumented students through a phenomenological approach, offering important insights into how individuals in positions of power, including those serving students in institutions of higher education, can make sense

of their role and how to make decisions toward advocacy. This study provided an important contribution by examining the individual level of advocacy and allyship, illuminating how one person truly can make a difference in the lives of others. Serna (2017) also synthesized strategic enrollment management policy recommendations for inclusive practices of undocumented students. The recommendations identified possible solutions for strategic enrollment management offices, including a call to educate staff, consider the whole student, and help undocumented students access financial resources as well as transfer seamlessly from one institution of higher education to another. In addition, Reyna Rivarola (2017) considered current programs responding to the needs of undocumented students within higher education in light of the current sociopolitical context. Together, these studies demonstrate tactics of working towards Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis by going beyond raising consciousness to engage in action to improve undocumented students' access to higher education.

Previous research has also identified formalized multicultural competencies for undocumented students (Nienhusser & Espino, 2017), as well as identified the effectiveness of training for practitioners to work with undocumented students (Cisernos & Cadenas, 2017). Nienhusser and Espino (2017) informed their undocumented status competency, or UDSC, through interviews with 45 agents from institutions of higher education in four different states. Naming what comprises UDSC provides a tangible, replicable tool for institutions of higher education to take action on issues of undocumented students' access to higher education.

Cisernos and Cadenas (2017) measured practitioner competency and self-efficacy for working with undocumented students based on attending a DREAMzone training on campus. DREAMzone training is a four-hour session with four learning outcomes: "(a) awareness of one's thoughts and feelings regarding undocumented students, (b) knowledge of laws and policies affecting the experiences of undocu-

mented students, (c) direct contact with undocumented students, and (d) skills, practices, and resources for working with undocumented students" (Cisernos & Cadenas, 2017, p. 191). Their work demonstrated how such an initiative makes a measurable difference in institutional agents' ability to serve undocumented students and epitomizes Freire's (2000) notion of liberatory praxis. Much like SafeZone training, designed to develop skills and understanding for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or allies, DREAMzone training can be replicated at institutions of higher education to inform faculty, staff, and students towards developing knowledge, skills, and confidence regarding undocumented students' access to and persistence in higher education. Both UDSC (Nienhusser & Espino, 2017) and DREAMzone training (Cisernos & Cadenas, 2017) serve as valuable models for how research can document developing praxis towards supporting undocumented students' access to and persistence in higher education. The studies embody notions of postcolonial feminism by challenging the binary of "illegals" and Dreamers. Furthermore, these studies provide tangible models which higher education researchers and institutions may be able to replicate in the context of their particular state and local policies.

### Implications for Higher Education

A critique of the literature on opinions of undocumented students' access to higher education using Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis illuminates important implications for higher education, including designing research studies towards consciousness raising. In addition, institutions of higher education have the opportunity to act in clear, definitive ways towards providing a safer climate for undocumented students which promotes access, persistence, and allyship.

### Research Efforts

First, research on majority opinions of undocumented immigrants as well as undocumented students' access to higher education can go beyond

raising consciousness to recommend, design, and act to address the current challenges undocumented students encounter within higher education and the broader political climate. As posited by Cabrera (2012), moving from consciousness toward engaging in action is a means of realizing Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis. Future research can examine what factors contribute to raising consciousness among majority groups specifically on the issue of undocumented students' access to higher education, towards designing and implementing practices for college students. As previously called for by Herrera et al. (2013), researchers need to examine to what extent interactions with undocumented students may be associated with views about undocumented students' access to and persistence in higher education. This work can also use postcolonial feminism (Bhattacharya, 2017) and the notion of inhabiting borderlands (Anzaldúa, 2012) to deconstruct and unpack the binary of "illegal" immigrants, a term which continues to dehumanize and render immigrants in a lesser status within society (Negrón-Gonzales, 2013). Journal editors can also prioritize praxis in calls for research articles.

### Action Steps at Institutions of Higher Education

Agents of institutions of higher education can define and work towards actionable items on the issues pertaining to undocumented students. From developing a coherent plan for strategic enrollment priorities (Serna, 2017) to implementing DREAMzone training (Cisneros & Cadenas, 2017), tangible options for improving access and climate for undocumented students exist and need to be replicated. In addition, institutional agents can think locally in terms of manageable next steps. Put another way, institutional agents can consider possible action steps, such as ending the use of "illegal" to describe people, which functions as a means of dehumanizing and criminalizing individuals (Negrón-Gonzales, 2013) and serves as a value-laden framing of one's circumstance (Caicedo, 2016). In addition, institutions of higher education can develop a DREAMzone training for practitioners

at institutions located proximally to one another. Attendees could then obtain a DREAMzone sign for individual office spaces to designate safe spaces for undocumented individuals, much like the SafeZone signs used to designate safe spaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals.

Institutional agents can also seek feedback from campus as well as community Dreamer organizations. Building trust with these students and community members could provide opportunities for local discussion to identify gaps and generate possible solutions. As described by Cabrera (2012), allies need to work with People of Color, rather than for People of Color. The importance of allying with people in minoritized positions cannot be overlooked in this important work. In addition, future research should involve community-based research methodologies to empower undocumented students and allies toward Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis. Institutional review boards should be prepared to review studies involving current methodologies that can respond in a timelier manner to current societal bottlenecks, such as the need for praxis surrounding coherent immigration reform and policy.

### Naming and Incorporating Whiteness

Employing Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis can also occur by engaging with White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) and working towards becoming a racial justice ally (Cabrera, 2012). Although engaging in such work is an ongoing process (Spanierman & Smith, 2017), the opportunity to begin and continue this work is each day. Engaging with White fragility can occur in the classroom (Matias 2016a; 2016b). Faculty and instructors can also work to employ positive cross-racial interactions within their courses, which have been found to be associated with more positive views of undocumented students' access to higher education (Garibay et al., 2016). Inclusive hiring and retention practices can also foster positive cross-racial interactions within institutions of higher education. Naming and incorporating Whiteness into future re-

search to design interventions and dismantle the binary which currently frames the rhetoric surrounding undocumented students' access to higher education has the potential to make a difference in the trajectories of undocumented immigrants, as well as people with legal status.

### Conclusion

Applying Freire's (2000) liberatory praxis to research on majority opinions about undocumented immigrants and undocumented students' access to higher education reveals that understanding these opinions is only a first step in raising consciousness. To meet the dire needs of undocumented students within higher education and within the political climate in the United States, researchers need to recommend, design, and take action towards developing praxis on the issue of undocumented students' access to and persistence in higher education. This critique acknowledges the importance of the work reviewed herein and serves as a call to go to the next step to truly raise consciousness by acting.

### References

- Andrade, L. M. (2017). "The war still continues": The importance of positive validation for undocumented community college students after Trump's presidential victory. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 1-17. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1538192717720265>
- Anzaldúa, G. (2012). *Borderlands: The new mestiza = la frontera* (25th anniversary edition.) San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bjorklund, P. (2018). Undocumented students in higher education: A review of the literature, 2001 to 2016. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(5). <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654318783018>
- Cabrera, N. L. (2012). Working through whiteness: White, male college students challenging racism. *The Review of Higher Education*, 35(3), 375–401. <http://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2012.0020>
- Cabrera, N. L. (2014a). "But I'm oppressed too": White male college students framing racial emotions as facts and recreating racism. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 27(6), 768–784. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2014.901574>
- Cabrera, N. L. (2014b). But we're not laughing: White male college students' racial joking and what this says about "post-racial" discourse. *Journal of College Student Development*, 55(1), 1–15. <http://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2014.0007>
- Cabrera, N. L. (2014c). Exposing whiteness in higher education: White male college students minimizing racism, claiming victimization, and recreating white supremacy. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 17(1), 30–55. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.725040>
- Caicedo, D. A. (2016). *Alien, illegal, undocumented: Labeling, context, and worldview in the immigration debate and in the lives of undocumented youth* (Doctoral dissertation). The City University of New York. Retrieved from [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc\\_etds/754/](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/754/)
- Cisneros, J., & Cadenas, G. (2017). DREAMer-ally competency and self-efficacy: Developing higher education staff and measuring lasting outcomes. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 54(2), 189–203. <http://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2017.1289098>
- Cowan, G., Martinez, L., & Mendiola, S. (1997). Predictors of attitudes toward illegal Latino immigrants. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 19(4), 403–415.

- Crawford, E. R., & Arnold, N. W. (2016). Exploring the meaning and paths of advocacy for undocumented students' access to education. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 15*(3), 197–213. <http://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2015.1131691>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241–1299.
- Crisp, G., Taggart, A., & Nora, A. (2015). Undergraduate Latina/o students: A systematic review of research identifying factors contributing to academic success outcomes. *Review of Educational Research, 85*(2), 249–274. <http://doi.org/10.3102/0034654314551064>
- Davidson, T., & Burson, K. (2017). Keep those kids out: Nativism and attitudes toward access to public education for the children of undocumented immigrants. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 16*(1), 41–50. <http://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2016.1179189>
- DiAngelo, R. (2011). White fragility. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy, 3*(3), 54–70.
- Diaz, P., Saenz, D. S., & Kwan, V. S. Y. (2011). Economic dynamics and changes in attitudes toward undocumented Mexican immigrants in Arizona. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy, 11*(1), 300–313. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2011.01255.x>
- Feranchak, E. W. (2007). *An analysis of the attitudes of higher education leaders in 18 high-immigration states about the appropriateness of providing education benefits to undocumented immigrants* (Doctoral dissertation). East Tennessee State University. Retrieved from ProQuest.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). New York, NY: Herder and Herder.
- Garibay, J. C., Herrera, F. A., Johnston-Guerrero, M. P., & Garcia, G. A. (2016). Layers of influence: Exploring institutional- and state-level effects on college student views toward access to public education for undocumented immigrants. *Research in Higher Education, 57*(5), 601–629. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-015-9400-0>
- Great Schools Partnership. (2014, March 10). Access. *The glossary of education reform for journalists, parents, and community members*. Retrieved from <https://www.edglossary.org/access/>
- Haney-López, I. (2006). *White by law: The legal construction of race* (10th anniversary edition). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Haubert, J., & Fussell, E. (2006). Perceptions of pro-immigrant sentiment in the U.S.: Social class, cosmopolitanism, and perceptions of immigrants. *The International Migration Review, 40*(3), 489–507.
- Herrera, F. A., Garibay, J. C., Garcia, G. A., & Johnston, M. P. (2013). Documenting attitudes toward undocumented immigrant access to public education: A multilevel analysis. *The Review of Higher Education, 36*(4), 513–549. <http://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2013.0043>
- Jauregui, J. A., & Slate, J. R. (2009). Texas borderland community colleges and views regarding undocumented students: A qualitative study. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 11*(2), 183–210. <http://doi.org/10.2190/CS.11.2.b>
- Kopan, T. (2018, February 26). Court takes pressure off already sputtering Congress on DACA. *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/26/politics/daca-supreme-court-congress/index.html>
- Kunovich, R. M. (2013). Labor market competition and anti-immigrant sentiment: Occupations as contexts. *International Migration Review, 47*(3), 643–685. <http://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12046>
- Lee, S. J. (2005). *Up against whiteness: Race, school, and immigrant youth*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Lyons, P. A., Coursey, L. E., & Kenworthy, J. B. (2013). National identity and group narcissism as predictors of intergroup attitudes toward undocumented Latino immigrants in the United States. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 35*(3), 323–335. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0739986313488090>
- Matias, C. E. (2016a). *Feeling white: Whiteness, emotionality, and education*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Matias, C. E. (2016b). “Why do you make me hate myself?": Re-teaching Whiteness, abuse, and love in urban teacher education. *Teaching Education, 27*(2), 194–211. doi:10.1080/10476210.2015.1068749
- Mukherjee, S., Molina, L. E., & Adams, G. (2012). National identity and immigration policy: Concern for legality or ethnocentric exclusion? *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy, 12*(1), 21–32. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2011.01257.x>
- Muñoz, S. M. (2015). *Identity, social activism, and the pursuit of higher education: The journey stories of undocumented and unafraid community activists*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Muñoz, S. M. (2016). Undocumented and unafraid: Understanding the disclosure management process for undocumented college students and graduates. *Journal of College Student Development, 57*(6), 715–729.
- National Student Clearinghouse. (2015, April 22). *Persistence & retention – 2015*. Retrieved from <https://nscresearchcenter.org/snapshotreport-persistence&retention18/>

- Negrón-Gonzales, G. (2013). Navigating “illegality”: Undocumented youth & oppositional consciousness. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*, 1284-1290.
- Negrón-Gonzales, G. (2017). Constrained inclusion: Access and persistence among undocumented community college students in California’s Central Valley. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 16*(2), 105-122.
- Nienhuser, H. K., & Espino, M. M. (2017). Incorporating undocumented/DACAmented status competency into higher education institutional agents’ practice. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 54*(1), 1-14. <http://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2016.1194286>
- Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Palmer, C., & Davidson, T. (2011). Entitled or excluded? Attitudes toward access to postsecondary education for undocumented students. *Current Issues in Education, 14*(2), 1-15.
- Parrish, D. J. (2015). *What’s the story here? How Catholic university leaders are making sense of undocumented student access* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from DAI-A 76/09(E), Dissertation Abstracts International.
- Reyna Rivarola, A. R. (2017). “Undocumented” ways of navigating complex sociopolitical realities in higher education: A critical race counterstory. *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs, 3*(1), 101-125.
- Salas, S. (2012). Steep houses in basic writing: Advocating for Latino immigrants in a North Georgia two-year college. *Journal of Basic Writing, 31*(1), 80-99.
- Segura-Robles, A., Alemany-Arrebola, I., & Gallargo-Vigil, M. A. (2016). Prejudiced attitudes in university students towards irregular immigrants: An exploratory study. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology, 14*(2), 393-416. <http://doi.org/10.14204/ejrep.39.15069>
- Serna, G. R. (2017). Undocumented students and strategic enrollment management: Guidance and considerations for finance, policy, and inclusive practice. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, 5*(1), 38-47. <http://doi.org/10.1002/sem3>
- Serna, G. R., & Cohen, J. M. (2017). State and institutional policies on in-state resident tuition and financial aid for undocumented students: Examining constraints and opportunities. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 25*(18), 1-22. <http://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.25.2809>
- Spanierman, L. B., & Smith, L. (2017). Roles and responsibilities of White allies: Implications for research, teaching, and practice. *The Counseling Psychologist, 45*(5), 606-617. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0011000017717712>
- Stupi, E. K., Chiricos, T., & Gertz, M. (2016). Perceived criminal threat from undocumented immigrants: Antecedents and consequences for policy preferences. *Justice Quarterly, 33*(2), 239-266. <http://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2014.902093>
- Suárez-Orózcó, C., Katsiaficas, D., Birchall, O., Alcantar, C. M., Hernandez, E., Garcia, Y., Teranishi, R. T. (2015). Undocumented undergraduates on college campuses: Understanding their challenges and assets and what it takes to make an undocufriendly campus. *Harvard Educational Review, 85*(3), 427-463.

### Recommended Citation:

Jach, E. (2019). Understanding views on undocumented students’ access to higher education: A critical review and call for action. *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs, 3*(3), 51-63.