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(Re)framing the Immigrant Narrative: Exploring Testimonios That Counter the Essentialized Image of (Un)documented People in the Discourses of Contemporary U.S. Rhetoric

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(RE)FRAMING THE IMMIGRANT NARRATIVE: EXPLORING TESTIMONIOS THAT
COUNTER THE ESSENTIALIZED IMAGE OF (UN)DOCUMENTED PEOPLE IN THE
DISCOURSES OF CONTEMPORARY U.S. RHETORIC

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2015

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Title: (Re)framing the Immigrant Narrative: Exploring *Testimonios* That Counter the Essentialized Image of (Un)documented People in the Discourses of Contemporary U.S. Rhetoric

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This qualitative participatory action research (PAR) dissertation positioned within a *critical race theoretical* (CRT) framework examines *testimonios* of five adults living in North Carolina from various countries, cultures, linguistic, and religious backgrounds who live or have lived undocumented in the United States. It chronicles a social justice study where a researcher-advocate in collaboration with various North Carolina community stakeholders create and implement strategies that work towards social change around issues facing (un)documented members of their state. This study explores how dominant immigrant discourses positioned within a United States-Mexico border framework shape the lives of five non-Mexican (un)documented adults. It examines how a partial narrative unfairly targets some, while hiding the complexity of the undocumented migration phenomenon in general as well as the true diversity of these communities more specifically.

Data were collected collaboratively through individual interviews, which are compiled and presented as *testimonios*. Emergent themes from these first-person call-to-action-narratives were co-constructed and analyzed by the researcher and participants. The (un)documented adults' expert lived-knowledge along with a CRT analytic lens was employed to reveal how larger power structures affect their experiences, struggles, and aspirations. The findings of this study indicate that the

participants' lives have been shaped by biased dominant border discourses that tend to construct racialized and criminalized depictions of them which in turn guides how they are talked about, treated, and (mis)perceived. Their diverse *testimonios* oppose the commonly *Mexicanized* (un)documented migrant border story and call for multiple counter-narratives that nuance the complexities of undocumented migration by historicizing and contextualizing global push-pull factors as well as indexing the multiple identities, cultures, ways of becoming undocumented, and experiences within these communities. Findings add to *critical race theory* scholarship, which actively fights against racism and other forms of oppression. It informs future research by revealing alternate ways to re-present dominant (un)documented immigrant discourses.

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To the five participants of this study, your *testimonios* have inspired and touched me more than you will ever know. I am forever grateful for your willingness to share your intimate lived experiences (realities) as well as allowing me to use your counter-narratives to challenge biased dominant (un)documented migrant discourses. My goal was to explore how your less commonly televised *testimonios* could re-present the complexity of this phenomenon as well as index the humanity and diversity within these communities.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

We need to look at all of the different reasons why people come here and not just what's convenient for the United States, you know? It is crazy when they are like let's just look at the Mexican story, you know? Not everybody who is undocumented crossed the U.S.-Mexico border or speaks Spanish. Let's open our minds people... So, what I need us to do is remove the one-faceted face of the U.S. immigrant undocumented community, which is the Mexican one, and we need to start putting the African, the Caribbean, the Asian, the South-East-Asian because when we say Asian everybody goes Chinese, but I mean everyone from continental Asia; Vietnamese, Korean, Laotian, etc. –Cesaria¹

Beverly A. Nance (2006) defines *testimonio* as a “tripartite combination of a first person narrative of injustice, an insistence that the subject’s experience is representative of a larger class, and intent to work toward a more just future” (p. 2). The excerpt above is taken from one the participants’ *testimonio* within this dissertation, which indexes her frustration with politicized rhetoric that tends to construct racialized images of (un)documented people and offer partial truths about undocumented migration in the United States. The other four (un)documented participants within this study share this similar dilemma because their lives are (have been) shaped by what Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) calls the “danger of a single story.” Adichie (2009) explains that “the single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with

¹ Cesaria is the pseudonym for one of the participants in this study.

stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (p. 1). As an undergraduate in college, I was only aware of a single story about (un)documented migration which was limited to images on the news of people of Mexican descent being arrested for crossing the United States-Mexico border without authorization.

However, over the last fifteen years I have established relationships with various people who have and continue to live undocumented in the United States from countries other than Mexico and who did not cross the southwest border to enter into the country. Bearing witness to these diverse experiences inspired me as a doctoral student to explore research surrounding undocumented migration (communities) and as a result I encountered amazing critical studies (Solóranzo, 1998; Yosso, 2002; De Genova, 2002; Lakoff, & Ferguson, 2006; Chávez, 2001, 2008; Ngai, 2004; Pérez-Huber, 2009b; Negrón-Gonzalez, 2009). I discovered that most of the scholarship focused on the largest authorized and unauthorized immigrant group (people of Mexican descent) in the United States. Thus, having been privileged to bear witness to various non-Mexican lived experiences as I mentioned earlier, I sought to explore how I could add to this existing body of research that advocates for (un)documented communities and that challenges discriminatory practices, decontextualized discourses, and essentialized constructions.

This qualitative participatory action research (PAR) chronicles a social justice study where a researcher-advocate in collaboration with various North Carolina community stakeholders created and implemented action-oriented strategies that worked toward social change around issues facing (un)documented members of their

state. It details the journey of the development and implementation of new co-constructed meanings that were revealed from the *testimonios* of the five non-Mexican (un)documented participants in this study. This research adds to existing scholarship by offering critical examinations of what I argue are less commonly presented first-person narratives of (un)documented migration in the country. For example, Hong Mai Pang, an undocumented member of *Revolutionizing Asian American Stories on the East Coast* (R. A. I. S. E) from Singapore explains that during an immigration rally in Washington, D.C. she felt as “an outsider” among the predominately Latino protestors because “there weren’t many Asian-American faces” (Pearson, 2013, p. 1). Pang along with other (un)documented Asian-Americans are making a conscious effort to participate in more publicized organized events and live theatrical performances like *UndocuAsians* in an effort to show that “immigration is not just a Latino issue” (p. 1). The danger of essentialized border discourses that focus on experiences of Latinos in general and Mexican narratives more specifically are that they disenfranchise other members of undocumented communities. Thus, groups like *R. A. I. S. E.* are significant because they counter the stereotypical “model minority myth” which generally depicts certain minorities such as people of Asian descent as models of success. This concept disregards their historical experiences with oppression and exclusion as well as it creates cultural and racial hierarchies that divide and stigmatize certain communities of color as the “model” and others as the “problem.” In addition, biased narratives hide the shared histories of oppression and solidarity between undocumented communities (Kuo, 2015, p.1).

This PAR dissertation offers findings on how five non-Mexican adults' lives are (have been) shaped by contemporary (un)documented immigrant rhetoric that I argue is commonly couched within a border frame, which in turn (in)directly constructs a partial narrative that indexes Mexican migrants as the culprits for the current (un)documented immigration problem in the country. I argue that these biased discourses that focus primarily on the United States-Mexico border may be constructing essentialized representations of (un)documented people (they are all Mexican), which in turn may cause misinformation about these communities to be normalized (they are all sneaking across the border) because it reveals only one perspective and one experience as the only truth. I do not make any claims that this study's findings are representative of the entire (un)documented population in the United States.

Definitions

In this investigation *discourses* are defined as belief systems that are constituted and legitimized by dominant groups of power. Although many scholars and disciplines define *discourses* distinctly, this study builds off and extends Foucault's (1972) concept of *power/knowledge*. Foucault (1972) defines *discourses* as "practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak" (p. 49). He explains that social laws and practices are defined by a specific group of people with power, who control how ideas, people, and things are classified by imposing their *expert* knowledge, which in turn causes people who are unfamiliar with certain subjects to reference or believe (sometimes without question) what they deem to be true. Accordingly, this investigation examines how biased dominant discourses normalize beliefs about, guide the treatment

of, and shape the lives of undocumented communities by constructing this population within a restrictive border frame.

Within my study I utilize the terms *(un)documented migrants*, *(un)documented people*, and *aspiring citizens* interchangeably to refer to persons born outside of the United States who reside in the country without proper documentation. I struggled with how to refer to these communities without making assumptions, hiding their humanity, and/or using deficit language, so I decided to use all three references. I use these terms to describe people who were either authorized to be in the country for a specific amount of time, but who overstayed the expiration date indicated on their visas and consequently *fell out of status*, as well as those who were never given any permission to enter the country at all. I specifically use *undocumented migrant* analogous to anthropologist Nicolas De Genova. He replaces *immigrant* with *migrant* due to his stance on immigrant essentialism and the figure of the *immigrant* as “an object of U.S. nationalism (positioned from the standpoint of the nation-state, in terms of outsiders coming in, presumably to stay” (De Genova, 2002, p. 420-21). *Undocumented people* does not assume ones reason or intention for entering and remaining in the country, rather it indexes the humanity of individuals who live in the United States without authorized documents.

In the *New Messaging: How to talk about immigrants* report, “over one hundred immigrant advocacy groups agreed that the term *aspiring citizens* establishes a sense of shared values and identity with persuadable Americans” (Sharry, Lake, Shenker-Osorio, & Rowe, 2012, p. 1). This latter term also does not frame this population from a deficit standpoint that merely describes what they do not have, but it focuses on their

aspirations and desires to continue to contribute to the United States without fear of deportation. The word *(un)documented* within this study carries a parenthesis around 'un' for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that this immigration status is not static, but that it can be adjusted. Second, it indexes that issues that commonly affect undocumented people tend to also affect people living in the United States who were born in other countries in general due to immigrant essentialism. In addition, at least half of undocumented people live in mixed-status households (Passel & Cohn, 2011), which would separate families and/or cause hardships if a member is deported.

Demographic Profile of (Un)documented People in the United States

Passel and Cohn (2014) report that approximately 42.5 million residents in the United States were born in another country in 2012, 11.7 million are permanent residents, 11.2 million are undocumented people (about 9 million live in mixed-status families), 17.8 million are naturalized citizens, and 1.9 million are legal residents with temporary status. In 2012, approximately 3.5% of the United States estimated population (316 million) was undocumented migrants who made up approximately 26% of the foreign-born population of the country. Thus, undocumented migrants make up about one quarter of the United States foreign-born population. This translates to one in twenty people in the labor force are undocumented. The top ten countries of birth of the 11.2 million undocumented populations in the U.S. are ranked in the following order: Mexico (5,850, 000), El Salvador (450,000), India (450,000), Honduras (350,000), China (300,000), Philippines (200,000), Korea (180,000), Dominican Republic (170,000), and Colombia (150,000). While undocumented Mexican migration declined by a half of million between 2009-2012, the overall number of undocumented people has

maintained at 11.2 million due to the increase in migrants from other countries (Passel & Cohn, 2014, p. 14-19). While approximately 52% of undocumented people were born in Mexico, the other 48% come from diverse countries and cultures. This dissertation focuses on the latter groups.

Framing of (Un)documented Migration

Contemporary dominant discourses surrounding (un)documented migration in the United States are commonly divided into two polarized frames; one that paints this population as deserving aspiring-citizens who are hard-workers seeking a better life, while the other which tends to construct these communities as border-crossing criminals who should be punished for being in the country without authorization. Consequently, this bifurcated framing tends to create decontextualized and essentialized narratives which may construct this entire population as having a single racialized identity, with shared behaviors, and a common goal for coming to the United States. I use the concept *frame* in this dissertation analogous to the way that George Lakoff and Sam Ferguson (2006) employ it to explain how *mental structures* are created to construct meanings in a non-neutral manner. These scholars explain that social institutions construct images (*mental structures*) in human beings minds, which in turn are referenced to create understandings about issues. Thus, *framing* often helps shape public opinion about issues that affect them. Lakoff and Ferguson (2006) explain that the manner in which undocumented migration is positioned, limits understandings and possibilities for solutions to issues that are more complex and cannot fit in the present restrictive framing.

Due to this specific framing of undocumented migrants and the complexity of immigration policies in general, many citizens are constructing beliefs about and expressing opinions concerning the destiny of an estimated 11.2 million people based off of partial narratives (debate) that are centered on the politicization of the United States and Mexico border. Within a border frame this type of rhetoric may be used to deter attention away from the multiple factors and actors involved and in turn blame (un)documented people for the country's immigration problems while simultaneously shaping public opinions about this community. Chávez's (2001) investigation of the language and imagery used surrounding Mexican immigration from popular magazine covers from 1965 to 1999 found that undocumented immigrants have been continuously demonized in the media. Chang and Aoki (1997) explain that "centering our analysis on the immigrant tells us much about the political economies of race and nativistic racism, which operate to construct immigrant, racial, and national identities" (p. 1398). As a result of a border frame, biased imagery and rhetoric surrounding (un)documented migrants are often couched in discourses of criminality and *racist nativism* (Pérez-Huber, 2009a).

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this qualitative participatory action research (PAR) is threefold. First, it responds and contributes to existing scholarship across a range of disciplines that call for the use of indigenous methodologies and critical theoretical frameworks to expose and re-present biased dominant discourses surrounding (un)documented immigration in the United States. For example, professors of Law Gloria Valencia-Weber and Antoinette Sedillo (2010) argue for more "nuanced stories" rather than

“stock ones” to invoke a deeper consciousness and understanding of the realities of undocumented communities. Linguists George Lakoff and Sam Ferguson (2006) call for a “re-framing of the immigrant narrative” to properly discuss the complexities of immigration laws and practices in the United States. Anthropologist Nicolas De Genova (2002) indexes the need to expose “illegality” frameworks that criminalize and essentialize images of (un)documented people. De Genova (2002) explains that “illegality” (much like citizenship) is a juridical status that entails a social relation to the state; as such, migrant “illegality” is a preeminently political identity (De Genova, 2002, p. 422). Critical race theorist Delgado (1984) encourages People of Color to tell their own stories in order to expand academic perspectives that have been historically controlled by Eurocentric dominant understandings. Pérez-Huber (2009b) encourages a “disruption in apartheid knowledge” by advocating for scholars to implement indigenous methods like the *testimonio* which values experiential knowledge from marginalized groups and employ critical frameworks that expose injustices that (un)documented people face.

Second, PAR challenges hierarchal roles that tend to privilege one groups’ knowledge over others. As a researcher-advocate for undocumented communities, the PAR dissertation process has allowed me to expose my non-objective position and biases by permitting me to work collaboratively with (un)documented participants and members from my research site to co-construct new knowledge that contributes to both social changes inside the academy and within the community at large by fighting for human rights and equitable representations of this marginalized population in North Carolina.

Third, this is a timely investigation due to President Barak Obama's polemic decision in November 2014 to take executive actions on a lingering 2013 comprehensive immigration reform bill known as S. 744 (*Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act*), which proposed to make various revisions to United States immigration laws and practices. As a result of the inability of the United States Congress to agree upon proposed changes, President Barak Obama recognized the urgency of addressing the issues facing the 11.2 million undocumented people living in the United States and took action. He implemented new policies that propose to allow approximately 4 million of the 11.2 million a chance to continue to live and work under a temporary protective status in the country beginning as early as May 2015. Despite his progressive efforts, without comprehensive plans, the other 7.2 million people who do not qualify under his administrations' new policies will continue to face the struggles of living (un)documented in the country.

Research Questions

As a result of biased decontextualized border discourses, partial constructions of (un)documented people, and a lack of public knowledge about United States immigration history, practices, and laws; biased understandings about (un)documented migration (communities) may be fostering selective-knowing, reading, and writing about this complex phenomenon and people involved. Consequently, the *testimonios* of Cesaría, Pedro, Sunil, Paris, and Fatima, the five participants in this study, are examined to explore this dilemma by addressing the following overarching and subsequent research questions below:

1. (main) How are the (un)documented participants' lives (*testimonios*) shaped by dominant immigrant discourses that are positioned within a U.S.-Mexico border framework?
 - A. (auxiliary 1) How do their *testimonios* engage and counter this narrowly defined dominant rhetoric?
 - B. (auxiliary 2) How do their *testimonios* reveal alternate ways of representing dominant (un)documented immigration discourses?

Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

The dissertation is approached as qualitative participatory action research (PAR) also known as action research (AR), which calls for the researcher to work collaboratively with a range of local stakeholders to take action against social injustices within a specific context. A PAR approach complements my epistemological stance as a researcher-advocate, which in turn informed my decision to employ a *critical race theory* (CRT) analytic lens to expose and oppose racist discourses and constructions that intersect with other forms of subordination that shape Cesaría, Pedro, Sunil, Paris, and Fatima's lives. CRT scholars (Bell, 1992; Solóranzo & Yosso, 2000; Delgado Bernal & Solóranzo, 2001; Yosso, 2006) encourage Communities of Color to share their experiential knowledge and counter-stories that challenge traditional Eurocentric research paradigms and create spaces to reveal their own *testimonios* and analysis of their own experiences with racism and other forms of subordination. In alignment with CRT, this dissertation positions the expert lived knowledge of the participants at the center of this study to examine how their counter-narratives which are presented in the

form of *testimonios* reveal alternate ways of re-presenting (un)documented immigrant discourses (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2002).

Participatory Action Research

In this study, PAR allowed me in alliance with the five participants to produce new co-constructed critical knowledge by analyzing their *testimonios* to create action-oriented goals that worked toward social change for undocumented migrants in our North Carolina communities. I followed Herr and Andersons' (2005) *Goals of Action and Validity Criteria* model for implementing a PAR methodology in a dissertation. Analogous to their model, I link their five validity criteria to commonly agreed-upon PAR goals which are:

- (1) The generation of new knowledge. (*Dialogic and process validity*);
- (2) The achievement of action-oriented outcomes. (*Outcome validity*);
- (3) The education of both researcher and participants. (*Catalytic validity*);
- (4) Results that are relevant to the local setting. (*Democratic validity*),
- (5) A sound and appropriate research methodology. (*Process validity*)

(Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 55)

By implementing the PAR goals and cross-checking them with the validity criteria in parenthesis above, my position as a researcher-advocate in this study allowed me the opportunity to work mutually with members of my research site who advocate for undocumented communities in North Carolina as well as the five participants in this investigation. Collectively we were able to obtain a contextual understanding of how biased dominant discourses and practices surrounding undocumented migration can be addressed and redressed locally. This PAR approach created a space for democratic

communal dialogues and “action-oriented-outcomes” within and outside of the academy. The experiential, communal, and scholarly knowledge as well as the actions of the participants, community advocates, and the researcher were used to create new strategies based on community scholarship to challenge biased rhetoric and immigration practices that affect their (un)documented communities.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) analyzes how race and racism interplay with various forms of subordination to create and maintain social disparities between dominant and marginalized racial groups (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT developed from legal scholars Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman in the 1970’s who were concerned with the slow pace of racial reform after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s in the United States (Delgado, 1995; Ladson Billings, 1998). Today this anti-racist movement has extended across disciplines (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solóranzo, 1998; Delgado, 2001; Yosso, 2006; Pérez-Huber, 2009a) to expose and challenge societal ideologies, systems, practices, and constructions that privilege the dominant racial group while oppressing and excluding People of Color. This study follows the five key tenets of CRT outlined by Solóranzo (1998) that “form the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of a critical race theory in education” (p. 122). These five tenets are “the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism; the challenge to dominant ideology; the commitment to social justice; the centrality of experiential knowledge; and the interdisciplinary perspective” (p. 122).

I specifically use CRT to expose how *racist nativist* framing of (un)documented people within dominant discourses as well as present and historic institutional inequities

continue to control rights and access in this country by creating and maintaining racialized identities. Huber-Pérez et al. (2008) define *racist nativism* as:

The assigning of values to real or imagined differences, in order to justify the superiority of the native, who is perceived to be white, over that of the non-native, who is perceived to be People and Immigrants of Color, and thereby defend the right of whites, or the native, to dominance. (p. 10)

Accordingly, CRT unpacks the border frame that commonly constructs a criminalized and racialized Mexican body to represent (un)documented migration. It explores how race and nativism intersect in relationship to hegemonic perceptions of how an American citizen should, look, act, and speak. By implementing a CRT theoretical framework, this study purposefully examines the contours of race and racism within dominant immigrant discourses that tend to homogenize diverse ethnicities into one category based on racialized borders and identities. Thus, this dissertation contextualizes the counter-narratives presented in chapter four, by indexing in chapters two immigration laws and practices that have historically and continue to fuel these dominant biased discourses that I argue are saturated in *racist nativist* (Pérez-Huber et al., 2008) ideologies.

Data Sources

Data were collected in several ways to explore and demonstrate the multiple realities of (un)documented migration as well as to give insight into various lived experiences within these communities in North Carolina. Montecinos (1995) indexes that “a monovocal account will engender not only stereotyping, but also curricular choices that result in representations in which fellow members of a group represented

cannot recognize themselves” (p. 294). In solidarity with Montecinos’ (1995) opposition to the use of a “master narrative,” and in alignment with *critical race theorists* (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2002) suggested oppositional tactics that challenge dominant discourses, the primary data collection method in this study are *counter-stories* which are presented in the form of five diverse *testimonios*. These first-person call-to-action-narratives are eyewitness (*testigo* in Spanish) accounts of traumatic injustices experienced by marginalized people, which tend to offer alternative historical memories and perspectives that may differ from the dominant explanations of events. A *testimonio* is usually told by one *testigo*, but the experiences commonly reflect both the individual as well as his or her subaltern community. *Testimonios* have been historically used throughout Latin American (Jesús, 1964; Montejo & Barnet, 1968; Menchú, 1984; Castillo & Rubiera, 2000) and by scholars (Acevedo, 2001; Beverley, 2004; Nance, 2006; Caminero-Santangelo, 2009) to chronicle less commonly presented experiences and historical memories. These intimate perspectives and insider knowledge possess a rhetorical and communal power to move a wider audience to participate in changing unjust situations. In order for these marginalized narratives to be shared with a wider audience, they are often communicated to, written by, and published by someone who acts as an intermediary between the underrepresented and the reader. As the compiler, I turned the transcriptions of each participant’s’ two to three hour interviews into written *testimonios*. I coded their *testimonios* and co-constructed themes with participants to address the research questions of this dissertation. The co-construction of themes process was a collaborative analytical approach in which the five participants and I discussed and collectively created a list of major topics that emerged from their

testimonios in an effort to ensure that they accurately represent their experiences. In alliance with the principles of participatory action research, participants are considered to be “subjects and partners in the research process” (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 108). Accordingly, we utilized their expert lived knowledge and an analytic lens that encapsulates the tenets of *critical race theory* (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2002) to collaboratively identify prominent themes revealed from the participants’ *testimonios*. The co-construction process is discussed in further detail in chapter five.

Research Site

The research site for this study was with the *Immigrant Solidarity Committee* (ISC), a group that assists and advocates for (un)documented migrants rights in multiple cities within North Carolina, which is one of the top fastest growing destinations for this population (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Prior to my research, I actively participated with this organization for two years (January 2012-January 2014). During these two years that I refer to as “entry into the community and paying forward period” throughout this study, I learned from and worked alongside seasoned (un)documented immigrant advocates to actively address and work towards social change in our state. Due to our established relationship I chose to conduct my nine-month PAR study (September 2014 - May 2015) with them as well. The contextualized participatory knowledge-building experiences that I gained prior to my research informed my choice to implement a participatory action research approach.

Connecting With the Research Participants

By using *purposeful sampling*, I was able to employ a referral network to identify a diverse group of (un)documented adults who were invited to participate in this study

by the director of the research site. I feel that I gained the trust of the voluntary participants as a result of my established participatory advocacy with the *Immigrant Solidarity Committee*. I intentionally sought to demonstrate the diversity and complexity of (un)documented migration. However, I honestly never expected the broad spectrum of diversity that would be revealed from the participants' *testimonios*. Cesaria, Pedro, Fatima, Sunil, and Paris represent a varied group of people who currently live or have lived undocumented in the country for at least seven years. The five participants come from El Salvador, Colombia, India, Morocco, and an island off the coast of Africa. Their educational backgrounds range from fifth grade to doctoral degree status. They speak various languages, work in diverse fields, and entered the country by land, air, and sea. As a qualitative PAR study, I purposely use a small sample in an effort to offer a more intimate and detailed critical analysis.

Significance of the Study

This investigation is centered on diverse experiences of undocumented migration in the country. It moves beyond surface understandings of this phenomenon and these communities by contextualizing, historicizing, and challenging contemporary dominant immigrant discourses in the United States. This research contributes to bodies of critical scholarship that work towards eradicating systemic discriminatory policies and practices that privilege some and oppress others. It also beckons seasoned and emerging scholars to be more purposeful in their research by employing participatory methodologies, critical analytic lenses, and including diverse epistemologies to combat societal injustices. Analogous to how anthropologist Nicholas De Genova (2002) specifies that his research is on “deportability and illegality” as oppose to “studying

undocumented people,” I also would like to clarify the focus of this study. This dissertation investigates how biased United States-Mexico border frames and discourses surrounding (un)documented migration shape the non-Mexican participants lives as well as it explores how their *testimonios* can be used to offer alternative ways to re-present this phenomenon and communities.

Chapter Organization

The goal of the first chapter has been to outline the context, purpose, and approaches of this qualitative dissertation as well as to expose my role as a researcher-advocate in this study who collaborates with community advocates to challenge biased discourses and practices that shape the lives of (un)documented communities in North Carolina.

Chapter two reviews literature that historicizes, contextualizes, and guides this study. It discusses the United States historical racialization of citizenship, immigration laws, and exclusionary practices, which index how race and racism have and continue to construct national ideologies of who and who does not belong. It reviews current dominant racist nativist discourses that surround (un)documented migration as well as it discusses scholarly calls to reframe this biased narrative. It also historicizes and indexes how scholars have employed the theoretical and methodological approaches (PAR and CRT) of this study as well as my rationale for selecting them.

Chapter three details my own positionality, which informs the design of the study and my justification for my critical methodological choices. I describe the research site, the participants, as well as both my participatory activities during my two-year “entry into the community and paying forward period” and during my nine-month study. Lastly, I

discuss and outline the study by explaining ethical considerations, as well as detail primary methods for collecting, coding, and analyzing the *testimonios* and other observational data.

In chapter four, I present the *testimonios* of the five participants in their entirety and analyze individual emergent experiences that connect to the overarching themes of this study, which are detailed in the following chapter.

In chapter five, I describe how the major themes that were revealed from the participant's *testimonios* were co-constructed by the researcher and participants. I also discuss how I employ *critical race theory* to analyze these themes.

In chapter six, I discuss the findings by addressing the research questions of this study that explore how dominant border discourses shape(d) the participants lives and how their *testimonios* offer alternate ways of looking at them (discourses). Lastly, I reflect on my journey as researcher-advocate in this PAR study and speak to possibilities of future directions that I and other scholars should consider as a result of the findings.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how dominant United-Mexico border discourses surrounding (un)documented migration impact five non-Mexican participants' lives living in North Carolina. I seek to explore how their *testimonios* offer alternate ways to re-present more nuanced understandings of this complex phenomenon and the communities affected by it. As a researcher-advocate, I am interested in change inside and outside of the academy, thus I explore how alongside local community immigrant advocates I can participate in addressing and redressing issues that affect these North Carolina residents. Many exceptional critical research studies surrounding (un)documented communities within the United States have centered on the largest population, people of Mexican descent (Portes, 1978; Chávez, 2001, 2008, 2012; De Genova, 2002; Yosso, 2006; Pérez-Huber, Malagón, & Solórzano, 2009; Negrón-Gonzales, 2009; Pérez-Huber, 2009a).

This dissertation seeks to expand the above mentioned existing bodies of research by presenting and exploring non-Mexican adult accounts of living (un)documented in the United States. The five participants' *testimonios* explore multiple reasons that drive undocumented migration, various ways of entering the country, diverse ethnic and linguistic communities within this population. It also details accounts from participants who *fell out of status* as a result of overstaying their visa expiration dates as well as those who have since adjusted their undocumented statuses. Before their five *testimonios* are explored, it is essential to review the literature that historicizes, contextualizes and deconstructs dominant discourses, which often guide fractional

narratives and partial knowledge about the estimated 11.2 million people living in the country undocumented today.

This chapter reviews the literature and theoretical perspectives that inform this study. First, I provide a synthesis of the historical racialization of (un)documented migration in the United States and discuss the construction of the “iconic illegal alien” (Ngai, 2004) which is important in understanding how race, racism, and nativism have and continue to impact the lives of People (immigrants) of Color in this country. Second, I discuss the effects of essentialism as it relates to the framing as well as the normalization of *racist nativist* (Pérez-Huber et al., 2008) discourses surrounding (un)documented migration. Third, I explore the violence surrounding current immigration laws and paradoxical immigration practices. Next, I discuss scholarly calls to re-frame the currently essentialized (un)documented immigrant narrative which guides the design of this study. Lastly, I review the historical and theoretical contexts as well as my rationale for approaching this study as participatory action research (PAR) and analyzing the participants’ *testimonios* through a *critical race theory* (CRT) lens.

Historical Racialization of Immigration in the United States

Traditionally the United States government has maintained a paradoxical relationship with immigrants in general and undocumented ones more specifically. For example, while the nation has valorized immigrants for their hard work ethic, most notably for their contribution to its industrialization and agricultural development, their sovereign disposition tends to emerge when (un)documented immigrants fail to assimilate, conform, or meet the socialized norms of an *American* citizen. Despite the fact that the United States government from the early colonial periods recognized that

immigration was necessary to populate and build the country, criteria on who would be eligible for citizenship were made clear with the *1790 Immigration Act* which stated that only “free White persons” qualified for naturalization. Thus, citizenship criteria have historically been guided by race since colonialism and it continues to be used by dominant discourses to construct essentialized images of non-citizens. According to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (as cited in procon.org, 2013):

The original U. S. naturalization law of March 26, 1790 (1 Stat 103-104) provided the first rules to be followed by all of the United States in the granting of national citizenship. At that time and by that law naturalization was limited to aliens who were 'free white persons' and thus left out indentured servants, slaves, and most women, all of whom were considered dependents and thus incapable of casting an independent vote. The 1790 Act also limited naturalization to persons of good moral character. (2013, p. 1)

Consequently, this first *Alien Naturalization Act* not only excluded the existing Native American populations, but all non-whites and most women. One of the earliest contributors to the United States labor force who were brought from Africa *legally* were also ineligible for citizenship. In fact, Daniels (2004) dates “illegal immigration, back to 1808, when 50,000 African slaves were smuggled into the United States after President Jefferson signed the act that prohibited the importation of slaves in January of the same year” (p. 6). Thus, many *native* persons lived and worked in the country as non-citizens for many years.

People of Mexican descent, who currently represent the largest authorized and unauthorized immigrant population in the United States, have historically maintained an

ambiguous relationship with the country. Following the Mexican-American War, the *Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848* allowed the United States to acquire 500,000 square miles of terrain. “The 80,000 Mexicans living in the territory are allowed to remain and receive citizenship. By 1849, the English-speaking population of California reached 100,000 compared to 13,000 of Mexican ancestry” (Takaki, 1993, p. 1). Thus, the United States has relied on *native* Mexicans living in the newly acquired United States territories as well as Mexican migrants who crossed the border freely to build railroads and for agricultural production among many other *low-skilled* labor needs, while treating them as expendable workers at the same time.

It was not until the fourteenth amendment was passed in 1868 that *almost all* persons born or naturalized in the United States would become citizens. However, “former slaves born in Africa and in the West Indies would remain illegal” (Rogers, 2004, p. 11). Many indigenous populations did not reap the benefits of this amendment either. In fact, citizenship laws and practices mirrored future immigration bylaws that would also have unspoken clauses which would implicitly determine who qualifies as official members and who could enter into the country *legally*.

Immigration regulations that were based on nationality and race were explicitly enforced with the *1882 Chinese Exclusion Act*. Chinese immigrants were prohibited from entering the country until 1943 when the *Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act* was passed which allowed them to come in legally because the United States needed China as an ally during World War II (1939-1945). Despite the exclusion act, many undocumented Chinese immigrants continued to enter the country through the Canadian and Mexican borders. Although people from around the world would migrate

to the United States during the *California Gold Rush* era, the Chinese who arrived in the mid 1800's were targeted because of their distinguishable appearance and language, creating an anti-Chinese (*Coolie*) sentiment in the country.

Many United States citizens became resentful of their presence and *luck* with finding gold and accused them of stealing their jobs. Daniels (1988) explains: "cartoons and other propaganda reinforced nativists' attitudes that created stereotypical views that the Chinese worked cheap and smelled bad" (p. 52). He also reports that demonstrators marched with the following anti-Chinese slogans:

WE WANT NO SLAVES OR ARISTOCRATS.

THE COOLIE LABOR SYSTEM LEAVES US NO ALTERNATIVE.

STARVATION OR DISGRACE.

MARK THE MAN WHO WOULD CRUSH US TO THE LEVEL OF THE
MONGOLIAN SLAVE WE ALL VOTE.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND NO MORE CHINESE CHAMBERMAIDS.

(Daniels, 1988, p. 38)

While the Chinese were banned in 1882 and blamed for the strife amongst the miners, Mexican recruitment increased as they continued to move across the borders without restrictions. European immigrants were also coming to the United States for many years as well. In 1892, *Ellis Island* was created in New York to process those who could not afford to enter through first and second-class passages. According to *Eyewitness to History* (2000), "by 1910, Eastern and Southern Europeans made up 70 percent of the immigrants entering the country. After 1914, immigration dropped off because of the war, and later because of immigration restrictions imposed in the 1920s" (2000, p. 1).

Many Mexicans fled to the United States during the Mexican Revolution that began in 1910 and because laborers were needed while United States citizens were away fighting in World War I. In 1913, the *Bureaus of Immigration and Naturalization* was created under the Department of Labor. Shortly after the anti-immigrant sentiment worsened leading to the *1917 All-Asia Barred Zone*, which prohibited all people from Asia and Pacific Islanders from entering the country with the exception of Filipinos. *Eugenics* movements and *Social Darwinism* would also emerge influencing immigration policies and supporting scientific (*nativist*) theories about racial supremacy and purity. This eugenic *science* attempted to prove that the new immigrants (Eastern/Southern Europeans and Asians) were intellectually, morally, and physically inferior than the *native White American* citizens. Accordingly immigration laws and practices would now justify the privileging of a certain type of immigrant while restricting others who were deemed by science to be innately shoddy.

United States-Mexico Border Restrictions: Illegal Aliens

In the year of 1924 three major events that would impact immigration regulations and citizenship status were enacted. First, the Border Patrol was created, even though employees of the United States Immigration Service patrolled the border as early as 1904. This meant that the previous *laissez faire* monitoring of the border would now transform into high priority surveillance that would control and punish those who were entering the country without authorization. Second, the *Johnson Reed Immigration Act* was passed the same year putting quotas on immigrants from specific countries. For example, “eighty five percent of its allotments were reserved to Eastern Europeans” (Higham, 1955 [1988] as cited in De Genova, 2004, p. 162). This meant that ethno-

racial hierarchies were created and they would determine who was worthy and unworthy of living in the United States. Third, the *Citizens Act* granted citizenship to *most* Native Americans born in the United States. Although indigenous populations inhabited the country before European colonizers, many were still not considered citizens. Thus, this 1924 comprehensive immigration reform marked territories and created a hegemonic system that would guide future laws and practices that will privilege some over others. For instance, there were no restrictions on immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. Ngai (2004) explains that these immigration restrictions and tightening of the borders created:

The illegal alien as a new legal and political subject, whose inclusion within the nation was simultaneously a social reality and a legal impossibility—a subject barred from citizenship and without rights. Moreover, the need of state authorities to identify and distinguish between citizens, lawfully resident immigrants, and illegal aliens posed enforcement, political, and constitutional problems for the modern state. The illegal alien is thus an “impossible subject,” a person who cannot be and a problem that cannot be solved. (p. 4-5)

Thus, as stated in chapter one, Foucault (1977) rightfully argued that “the existence of a legal prohibition creates around it a field of illegal practices” which causes these “impossible subjects” (Ngai, 2004) to continue to be what Khosravi (2010) calls “excepted” in this “legal production of migrant illegality” (De Genova, 2002). Historically, while many undocumented people (Native Americans, Freed African Slaves, Chinese, etc.) did not have access to citizenship, they continued to live and work alongside citizens. However, in 1948 the *Displacement Act* was created allowing approximately

650,000 displaced Europeans to resettle in the United States as refugees, which afforded them the opportunity to adjust their status, a privilege that was not offered to the existing undocumented immigrants living in the country.

United States-Mexico Paradoxical Relationship

For Mexicans, the notion of status has been complicated due to their historical ambiguous identities in the United States as natives-citizens-aliens-immigrants in territories that were formerly part of Mexico. In fact, their paradoxical relationship with the United States privileged them with few entry and re-entry restrictions, but immigration laws and practices would change almost always at the convenience of the United States. For example, from 1942 to 1964, the United States and Mexico created the *Bracero Program* that would allow both Mexican guest workers and undocumented Mexicans to work in the United States due to labor shortages caused by World War II. Many Mexican-Americans (*Chicanos*) would become resentful towards the *braceros* and undocumented Mexican workers because they were unable to achieve the social mobility and fixed salaries that they desired because they could not compete with the cheap labor the latter offered. Although *Chicanos* would often mock and distinguish themselves from Mexican migrants because they spoke English, maintained a higher socio-economic and “legal” status than the *braceros*, most United States citizens would still group them all together and consider them as a homogeneous population. For example, “one writer called the borderlands a twilight zone where wetbacks and even Spanish-speaking United States citizens will do work at wages that even Negroes and White trash refuse to do...The Mexican peasantry, he said, lives in Asiatic poverty” (cited in Ngai, 2004, p. 159). Thus, the competition with and image of the *braceros* was

typically constructed negatively, which would cause a socio-economic animosity among working class people towards this population.

In fact, in response to the growing resentment and massive increase of authorized migrant workers, the United States government employed *Operation Wetback* from 1954 to 1955, which deported estimates that range from 2 to 4 million once authorized Mexican workers. Although this *open-door* agreement was dismantled, it was replaced by United States owned *Maquiladoras* (assembly plants) that were created along the United States-Mexico border in a free trading zone, which allowed the United States access to cheap goods and labor without having to deal with immigration matters. As a result of the large amount of displaced *braceros*, the limited amount of job opportunities at the new assembly plants, low wages, and the United States dependence on Mexicans for cheap labor in the country; (un)documented migrations steadily increased causing a fear among some politicians and citizens that was rooted in what Rodriguez (2002) calls the “browning of America.” Many were alarmed because the demographics and laws of the United States would change dramatically in the upcoming years. Some citizens became fed up with all of the discriminatory practices and *separate but equal* doctrines, forcing politicians to address and redress both domestic and international policies and bylaws.

Ngai (2004) explains that because “Mexicans workers were often constructed outside of the American working class and outside of the national body” (p. 166) many United States citizens were either unaware or unconcerned with the poverty and mistreatment of this population until advocacy groups unveiled the deplorable conditions of these workers. For example, a CBS broadcast in 1956 of labor organizer Ernesto

Galarza's book *Stranger in Our Fields* was published exposing the inhumane living quarters and abusive management of the *bracero* program (Ngai 2004, p. 165). The United States Department of Labor officer in charge of the program, Lee G. Williams, described the program as a system of "legalized slavery" (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2013). In the late 1950s and early 1960s, César Chávez lead farmworker protests over the program and organized the *United Farm Workers* to expose this inhumane treatment.

Addressing Racially Guided Discriminatory Practices

During the 1960's many counter mainstream culture groups emerged and fought for civil and human rights as well as for social justice. For example, the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* was passed and in 1965 Black people were allowed to vote. However, as a result of the continued racial disparities, frustrations led to various tragic events in 1965 like the Watts Riots in Los Angeles and the assassination of civil rights leader Malcolm X. Consequently with the United States domestic demands for socio-racial equity, the government was forced to address and amend international discriminatory laws that guided immigration, which lead to the passing of the *1965 Immigration and Nationality Act*.

This same immigration law, also known as the *Hart-Cellar Act*, did not become official until three years later in 1968. Many may view this new immigration law as a turning point in diminishing discriminatory immigration practices that favored some and excluded others from entry into the country and citizenship, but others may argue that this act was simply a political move in response to the upheaval that stemmed from the *Civil Rights Movement* and other minority lobby groups (*Chicano / Filipino Workers*

Movement) to appear that the government was now embracing ethno-racial diversity, even if its policies were still rooted in biased soil. On one hand, the act abolished the restrictive national origin system and allowed more people from the eastern hemisphere (people of color; 120,000 visas per year) to enter and have access to citizenship, which goes against the *Free Whites Only 1790 Immigration Act*. It also encouraged immigrants to reunite with their families by bringing over their loved ones from their countries of origin, and it would for the first time put quotas on immigrants from the western hemisphere (including Mexicans).

On the other hand, it created another preference system that favored *professional skilled-workers over low-skilled* ones, creating a class-based system that would only allow persons from a certain educational and socio-economic background to be eligible for these visas. “The post 1965 immigrants arriving were more educated and held more prestigious occupations than previous immigrant populations” (Pierre, 2004, p. 149). Because this was the first time that restrictions were placed on Mexicans, many who did not meet the visa criteria found other ways to migrate to the country. Also because of the proximity, its historical relationship with the United States, and as a result of the new quotas, Mexicans were and continue to be the largest migrating population. Despite historically being descendants of *native* inhabitants of many states in the southwest, and even though they have greatly contributed to the United States infrastructure and culture, Mexicans continue to be constructed in public discourses as low-skilled laborers, criminal invaders, parents of anchor babies, and inassimilable accented speakers. Thus, this once welcomed immigrant population begins to be unfairly scrutinized, targeted, and punished for their increasing presence in the country

both as documented and undocumented people. Understanding the historical, geopolitical, and economic relationship that the United States has had with Mexico, one can better contextualize why Mexican migrants continue to be the largest marked immigration population in the country.

Effects of Free Trade Agreements on (Un)documented Migration

Arrangements have emerged, like Free Trade Agreements (FTA's) in hopes of improving economies in the United States and those in the participating countries to deter undocumented migration, especially from Mexico. In 1994, the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA) was signed "eliminating tariffs over 15 years and that would turn the United States, Mexico, and Canada to become the second largest trading bloc after the European Union" (Becker, 2010, p. 1). While the agreement was created to increase investment opportunities and wages, which would hopefully decrease undocumented migration, the reality is that it did not take into account and was not prepared for several factors. First, the FTA's did not make provisions for the labor (workers) demands. Second, not all Mexican states have the infrastructure to support and compete with large manufacturing companies and as a result smaller locally owned Mexican companies and farmers were forced into foreclosure. Next, the Mexican *peso* would devalue (*peso crisis*) in 1994-1995 causing a recession, pushing people across the border in search for jobs, and other countries (especially China) would offer cheaper labor that lure companies and manufacturers to relocate. According to Bybee and Winter (2006):

NAFTA essentially annexed Mexico as a low-wage industrial suburb of the US and opened Mexican markets to heavily-subsidized US agribusiness products,

blowing away local producers. Capital could flow freely across the border to low-wage factories and *Walmart*-type retailers, but the same standard of free access would be denied to Mexican workers. (2006, p. 1)

While most agree that NAFTA has not met its intended goals, other FTA's have continued to emerge. In 2005, the *United States-Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreements* (DR-CAFTA) were passed following additional agreements with Colombia and Panama. Although it is obvious that trade and migration are inextricably linked, laws detailing the procedures for the movement of goods have only been addressed while the movement of people continues to be ignored and only redressed with temporary fixes (fences, increased border control, and nearly 400,000 deportations annually). The reality is that since FTA's with Latin American countries in particular, both migration and immigration from these regions to the United States has increased. Thus, these newly created open economic borders have led to a somewhat open human trafficking highway, which has in turn caused Latinos to be the largest group of (un)documented and targeted immigrant population in dominant discourses surrounding United States immigration. The billion-dollar question, literally (113 billion dollars are spent annually in the United States on unauthorized immigration according to the *Federation for American Immigration Reform* (FAIR), posed by scholars Lakoff & Ferguson (2006) in chapter one is "if capital is going to freely cross borders, should people and labor be able to do so as well?" (p. 2).

Immigration Control Reform and Control Act and Amnesties

In an attempt to repair its previous inconsistent immigration laws and to control the large amount of undocumented people in the country, the *Immigration Control*

Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was enacted in 1986 to address and redress several issues. First, it required employer's to use immigration forms (I-9) to ensure that all employees provided documentation of their authorized status to work in the country. Thus, it made it against the law to knowingly hire someone who was undocumented. Second, it granted amnesty to undocumented people who entered the country without authorization after January 1, 1982 and who remained in the United States incessantly. According to Becker (2008a), in 1982 Mexico was in an economic crisis, causing massive undocumented Mexican migration to the United States.

Four years later in 1986, the Border Patrol would apprehend 1.7 million Mexicans trying to enter the country without authorization while the same year 2.7 million undocumented people from multiple countries who met the criteria stated previously would gain legal status through IRCA that same year. Many critics of IRCA complained that the amnesty would only encourage more migrants to enter the country without authorization in hopes that congress would pass more amnesties in the future. Although IRCA was supposed to be a onetime reprieve that would help the government better control undocumented migration, the following six amnesties would be passed after it according to *The American Resistance* (2013) website:

1. Section 245(i) The Amnesty of 1994 - a temporary rolling amnesty for 578,000 illegal aliens.
2. Section 245(i) The Extension Amnesty of 1997 - an extension of the rolling amnesty created in 1994.

3. The Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) Amnesty of 1997 - an amnesty for nearly one million illegal aliens from Central America.
4. The Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act Amnesty (HRIFA) of 1998 - an amnesty for 125,000 illegal aliens from Haiti.
5. The Late Amnesty of 2000 - an amnesty for approximately 400,000 illegal aliens who claimed they should have been amnestied under the 1986 IRCA amnesty.
6. The LIFE Act Amnesty of 2000 - a reinstatement of the rolling Section 245(i) amnesty to an estimated 900,000 illegal aliens.
(American Resistance, 2013, p. 1)

While many critics may blame congress enacted amnesties for the increase in undocumented immigration in the United States, it has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter how several factors have contributed to the continued influx such as immigration exclusion acts and country quotas, newly established territories (*Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo*), displaced people from wars, unstable bi-lateral labor agreements, and, selective immigration practices that favor certain countries over others, to name a few.

Despite quantitative data indicating that forty percent of undocumented migrants enter the country with authorization and overstay their visas and while other ports of entry exist such as the United States-Canadian border and ships arriving at coastal states bringing migrants from all over the world, the most attention and money continues to be spent on the Mexico-United States borders. For example, in order to

target two of the busiest crossing points on the 2,000 mile United States-Mexico border, *El Paso's Hold the Line* (1993) and *San Diego's Operation Gatekeeper* (1994) were initiated to deter migrants by pushing them into remote areas that border control officials thought would dissuade unauthorized people from wanting to cross over. Although billion dollar strategies have been employed to stop unauthorized border crossings in particular and undocumented migration in general, the United States continues to create plans that only address some of the migration issues without thoroughly exploring all of the consequences of its actions.

Essentialization

Wagner et al. (2009) explain that “when a category is essentialized, it is assumed that there exists an *essence* of the category which *determines a category membership*. That is, if an object possesses the *essence*, then it is a member of the category” (p. 8). Accordingly, I argue that by prioritizing the militarization of the southwest border and depicting it and the people who cross it as national security threats in dominant immigrant discourses, (un)documented people (migration) in the United States (in)directly become categorized as *Mexican criminals*, thus causing anyone who is perceived to “possess the essence” of *Mexicaness* to be constructed as “members of this category.” In reviewing the historical racialization of immigration laws and practices of the United States previously in this chapter, it has been indexed that race has and continues to guide how citizenship, national identity, and nationhood is defined. In fact, Ngai (2004) explains that as a result of the adoption of the 1924 national-origin quota system “it rearticulated the United States-Mexico border as a cultural and racial boundary and creator of illegal immigration” (p. 67), which in turn construct people of

Mexican descent to be perceived as the “iconic illegal aliens” in the country despite their native ancestral presence before the *Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848*.

Mendelson (2013) warns “that the tendency to overlook the social components of individual stories leads to a portrayal of immigrant struggles and circumstances as the result of essential characteristics, rather than specific structural and socially imposed processes” (p. 213). By removing undocumented migration (people) out of border frames that racialize and criminalize, essentialized legal constructions of these communities that are often couched within *Illegality* frameworks can be eliminated, so that more nuanced discourses and understandings can be achieved such as uncovering how immigration laws and institutions contribute to this “illegalization” (De Genova, 2002).

As a result of decontextualized discourses that blame people instead of focusing on redressing broken systems, a social space that fosters a homogenous (un)documented immigrant identity may be (c)overly used to rationalize nativism, xenophobia, and societal acts of violence. For example, the official USCIS terminology that is commonly used when referencing undocumented people is dehumanizing and poses them as a threat to the United States. Referring to a human being as an “*illegal alien*” (in)directly implies that this person is a non-human extraterrestrial criminal who has come from an unknown place and is invading the country. Anthropologist Chávez (2012) notes:

As illegal aliens they are not legitimate members of the community. The “illegal” component of the term underscores that they exist outside the legal system that governs society. Alien is synonymous with outside, foreigner, and stranger. In

short, the undocumented immigrants' image consists of a conglomeration of negative values and missing qualities. (p. 23)

(Un)consciously these images becomes etched in the public's minds as representative of a group of people, which Bucholtz (2003) outlines in her definition of *essentialism* occurs when:

The position that the attributes and behavior of socially defined groups can be determined and explained by reference to cultural and/or biological characteristics believed to be inherent to the group. As an ideology, essentialism rests on two assumptions: (1) that groups can be clearly delimited; and (2) that group members are more or less alike. (p. 400)

This study argues that the racialized and criminalized identities that have been imposed upon undocumented people by essentialized dominant discourses assume "that they can be clearly delimited" by constructing these "group members" as "more or less alike."

Normalizing Essentialized Racist Nativist Discourses

Pérez-Huber et al. (2009) define *racist nativism* as "the assigning of values to real or imagined differences, in order to justify the superiority of the native, who is to be perceived white, over that of the non-native who is to be perceived as People and immigrants of Color" (p. 43). This means dominant discourses and definitions of who and who is not accepted as citizens is determined by specific groups in power. In fact, Foucault's (1972) conceptual understanding of *discourse* indexes that those in power define and control the societal laws which in turn inform social practices that guide how we *know*, see, classify and treat different groups of people. For example, Negrón-González (2009) explains how the dominant portrait of undocumented people as

Mexican, illegal, and criminal, causes society to reference these automated images engraved in their minds without questioning the validity of this narrative. She explains:

One of the central goals at the top of the anti-immigrant agenda over the past 20 years has been to control the public discourse around immigration...the dominant narrative becomes situated as the universal truth that all other conceptions of reality must be measured against. (Negrón-González, 2009, p. 26)

Romero (2008) also recognizes how contemporary rhetoric from the department of Homeland Security (DHS) contributes to essentialism. For example, she explains and responds to how DHS' Office of Detention and Removal (DRO) slogan for their 10-year detention and removal plan of undocumented people can create a misinformed rhetoric about this population. She states, "in framing the mission solely on the basis of public safety and national security, all unauthorized immigrants are defined as security threats" (2008, p. 1360). Accordingly, these essentialized racist nativist discourses become normalized and perpetuated in various public domains. Former CNN Anchor Lou Dobbs who had access to millions of viewers perpetuated myths about Mexicans coming backing to re-claim their lands. Dobbs (2006) remarks:

There are some Mexican citizens and some Mexican-Americans who want to see California, New Mexico and other parts of the Southwestern United States given over to Mexico. These groups call it the *reconquista*, Spanish for re-conquest. And they view the millions of Mexican illegal aliens in particular entering the United States as potentially an army of invaders to achieve that takeover. (Dobbs, 2006, CNN Special Issue Presidential Immigration Summit)

This type of messaging on this widespread media network that warns United States citizens about people of Mexican descent having the potential to be “an army of invaders” who want to “takeover” has the power to influence larger audiences’ perspectives towards people of Mexican descent as well as it heightens hysteria about the lack of national security at our southwestern border. These types of biased discourses about the southwestern border fuel the usage of racial epithets such as “illegal Mexicans” and insinuate that people of Mexican descent are the only ones entering without authorization through this route. In contrast, “illegal Canadians” is rarely used to describe unauthorized people who enter through the United States-Canada borders, which indexes how the United States-Mexico border is unfairly stigmatized, criminalized and racialized.

Juxtaposing the northern and southern borders of the United States demonstrates how biased border constructions guide racialized rhetoric and fuels what Chávez (2008) refers to as the *Latino threat narrative*, “a social imaginary where Latinos are virtual characters” (p. 78). Accordingly, I argue that dominant discourses and scholarly research less commonly examine those who attempt to as well as those who successfully enter through the waterways (by boat, jet ski, swimming, bridges, tunnels, etc.) of states that border Canada (New York, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Detroit, etc.) without authorization due to both racial and socio-economic factors. This limited United States-Mexico border narrative may also hide the fact that approximately 40-50% of people legally enter the country, but become undocumented after overstaying their visa expiration dates (Pew Hispanic Center, 2006). It also disregards the various modes of entering the country such as through the northern Canadian-United States

border, by sea, and by flight. The reality is how people are portrayed or framed in society via dominant discourses alters how others talk, think about, and understand them, which in turn determines how they are constructed and treated. Accordingly, the following section will discuss how racist nativists beliefs about (un)documented immigrants are being normalized as well as it examines how people are being mobilized by them.

Implications of Racist Nativist Discourses on Immigration Practices

What surfaced in most all of my conversations was an underlying racism, and fear of the “Mexicanization” of America. Revealing what he really thought, Ross Labadie, a member of the Minutemen search and rescue operation told me, “It’s amazing how much Middle Easterners look like Hispanics and maybe I don’t want them here either.” (Brown, 2011, p. 1)

Carolyn Brown, a Journalist faculty member at American University in Washington, D. C., revealed the statement above in her extensive interviews and patrol with multiple members of vigilante groups (*Minutemen*) who voluntarily police the United States-Mexico borders detaining and notifying the Border Control of undocumented migrants attempting to cross. The latter part of the quote above from the *minutemen* member demonstrates how immigrants from different countries are often grouped together and discriminated against based on perceived common racial characteristics (appearance) that is often a result from mediated images that tends to construct them all as Mexican.

Currently one of the latest and also controversial immigration programs, *Secure Communities*, was created by the *Department of Homeland Security* (DHS) in 2008 in an effort to locate and remove undocumented people or foreign born persons who have

committed crimes which causes him or her to be removed from the country. Basically, racial profiling is used to identify (un)documented people and local law enforcement authorities are mandated (in 1,595 jurisdictions) or encouraged to send fingerprints to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to find out their immigration status. If it is discovered that the person arrested is unauthorized to be in the country, they are held for 48 hours until ICE takes enforcement action. ICE reported:

Through April 30, 2011, more than 77,000 immigrants convicted of crimes, including more than 28,000 convicted of aggravated felony (level 1) offenses like murder, rape and the sexual abuse of children were removed from the United States after identification through Secure Communities. (Navas, 2011, p. 1)

While it is commendable that 28,000 violent criminals were deported through this program, concerns are being raised about how rights are being violated against both non-citizens and United States residents. For example, the October 2011 *Analysis of Demographics and Due Process report on Secure Communities* from The Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Law and Social Policy at the University of California Berkeley Law School found:

Approximately 3,600 United States Citizens have been arrested by ICE through the Secure Communities program even though citizens by definition should not be subject to immigration detention and 88,000 families containing U.S. citizens have been affected through the immigration arrest of a family member....Latinos are disproportionately impacted by Secure Communities. The data indicates that 93% of the people identified for deportation through Secure Communities are from Latin American countries, while 2% are from Asia, 1% are from Europe and

Canada, and the remaining 3% are from Africa or another country (Kohli, Markowitz, & Chávez, 2011, p. 2-6)

Although this study illustrates that Latinos in general and Latino men specifically are targeted more, Aarti Kohli, one of the authors of the study, points out that the government's own data has consistently shown that most of the people impacted by this program have no record or are low level offenders. Critics of *Secure Communities* believe that this program may lead to racial profiling, that it violates one's right to due process, and may cause immigrant communities to be reluctant to report crimes to the local police in fear of being deported. For example, *The NC Times*, a San Diego newspaper, reported in October 2011 that "a woman who called the Escondido Police Department to report that she was beaten by her boyfriend was herself arrested and later turned over to immigration authorities after she was booked at the Vista jail" (Sifuentes, 2011, p. 1). Incidents like these may cause (un)documented people to withstand abuse and/or deter them for reporting crimes out of fear of being exposed. The risk of deportation not only affects the individual involved, but the entire family. In fact, the 2011 executive report of *Shattered Families: The Perilous Intersection of Immigration Enforcement and the Child Welfare System* Applied Research Center (ARC) estimates that there are:

At least 5,100 children (1.25% of all children in foster care) currently living in foster care whose parents have been either detained or deported in the next five years, at least 15,000 *more* children will face these threats to reunification with their detained and deported mothers and fathers... in counties where local police have signed 287(g) agreements with ICE, children in foster care were, on

average, about 29 percent more likely to have a detained or deported parent than in other counties (Wessler et al., 2011, p. 4)

Due to the mixed immigration statuses of families, members are being separated at a higher rate as a result of recent aggressive initiatives like *Secure Communities* and other state enacted laws that are preventing undocumented citizens from access to basic resources. Not only are undocumented migrants being affected by these *ad-hoc* members of the DHS enterprise, but their documented family members and United States residents are being unfairly targeted and footed with bills that result from a lack of comprehensive immigration laws.

Implications of States Enforcement of Federal Immigration Laws

On April 23, 2010, Jan Brewer, the Governor of Arizona, signed into law the *Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods ACT (SB 1070)* in an attempt to take federal immigration laws concerning undocumented migrants into the local's hands. Under this bill, more immigration and civil rights violations are created, giving the police and local citizens the power to do the job that she claims the federal government has failed to do. First, local police with "reasonable suspicion" have the authority to intrusively question any person in Arizona and demand that they provide legal proof of United States residency or citizenship. If these targeted people do not have any documentation on hand (as most U. S. citizens do not), they will have to convince the law officers of their *legal* status or they can be detained until they are presented. Because Arizona borders Mexico and due to the border framing that tends to construct undocumented people as Mexican, "reasonable suspicion" can be interpreted by many as giving authority to racially and linguistically profile anyone who looks Mexican,

whatever that looks like. This means that people who fit a certain description can be targeted by the police regardless of their legal status in the country and/or despite the fact that they have not committed a crime.

Second, it allows for citizens to sue the law enforcement if they believe that they are not enforcing immigration laws efficiently. So, private citizens (*Minutemen*) are able to police the police. Third, under this bill it is illegal to provide transportation to an undocumented person or hire or conceal him/her despite ones' own personal moral beliefs. Romero (2008) references Georges-Abeiyi's paradigm of *grand and petit apartheid* to demonstrate overt and covert discriminatory social and juridical practices. For example, she discusses characteristics of *petit apartheid practices* that are evident in creating and maintaining the current anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States. Romero (2008) explains:

Increased militarization along the United States-Mexico border occurs largely outside of the public view, and US border Patrol agents operate with a high level of unchecked discretion (Dunn, 1996; Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002)... Physical appearance as Latino, association with a work crew, inability to speak English or preference to speak Spanish, and proximity to the border are used as a reasonable suspicion to justify investigative stops...Citizenship inspection targets racialized bodies and directs heavy surveillance at Mexican-American neighborhoods. (p. 29)

With the rise of the current *petit apartheid* anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States, racialized and criminalized images of Mexicans in particular and Latinos in general has emerged, thus encouraging unconstitutional acts of violence against these specific

populations. In the June 2010 special report from the *Immigration Policy Center*, data from the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics “debunk myths” about undocumented people and the crime rate in Arizona. It explains:

- 1) Although the unauthorized immigrant population doubled to about 12 million from 1994 to 2004, violent crimes in the U.S. declined by 35.1% during this time and the property crime rate fell by 25.0%.
- 2) The violent crime rate fell from 512 per 100,000 people in 2005 to 447 per 100,000 people in 2008, the last year for which data is available.
- 3) The property crime rate fell from 5,850 per 100,000 people in 2005 to 4,291 per 100,000 people in 2008. (Immigration Policy Center, 2010, p. 6-7)

By implementing *SB 1070*, it is estimated that 100 millions of dollars will be needed to support it (2010, p. 10). Despite the media’s scare tactics, many of Arizona’s own residents and police officials do not seem to agree with the discriminatory practices that this law permits. For example, Arizona’s *Association of Chiefs of Police (AACOP)* released the following statement concerning *SB 1070*:

The provisions of the bill remain problematic and will negatively affect the ability of law enforcement agencies across the state to fulfill their many responsibilities in a timely manner. While AACOP recognizes immigration as a significant issue in Arizona, we remain strong in our belief that it is an issue most appropriately addressed at the federal level. (Immigration Policy Center, 2010, p. 9)

While it is evident from the statement above is that some local authorities do not feel that they should be acting as federal agents. In addition copycat laws in other states are being created to try and combat an issue that they are not completely knowledgeable

about or trained to control. Despite public expressed concerns from local Arizona police officials, Alabama passed a similar and somewhat stricter immigration law known as House Bill 56 (*HB 56*) in October 2011 that would have a larger impact on undocumented people's lives in this state.

Under *HB 56* local school officials have the right to check the immigration status of students and it is a misdemeanor if an undocumented person fails to carry immigration documentation. Waslin (2011) explains that important provisions will make it difficult for undocumented people to get access to basic needs such as water. She explains that Section 27 of *HB 56* states that state courts cannot enforce contracts between any party and "an alien unlawfully present in the United States" (p. 6). Undocumented migrants can enter contracts, but they do not have any legal right to take any employer to court who refuses to pay him/her for his services or if he or she is "renting an apartment would have no legal recourse if the landlord unilaterally withdraws the lease or fails to meet health and safety standards" (p. 6). Waslin (2011) also explains how parts of the law are being interpreted differently in various counties and towns within the state of Alabama. For example, section 30 under *HB 56* states that an undocumented person cannot "enter into or attempt to enter into a business transaction with the state" (p. 6). One town required that all water customers must present a valid driver's license or identification card to maintain their services while another county interprets this section of the law to include the need for proof of residence to register a mobile home. Due to the fact that states like Alabama and Arizona have created laws that mandate untrained local officials to act as federal agents and that allow for different

interpretations of each section, (un)documented people will be subject to discrimination and denied civil rights.

Consequently, in September 2011 *A Culture of Cruelty* report was released documenting over 30,000 reported incidents of abuse and mistreatment by United States Border Control Agents. This humanitarian group interviewed 4,130 interviews with 12,895 individuals who were in Border Patrol custody between fall 2008 and spring 2011 and reported the following:

Based on these interviews we have identified 12 areas of concern, and in the full report provide prevalence statistics and case examples for each denial of or insufficient water; denial of or insufficient food; failure to provide medical treatment or access to medical professionals; inhumane processing center conditions; verbal abuse; physical abuse; psychological abuse; dangerous transportation practices; separation of family members; dangerous repatriation practices; failure to return personal belongings; and due process concerns.

(Latin American Working Group, 2011, p. 5)

While it is evident that a comprehensive immigration reform plan is needed in the United States, dehumanizing people, justifying racial profiling, and allowing local untrained officials to perform federal matters counters the constitutional rights that govern this democratic country. The essentialized construction of an (un)documented migrant figure frames the lives of millions of people, which in turn causes society to reference these automated images and narratives without having a complete understanding of the complexity of these discourses.

Re-Presenting the (Un)documented Immigrant Narrative

It is not an issue that's very broadly talked about within the Asian-American community until very recently, because there is such a culture of silence that surrounds the issue. It is very much stigmatized, so you don't really talk about it. Initially, my own reaction when I heard there were other undocumented Asian youth coming out, I was like: That's crazy! Why would they do that? And then fast-forward two years later, I'm doing it. (Pearson, 2013, p. 1-2)

The quote above comes from an interview with a student of Asian descent who discusses her reaction to other nationalities (besides Latinos) who are exposing their undocumented immigration statuses in public spaces. Her comments are telling because even though she as undocumented person is shocked to learn that non-Latinos are actively sharing their stories and advocating for social justice. Consequently, this investigation is timely because it argues for less commonly accounts of (un)documented experiences that re-present the diversity of these communities which in turn dismantle stigmatization.

I would like to clarify that majority (Mexican) voices are essential, valorized, and influential in re-framing the (un)documented immigrant narrative, however other accounts need to surface and be included as well to index the shared solidarity and marginalization. Accordingly, this study explores how less commonly presented *testimonios* of diverse groups of *aspiring citizens* can offer alternate ways of looking at dominant discourse and re-present them. The word *re-present* is appropriate for this study because it reflects two different ideas. Nunan & Choi (2010) talk about the ambiguity in the term "represent;" that it can be taken two ways: "to stand for" and "to re-

present” (p. 2). Analogously, this investigation posits to accomplish both. It simultaneously seeks to deconstruct the racialized and criminalized images and rhetoric surrounding “aspiring citizens” and offer less commonly presented counter-narratives that explore how their lives are shaped by these discourses and immigration practices.

This study corresponds to the calling for scholars to shift their analysis off of the “illegal alien frame” (Lakoff & Ferguson, 2006), and instead examine the juridical and social-political status of migrant *illegality* (De Genova, 2002). As PAR research, this study explores the impact of *illegality* on their everyday lives (Willen, 2007) by positioning the argument in a human rights framework (Pérez-Huber, 2009a) that leads to social justice (Romero, 2007). This investigation also seeks to eradicate the racialized constructed Mexican face (Chávez, 2001) of (un)documented migration in the United States, by exploring *testimonos* of non-Mexican adults to index the diversity within this population and to explore less commonly shared narratives that demonstrate how biased rhetoric negatively shapes their lives.

My investigation differs from existing research in three ways. First, it is approached as PAR with the purpose of contributing to social justice research and local change by collaborating with community stakeholders. Second, the participants in this study represent a less commonly examined group of undocumented migrants (non-Mexican adults who entered by air, land, and sea), which expands the commonly constructed border frame. Third, it challenges essentialized dominant discourses surrounding (un)documented people by exploring how non-Mexican adults *testimonios* can re-present this biased border narrative that racializes, stigmatizes, and criminalizes millions. While many studies focus on the experiences of undocumented students, I

argue that the discourses surrounding students are somewhat more sympathetic than those concerning non-student undocumented migrants due to the fact that dominant rhetoric commonly portray this group as victims because they were brought to this country without their consent at a young age.

The differences in rhetoric surrounding undocumented students and undocumented non-students is also evident in proposed and current legislature specific to students like the *Dream Act* and the 2011 *Morton Memo* issued by the Director of Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE), John Morton. The latter encourages immigration officials to exercise prosecutorial discretion in deportation cases involving particular populations. In other words, this legislation suggests clemency should be applied toward undocumented students and other *special* undocumented groups (military, agricultural workers), but there are no provisions for other undocumented people who do not meet these criteria. On June 15, 2012 *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* (D. A. C. A) was signed by President Obama, which allows certain students the opportunity to work, study, and stop removal proceedings if they are approved (see criteria for D. A. C. A. at www.uscis.gov). Accordingly, many politicians and United States citizens tend to have more understanding of undocumented student *testimonios* because they empathize with children who were brought to this country at a young age and who were not included in the decision-making process of living here without proper authorization. Therefore the rhetoric surrounding students is distinct from my collaborators who are adults and do not meet the criteria for prosecutorial discretion.

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the immigrant advocacy organization that governs the *Immigrant Solidarity Committee (ISC)*, which was the

research site for this dissertation believes that the following seven key components are needed in order to create a humane immigration reform:

(1) develop humane economic policies to reduce forced migration, (2) Protect the labor rights of all workers, (3) Develop a clear path to citizenship, (4) Respect the civil and human rights of immigrants, (5) De-militarize the Mexico-U.S. borders, (6) Make family reunification a top priority, and (7) Ensure that immigrants and refugees have access to services. (AFSC, 2013, p.1-2)

These recommendations by ISC index a need for comprehensive immigration change. During my two year “entry to the community and pay it forward period’ as well as my nine month participatory action research with the Immigrant Solidarity Committee, I have gained knowledge and experiences that have helped me better understand the complexities of (un)documented migration and that have guided the approach to this study. I sought to contribute both academically and locally by historicizing, contextualizing, and nuancing (mis)understandings surrounding undocumented migration. Approaching this investigation as PAR, the participants and I were able to use both academic and experiential (*testimonios*) knowledge to explore how partial discourses, paradoxical immigration laws, and practices couched in racist nativist ideologies can be re-presented in a human rights frame.

Participatory Action Research

Action Research (AR) or *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) are interchangeable terms used to refer to an inquiry based approach that prides itself on combining *action* with *research*, while valuing both the researchers’ and participants’ contributions to making meaningful social change in their local areas through active

participation. It is an approach that utilizes collaborative research and collective knowledge to address and change injustices (racial, social, educational, gendered, etc.) by working with various stakeholders to create goals and carry out actions that work towards change. Reason and Bradbury (2001) define *Action Research* as:

A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (p. 1)

This qualitative approach challenges a traditional Western Eurocentric research model because it implements a *Freirian* participatory inductive method where the goal is social action. It utilizes what Herron (1996) terms “co-operative inquiry,” where the academician acts as an insider/outsider and collaborates with the participants to create knowledge that is valuable within the academy and practical in the community.

Various founders and countries have been identified as initiators and practitioners of AR and PAR. *The Highlander Research Education Center* in the Appalachian area of Tennessee and later the Highlander Folk School provided a hub for scholars and local activists to address labor, social and environmental injustices in the 1930's. Social Psychologist Kurt Lewin is also cited for founding this type of research and for coining the term *Action Research*. He created this collaborative action-oriented type of research as a result of implementing group field activities.

AR would transform to PAR in the 1970's when Orlando Fals-Borda, a Colombian sociologist, along with some of his colleagues in other disciplines further developed Lewis' realization that action was needed in research and expanded it to include participatory activities that would lead to social change. As a result they included the community in their inquiry- based studies so that their research would have more tangible and transforming results. In fact, Fals-Borda and his colleagues organized the first PAR conference in Cartagena, Colombia in 1977 (Hall, 2005). They believed that the community should work in collaboration with researchers to select and examine methodologies that would be appropriate to resolve local social injustices since they affected them directly. These Colombian scholars were frustrated with conventional research methodologies that did not seem to be beneficial or practical.

Decades later many social and political theorists (Karl Marx, John Dewey, Frantz Fanon, and Antonio Gramsci) and critical educators (Paulo Freire, Derrick Bell, Gloria Ladson-Billings) have contributed greatly to its development. For example, Brazilian critical educator Paulo Freire (1970) has internationally influenced and popularized *action research* through his critique of what he called the *banking system of education*. He argued that teachers were only depositing biased knowledge into students' minds (Brazilian poor) without teaching them how to critically use and/or challenge this information. Ella Edmondson Bell and Gloria Ladson-Billings have also used PAR with CRT to critically examine racial inequities in the justice and education system within the United States.

PAR has been implemented worldwide to reflect the distinct realities and social injustices of practitioners own contexts in their pursuit of change through collaborative

(scholar and local stakeholders) efforts of local participation and empowerment. PAR aims to address problems in the community, which indirectly affect the academy. For example, Collins (2005) used PAR for her doctoral dissertation at the University of Toronto in her study on community poverty. She argues that participatory action research serves a number of key goals such as it “incorporates voices from marginal populations, honors community knowledge, shifts the role of researcher to listener, works towards social justice, and fulfill basic human needs” (2005, p. 295). Van der Meulen (2011), author of *Participatory and Action-Oriented Dissertations: The Challenges and Importance of Community-Engaged Graduate Research* argues that community-engaged action research is beneficial for graduate students who often experience feelings of isolation in their final stages. From her own personal experience of implementing an action research methodology for her dissertation, she believes that it is a rewarding experience for both the researcher and the collaborators because students who use this approach tend to feel “a greater sense of purpose in their research projects and communities can participate in studies that seek answers to questions they themselves deem as important” (2011, p. 1292).

While many scholars have successfully implemented PAR, others have criticized this approach for its lack of examining how other institutionalized tenets of power like gender and race are inextricably linked to community social injustices. Some critics argue that many PAR scholars tend to examine the local injustices and needs of the communities while shying away from addressing how these major societal biases affect their collaborators lives. For example, Maguire (1987) brought attention to the fact that women’s ways of thinking and experiences have been traditionally excluded from PAR,

a term that she refers to as an *androcentric filter*. She suggests that *Feminist Theory* should be combined with PAR to better challenge systems of oppression. She explains: “participatory research taught me the necessity of being explicit about personal choices and values in the research process. Feminism taught me to recognize that the personal is political” (Maguire, 1987, p. 5). Reid (2004) provides an approach for pairing these two in the framework of Feminist Action Research (FPAR). Its guiding principles are inclusion, participation, action, social change, and researcher reflexivity.

Critical Race scholars have also critiqued the lack of discussions on how race and racism within PAR affect peoples’ lives (Bell, 2001; Varcoe, 2006). Derrick Bell (2001) explains, “in the USA where the fight for racial equality has historically dominated the landscape, an eerie silence lurks when it comes to discussing action research techniques to dismantle racial oppression” (p. 49). He also indexes that *American Civil Rights* and *Black Nationalist Movements* have been “firmly rooted in action research tradition” (p. 49), yet they are minimally credited or address how race impacts ones experience. Accordingly, this study will attempt to address both concerns by implementing *critical race theory* as a conceptual framework to expose *racist nativist* discourses surrounding undocumented immigrants and offer more inclusive experiences of both genders in the *testimonios* presented within the PAR approach. In fact, one of the tenets of CRT encourages scholars to examine how race intersects with other forms of subordination such as gender.

Phillips (1997) best explains the need to explore all of the powers, knowledges, and truths while using a PAR methodology in her statement:

While PAR researchers understand that research can be a tool for social change, addressing imbalances of power, mostly around issues of economic marginalization, FARPAR (Feminist Anti-racist Participatory Action Research) researchers can use the research process to address power differences related to race, class, and gender. (Phillips, 1997, p. 102)

Thus, this study follows Herr and Andersons' (2005) *Goals of Action and Validity Criteria* model for implementing a PAR methodology in a dissertation. Analogous to their table below, I link their five validity criteria to commonly agreed-upon PAR goals below in table 1.

Table 1

Goals of Action and Validity Criteria Model for a PAR Dissertation

Goals of Action Research	Quality/Validity Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The generation of new knowledge. • The achievement of action-oriented outcomes. • The education of both researcher and participants. • Results that are relevant to the local setting. • A sound and appropriate research methodology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogic and process validity. • Outcome validity • Catalytic validity • Democratic validity • Process validity

(Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 55)

By implementing these validity criteria, the PAR methodological approach has a checks and balance system that endorses a study of quality with measurable standards and outcomes. *Outcome validity* measures the success of the research because it “forces the researcher to reframe the problem in a more complex way, often leading to a new set of questions and problems” (Anderson, 2005, p. 55). *Process validity* caused me to

reflect on, adjust, and ensure that the design, the collaborators, methods, and narratives are trustworthy, triangulated, and that multiple voices are included and valued.

Democratic validity mandated collaboration of all of the stakeholders concerns, perspectives, and experiences to ensure that the findings and outcomes are appropriate for the context and its participants. *Catalytic validity* measured how the study empowered both the participants and I to become more knowledgeable and motivated to advocate for change by transforming their social unjust realities. Combining different perspectives caused us to explore new ways of understanding and approaching the problem. *Dialogic validity* encouraged me to engage in dialogue with other critical action researchers like members of my dissertation committee who helped me reflect on my study and ensure that my design, methodological, and analytical approaches within the study are appropriate to examine its problems and findings. In chapter six, I discuss these PAR outcomes.

By approaching this study as PAR within a CRT framework to expose and oppose *racist nativist* discourses; shared knowledge, and experiences between the participants and I were both valued and considered in working towards social change. Voice and agency of traditionally silenced populations was achieved by examining the participants' *testimonios* with the goal of finding alternative ways to re-present the commonly essentialized discourses surrounding (un)documented migrants within and outside of the academy. In fact, CRT encouraged me to use lived experiences of traditionally marginalized populations to bring their voices out of the periphery and expose the social injustices that shape their lives.

Rationale for Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Scholars use *critical race theory* (CRT) to expose, challenge, and respond to racism in the United States society in general and within certain institutions (legal & educational) and discourses more specifically. This PAR study is positioned within a critical race theory framework that examines how race in combination with other forms of subordination has historically and continues to guide immigration laws, practices, and dominant discourses surrounding (un)documented communities. I use CRT as a social justice theoretical framework as well as an analytical tool to index and challenge racist practices and rhetoric surrounding (un)documented migration. This study followed the five tenets that Solórzano (1998) outlines to define CRT below:

1. *The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism*, which points to racial oppression being a key underlying force in the maintenance of power through tacit acceptance of white supremacy;
2. *The challenge to dominant ideology*, which openly questions the status quo in the educational system and its promulgation of the myth of meritocracy, race neutrality, and “equality;”
3. *The commitment to social justice*, by continual attempts to question and abolish racism and racial oppression as part of also counteracting ethnic, gender, class, and other forms of oppression;
4. *The centrality of experiential knowledge*, where the lived realities and voices of the oppressed take precedence and become key to understanding subordination and the tools to counter it and;

5. *The interdisciplinary perspective*, which challenges the all-too-often singular focus on one discipline when addressing issues of academic research and educational theory, aiming instead to open up for examination a wide range of historic, social, and political considerations within the study of education. (p. 122)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is used in this study to expose how the construction of *racist nativist* discourses surrounding (un)documented migration United States are creating misinformed narratives about this population. This investigation examined the essentialized (un)documented *immigrant figure* that is socially constructed and mediated through dominant discourses. Accordingly, through a CRT lens I explore why People of Color (citizens and aspiring citizens) are often meshed into one imaginary homogenous ethno-racial national identity. This study specifically focused on how a United States-Mexico border frame tends to construct all (un)documented immigrants as *Mexican*. By deconstructing this biased frame, less commonly presented critical counter narratives (*testimonios*) of both undocumented and authorized immigrants from non-Mexican countries are explored to understand the true complexity and diversity that exists within these communities. CRT exposes how these *racist nativist* perspectives of (un)documented people affect how we read, write, view, treat, and shape the lives of millions of people.

History and Effectiveness of Critical Race Theory

CRT commenced as a movement that emerged from a group of legal scholars and activists (Critical Legal Studies -CLS) in the mid 1970's who found themselves and other people of color confronting (c)over forms of racism within the United States legal system. These scholar-activists combined various theories and ideas that stemmed

from philosophers like Antonio Gramsci, adapted perspectives from the Civil Rights era, Feminist, and *Chicano* movements of the sixties and seventies to create a separate organization (CRT). Frustrated by racist practices that cause People of Color to be targeted and treated unfairly, they began to meet at conferences and create strategies to combat various forms of systemic racism that exist within a range of institutions. While there are various tenets of CRT, there are three that are agreed upon creeds by most CRT scholars: First, “racism appears normal and natural to people in this society” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 264). Second, it encourages People of Color to tell and share their lived experiences with racism so that their (marginalized) voices can add to the conversation about race, which are commonly guided by dominant discourses. Third, the goal of CRT is not only to expose racist practices, but it calls for systemic change. Eventually the CRT framework was adapted by scholars from other fields and broadened to include other discriminatory factors that intersect with race. For example, *Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit)* emerged extending CRT principles to examine biased immigration laws and practices, language rights of multilingual speakers, and to valorize the knowledge of Latinos.

Romero (2008) encourages scholars to use CRT when dealing with immigration studies because she explains that the United States immigrant experiences and the citizenship process cannot be fully understood without analyzing the construction of the *illegal alien* and understanding how immigrants have been historically racialized, criminalized, and excluded from society. Romero (2008) states that race does indeed play a major part in the racialization of who is *perceived* to be American, which encourages racial profiling in immigration practices. In her case study of the *Chandler*

Immigration Raid, she explains that, “the racialization of *Mexicaness* was reinforced by selecting persons for citizenship inspection on the basis of their appearance, Spanish-speaking abilities, and location of residence” (2008, p. 33). Critical race educators like Gloria Ladson-Billings, Daniel G. Solóranzo, and Tara J. Yosso, also implement CRT principles to expose racist practices that marginalize and construct racialized notions of people of color, which contributes to *apartheid knowledge* in the academy.

Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2009) argue that ideological beliefs and practices in the academy are rooted in Western epistemologies, which prioritize Eurocentric ways of knowing while devaluing other processes of understanding and constructing meaning, thus creating what they call apartheid knowledge. They utilize the term *apartheid* to distinguish between what has historically separated and defined who and what is ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ in academia. Even in a time where global and local epistemologies are essential in understanding the reading, writing, and relationship of the word to the world, qualitative research manuals like *The Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, L.S., & Smith, L.T, 2009) must be created independently, of the *standard* ones, thus again, separating how and with whom scholars conduct research based on *apartheid* methods that are deemed valid or invalid for certain populations.

Consequently, many scholars have failed to explore these epistemologies, methodologies, and theories because they do not consider them to be *legitimate*, and they are erroneously under the impression that they are only applicable for oppressed groups of people in *urban America* or from *subjugated developing countries*. Although someone from every continent is represented in the United States, as well as almost

every spoken world language can be heard in one of the fifty states, and because witnesses (victims) of various global human injustices are living in this country, it is apparent that critical and indigenous methodologies and epistemologies be incorporated as (legitimate) tools, if indeed the goal of scholarly research is to bring about awareness, uncover the multiple truths of the world, create agency, and endorse change. CRT acknowledges that institutionalized racism exists which in turn creates race-based inequities where *Whiteness* holds a privileged power over People of Color. CRT recognizes that identities, beliefs, experiences, and ways of living are multiple, not static or shared by all individuals within a particular race. In fact, its goal is to expose and combat undemocratic practices that essentialize and fail to recognize the intersectionality with race and other factors like class, gender, nationality, and religion.

CRT indexes that race and class are often indicators of how racism continues to exist in contemporary societies, especially when we examine statistics on poverty, prison demographics, standardized test scores, mortality rates, economic assets, and other data that point out major disparities between Caucasians and People of Color. There is no genetic disposition by People of Color that contributes to these obvious gaps. Assigned racial characteristics and behaviors created through dominant discourses continue to socially construct and maintain a racial hegemony that oppresses some while privileging others.

By implementing a PAR approach within a CRT framework, this study examines how less commonly presented counter-narratives can nuance generalized understandings and work towards eradicating biased practices surrounding undocumented migration (communities) in North Carolina. Third, this framework aims

for a *social justice commitment* that leads toward a research agenda that contributes to the erasure of “racism, sexism, poverty, and that empowers subordinated populations” (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2002, p. 27). Accordingly, this qualitative PAR dissertation informed my use of participatory co-constructed strategies where both the participants and I actively became agents of change within our local community by participating in activities that advocated for undocumented communities which are detailed in chapter three. Solóranzo and Yosso (2002) argue for a *centrality of experiential knowledge* where the experiences of People of Color are explained better and not distorted just to support the research. Lastly, they call for a *transdisciplinary perspective* that incorporates multiple methods and epistemologies from various disciplines and demonstrates how they analyze the effects of race and racism of People of Color. This investigation incorporated theories, epistemologies, and methodologies from a variety of disciplines (Sociology, Legal Studies, English Studies, Anthropology, Latin American Studies, and Education) that examine how race and other forms of subordination shape lives.

Table 2 below demonstrates how a PAR approach within a *critical race theory* framework works mutually to accomplish the research goals of this dissertation. I juxtapose the five tenets that Solórzano (1998) outlines to define CRT with Herr and Andersons’ (2005) *Goals of Action and Validity Criteria* model for implementing a PAR methodology in a dissertation. In the last column I explain how the research outcomes are achieved.

Table 2

Research Approach Compatibility Crosswalk

<u>Participatory Action Research</u>	<u>Critical Race Theory</u>	<u>Research Outcomes</u>
1. The generation of new knowledge.	1. The challenge to dominant ideology.	1. The participants' <i>testimonios</i> counter dominant narratives surrounding undocumented migration. The participants and I worked collaboratively to co-construct new knowledge.
2. The achievement of action-oriented outcomes.	2. A commitment to Social justice research.	2. I participated in advocacy activities locally for undocumented communities. The counter-narratives presented in this study call for social change.
3. The education of both the participants and researcher.	3. An interdisciplinary perspective.	3. The participants and I valued each others experiential, observational, and participatory knowledge which enhanced the study.
4. Results that are relevant to the local setting.	4. The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism.	4. Through my participation in local advocacy activities in combination with the compilation of the participants' <i>testimonios</i> , many practices guided by race were exposed and challenged (racial profiling, racialized images of (un)documented migration, and other discriminatory practices).
5. A sound and appropriate research methodology.	5. The centrality of experiential knowledge.	5. A critical race theoretical framework is implemented. Thus, the participants' experiences are at the center of this research and they are acknowledged as experts and sole authors of their <i>testimonios</i> .

(Herr & Anderson, 2005; Solórzano, 1998)

Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter has contextualized the historical racialization of immigration practices, laws, and discourses in the United States. It explored how the "illegal alien" was constructed due to the creation of new racial categories for immigrants as well out of the need of the United States to control the *authorized* Mexican laborers who were crossing the borders. It examined the racialization of the United States-Mexico border, it indexed the violence surrounding it, as well as it exposed the *racist nativist* (Pérez-Huber et. al., 2008) discourses that construct a *Mexicanized* "majoration story" (Delgado Bernal & Solóranzo, 2002) surrounding (un)documented migration. It examined various reasons that drive (un)documented migration and the paradoxical immigration practices surrounding it. Scholarly calls to eradicate the essentialized rhetoric and images surrounding (un)documented migration were discussed as well as studies were indexed to examine how to re-present more equitable and telling narratives. Now that I have detailed the purpose of this study and historicized biased discourses and immigration practices with the United States, the next chapter will discuss how I connected with the participants of this study and participated in advocacy activities for (un)documented communities in North Carolina with members of my research site which informed my positionality. I also discuss how I collected, presented, coded, and analyzed the participants' *testimonios*.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation seeks to critically explore how deficit dominant discourses surrounding (un)documented migration in the United States can be re-presented to nuance the complexities of this phenomenon and index the various realities within these communities. In chapter two, I reviewed literature that historicizes, contextualizes, and problematizes dominant discourses and immigration practices that have and continue to racialize and criminalize Communities (immigrants) of Color. This chapter discusses the design of the study as well as collaborative participatory actions prior and during the dissertation that informed my positionality and approach as a researcher-advocate. In alignment with the tenants of *critical race theory* (CRT), I position the five (un)documented participants' expert knowledge (*testimonios*) at the center of the study to unpack biased border narratives that affect their lives and inform public opinion. With the current urgency by President Obamas' 2014 executive actions to address and redress immigration laws and practices that guide and affect the lives of the estimated 11.2 million (un)documented people living in the United States, there is a present need for in depth studies that critically explore the consequences of restricting dominant discourses within a United States-Mexico border frame.

This *participatory action research* (PAR) chronicles a collaborative journey by various local stakeholders who work towards changing social injustices that affect undocumented communities in North Carolina. Five *testimonios* of non-Mexican (un)documented North Carolina residents' experiences were collected from transcribed interviews and analyzed using a CRT lens to address the following research questions:

1. How are the (un)documented participants' lives (*testimonios*) shaped by dominant immigrant discourses that are positioned within a United States-Mexico border framework? (main)

(Auxiliary 1) How do their *testimonios* engage and counter this narrowly defined dominant rhetoric?

(Auxiliary 2) How do the participants' *testimonios* reveal alternate ways of re-presenting dominant (un)documented immigration discourses?

This qualitative PAR dissertation is positioned within a CRT framework and seeks to challenge and transform dominant border discourses that are saturated in *racist nativist* (Huber-Pérez et. al, 2008) rhetoric which in turn shape the five (un)documented participants' lives in this study. My social justice and anti-racist theoretical and methodological research approaches were informed by my participatory experiences advocating for (un)documented communities in North Carolina as well as existing scholarly bodies of studies surrounding this population. It guided my choice in how I collected, presented, and analyzed the data. By approaching this PAR study with a CRT analytic lens, I chose to use *counter-stories* (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1995; Bernal & Solóranzo, 2001), which will be presented in the form of *testimonios* in this study as the primary collection method. By examining the participants' diverse *testimonios*, their multiple truths and experiences counter dominant discourses "single story" (Adichie, 2009) border-narrative that commonly frames (un)documented migration (communities) within the United States. Next, I discuss how my research approaches value the experiential and lived knowledge of the participants and positions them as the experts in this dissertation. It also recognizes that their eyewitness accounts are not just stories to

tell to give an insiders' perspective on the matter, but their *testimonios* are presented to move readers to deepen their understandings of (un)documented migration, challenge biased discourses that restrict this phenomenon within an *illegality* framework, and to take action towards social change within these communities. Based on the findings of the data, the participants' *testimonios* counter dominant border rhetoric and offers alternate ways to re-present (un)documented migration (communities). I employed co-constructed analytical and participant-observation strategies to crystallize the data. Before I discuss the methodologies that guide this study, I contextualize my research by providing essential background information about my positionality within the study and I also provide an in-depth portrait of the participants, insight into the research site advocacy work, and describe our collaborative journey towards social change in our North Carolina communities. First, I begin by clearly revealing my role as a researcher-advocate within this dissertation. Second, I discuss how I connected with the participants within this study through a referral network that I established prior to embarking on my research, which I refer to as my "two-year entry into the community and paying forward period." I explain the methods of data collection, coding, and analytical techniques that I employed as well as the ethical considerations of this study.

Researcher's Positionality

Throughout this investigation I express my commitment as an advocate for (un)documented peoples' rights and index my positionality as a researcher who works in solidarity with participants in their fight for social justice and a comprehensive immigration process that leads to a pathway for citizenship. Thus, I worked alongside undocumented communities and with advocacy groups to expose and work towards

redressing inequities that affect this population. For example, alongside members of my research site I participated in campaigns that called for the eradication of stigmatizing language used to refer to undocumented communities in the local media. We hosted two community listening sessions that fostered dialogues between undocumented communities and local city council members to provide spaces where they could openly discuss ways to address the needs of all of the members of the city. Some undocumented members expressed their concerns about racial profiling by police officials and the inability for parents to volunteer in their children's classrooms due to mandated background checks that require a social security number.

I do not make false truth claims that this study is politically neutral or completely objective in scope. The goal of this dissertation is to contribute to social change. Analogous to critical scholars Denzin and Lincoln (2000), I understand that absolute objectivity in research is not realistic because researchers are molded and shaped by their histories, cultures, religious beliefs, socio-economic, and political environments. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) best reflect my worldview by explaining that "any gaze is always filtered through the lens of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations situated in the worlds of-and between-the observer and the observed" (2000, p. 19). Accordingly I arrived at my research context and approached my study with two years of experiences advocating for (un)documented rights in North Carolina. I detail my participatory advocacy contributions in the subsequent pages under the section entitled "Two Year Entry into the Community and Paying Forward Period." I struggled with the idea of separating my social justice commitments from my research obligations to be objective as a doctoral

student. I grappled with the idea of having to be neutral throughout my dissertation process, which in retrospect I realize mentally crippled me from embarking on the research during the initial time period that I proposed. It was not until I discovered existing scholarly studies that implemented the type of research design and tools that aligned with my epistemological stance and ethical obligation to conduct social justice research that I could embark upon this process. Accordingly, the methodologies, ontologies, as well as the theoretical analytic lens within this dissertation have been informed by my research contexts as well as from my own understanding, observations of the participants, and as a result of my advocacy work at the research site.

I have a somewhat intimate understanding of the lived experiences of the participants in this study because I have family members through marriage and friends who are (have been) (un)documented in the country. I do not claim to 'know' the realities that this immigration status entails, but as a result of my kin-friend relationships, I am familiar with inequitable practices that prevent many people outside of the country from ever obtaining a visa to come to the United States. I am also knowledgeable of the intricate process of adjusting ones status within the country as well as the daily obstacles of staying under the radar. My hybrid identity as a researcher-advocate solidifies my position throughout this research as an insider/outsider. While I understand that my privilege as a United States citizen may have unintentionally created a power dynamic between some of the participants and I initially, I am confident that they recognized my position as a researcher-advocate and understood my desire for this academic dissertation to serve a larger humanistic purpose.

To ensure validity, the five participants were encouraged to tell their own stories from their own lived experiences. While I had open-ended questions to guide our conversations, I made them aware that their experiences would guide the study. My hybrid identity also allowed me to use my privilege as a researcher to position the participants' *testimonios* at the center of this study where their voices, lived experiences, and knowledge can be used in the academy while also continuing to advocate for social justice in North Carolina within my local community. While I am the researcher and writer of this dissertation, in alignment with the core principles of *critical race theory*, I recognize the participants as the authors, experts, and authorities of their own lived realities. I am humbled that they were willing to share their *testimonios* with me as well as I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to learn from and work with members of my research site who work daily in the trenches fighting for human rights. During my two year "entry into the community and paying forward period," I realized the urgency of this action research after witnessing personally and learning about the 315,943 ordered removals and returns by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in 2014 alone (United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2014).

Two-Year Entry into the Community and Paying Forward Period

Prior to embarking on my research, my original plan of a six-month service commitment with the *Immigrant Solidarity Committee* (ISC), a local group who advocates for undocumented immigrants in North Carolina, was unexpectedly extended to two years (January 2012-January 2014) due to several factors. First, I did not want to enter into my research site as an investigator or be thought of as an expert, but rather I wanted to be considered an advocate and apprentice who was ready to learn and

contribute. My goal was to be accepted as an ally. Second, after attending multiple ISC committee meetings, I became more informed about national and local (North Carolina) immigration policies that affect undocumented people and their families. Due to the complexity of the laws and practices, I realized that I needed to become more knowledgeable about United States intricate immigration policies and operational procedures before I delved into collecting any data. Thus, I began to investigate about the history of (un)documented immigration in this country. I collected statistical data on undocumented populations nationally and locally, and I attended workshops where other committee members would present on current immigration issues such as detention data and abuse reports of undocumented people held in immigration detention facilities nationwide.

Due to my increased awareness following historical investigations and as a member of ISC, I became actively involved in advocacy projects for undocumented people locally through this committee. For instance, I served food to a group of undocumented Christian evangelists who had to return to North Carolina from Texas to attend a deportation hearing because they were in a church van (the driver was a United States citizen) that was in route to a religious retreat, but they were followed, stopped, and charged by border control agents out of their jurisdiction. I wrote letters and signed petitions to stop proposed anti-immigrant legislature and abusive practices towards undocumented migrants. I also was the spokesperson at a local televised press release that expressed ISC's reaction to the Supreme Court's split ruling in 2011 on Arizona's *Senate Bill 1070* proposition, which was one of the strictest anti-undocumented immigration measures in recent United States history. It was

controversial because it proposed to allow local police authorities to request legal documents from anyone who *appeared* to be undocumented in the country, which many felt legalized racial profiling.

I also helped weed an immigrant community garden where its members grew crops and shared their harvest. I attended and participated in marches, rallies, and vigils that advocated for undocumented communities' rights. At one of the ISC meetings we supported a local group of undocumented youth who presented their testimonials and discussed their advocacy campaigns to get local businesses and news media groups to drop the "I-word" (*illegal*) and replace it with *undocumented*. I participated in a private meeting between North Carolina Senator Hagan's Community Relations' Assistant and ISC, which was arranged to ask for the senator to support a comprehensive immigration reform that was voted on in the senate in July 2013 and is now being reviewed by the House of Representatives.

In the meeting with Senator's Hagan's representative, I was able to voice my concerns about four issues that I believe should be considered in the bill as a result of my historical investigation of the United States immigration system and participatory observation role with ISC. First, I expressed my opinion about inequitable visa granting practices by the U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) which tends to favor the wealthy and seasonal agricultural farmers. For example, I explained that if more United States visas were available, affordable, and accessible to applicants who do not have a lump sum of money in the bank, the number of undocumented people entering the country without proper authorization or those overstaying their visas would likely decrease because visa equity would be increased which would probably make

them feel like they have a chance of entering the country legally.² Although many United States citizens can easily travel and obtain visas to go abroad, they often do not understand that visas to come to this country are capped and that certain internationals are unable to qualify for them due to selective practices and fixed criteria.

Second, I mentioned the unnecessary costs (billions of dollars) used to militarize the United States borders when approximately 40% of undocumented communities are made up of visa *over-stayers*. Thirdly, I shared that the accomplishments and need for immigrants in the United States in the labor force and academic innovation are rarely recognized or addressed in the proposed bill. In fact, Anderson (2013) questions why the contributions of international students to United States graduate school programs are not discussed in the current immigration debate. For example, the National Foundation for American Policy reported that they approximately make-up “70% of full-time graduate students (Master’s and Ph.D.’s) in electrical engineering, 63% in computer science, 60% in industrial engineering, and more than 50% in economics, chemical engineering, materials engineering, and mechanical engineering are international students” (Anderson, p.1, 2013). These students are advancing technical fields, which allow the United States to be more knowledgeable due to their research scholarship, which in turn permits the country to become forerunners in these areas globally. Lastly, I voiced the need to create a comprehensive pathway to citizenship for all non-criminal undocumented persons residing in the country, not just selective proposals for some (students, military). Table 3 below outlines some of the “paying forward” activities that I participated in over a two-year period.

² This quote is from my speech that I prepared before the meeting, which I recorded in my research journal.

Table 3

Entry into the Community and Paying Forward Period Log

Activities	Details	People and Context	Amount/Time
1-Knowledge-building workshops and planning activities with ISC.	I attended 24 ISC meetings.	6-15 ISC members @ American Friends Meeting House.	15 separate meetings, 1.5 hour each over 24 months.
2-I served as the spokesperson for ISC during a press release on our reaction to the Supreme Courts decision on Arizona's proposed Senate Bill 1070.	Local advocates responded to community reactions on the Supreme Courts' decision on Arizona's SB1070 proposed piece of legislature.	15-20 immigrant advocates from various organizations @ local Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) office.	1-hour press release, 4 immigrant advocacy groups gave speeches.
3-I served food during a pre-court luncheon sponsored by ISC for a church group of undocumented persons with the exception of the driver, who were stopped and charged in North Carolina on their way back to Texas from a religious retreat.	This group was racially profiled and followed by border control from Texas to North Carolina due to their suspected (un)documented immigration statuses. They had to come to North Carolina for a hearing because they were arrested in the state.	25 undocumented church members of all ages after their court hearing, 1 U. S. citizen driver, and 5 ISC volunteers from the church.	1 hour informal luncheon and conversations in addition to a 30 minute formal talk by a bilingual voluntary legal aid representative in charge of the case. Total 1.5 hours.
4-I attended and delivered a speech at a private meeting between ISC members and a representative from North Carolina Senator Hagan's office requesting her help in advocating for immigrant inclusion and reform that leads to a pathway to citizenship for (un)documented people.	Four members of ISC discussed our reasons why she should support certain pro-immigrant pieces of legislature.	4 members of ISC and 1 representative from Senator Hagan's Office.	1.5 hours.

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>People and Context</u>	<u>Amount/Time</u>
I attended an organized local rally and two-mile walk to advocate for undocumented people's rights.	We were advocating for local officials to take deferred action when arresting (un)documented people for non-criminal acts.	150 (un)documented immigrants and advocates. Downtown to a local park.	45-minute walk and 1 hour 15 minute speeches by immigrant advocacy groups and testimonies from undocumented individuals. 2 hours total.

During this two-year period, ISC allowed me to actively engage diverse groups of stakeholders. Following more than 24 months of participatory activities with ISC, I gained a better idea of how to design my dissertation study as well as how I could contribute to the body of literature that advocates for more contextualized immigrant discourses. I wanted to stay true to my real passion, which is to become an agent of change. I intentionally approached this study as PAR because I sought not only to critique deficit discourses surrounding undocumented migration (communities), but my aim was to be participatory in combating them as well. My overarching goal was to work in solidarity with undocumented people in my own context to transform social inequities and injustices that affect my local communities. In other words, I did not only want to make critiques without working towards redressing biased discourses, understandings, and practices.

After reevaluating my conceptual goals for this study and my desire to conduct and contribute to social justice research, I was able to make an informed choice about where and with whom I would conduct my research as well as how I would collect, present, and analyze my data.

Ethical Considerations

Before I embarked upon my *participatory action research* (PAR), I received permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Indiana University of Pennsylvania to conduct this study in September 2014. This investigation was conducted within nine months (September 2014-May 2015) due to my prior two-year (January 2012-January 2014) engagement and commitment to learn more about issues that affect the everyday lives of undocumented people. During this “entry into the community and paying forward period,” I was able to gain access into prospective participants’ communities as well as earn their trusts, and ultimately give back by participating in activities at a site that advocates for and works towards social change for undocumented people locally.

I did not collect data for this study during that time. In fact this two-year “entry into the community and paying forward period,” was essential to embarking on my research for the following reasons. First, PAR studies are community-based, thus I had to gain entrance into my prospective participants’ lives and earn their trust. I also knew that I was going to use *purposeful sampling* to “intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2011, p. 214), thus established trust was essential. Second, I wanted to understand through active participation about the concerns and realities of undocumented life by witnessing various lived experiences and by learning through *situated-contextual- knowledge* that has often been marginalized in dominant immigrant discourses. Third, I wanted to approach this study as social justice research, which would allow me to work with advocates and participants’ towards making our North Carolina community a more equitable place for

all of its residents. Thus, I needed to understand the obstacles that these communities faced establish prior to my study by volunteering for a significant amount of time.

Once I embarked upon my investigation (September 2014), the research site director invited prospective adults to participate in my dissertation research as well as she asked committee members to announce this opportunity to people who they knew who met the criteria of the study. Thus, this participation was voluntary since invitations were not made by me directly, which prevented perspective participants' from feeling coerced or obligated to participate. I obtained signed consent forms (see appendix A) from the five participants as well as verbal consent at the time of the interview. All interviews (*testimonios*) occurred on a voluntary basis and all participants were aware of their option to withdraw from the study at any time. They all were required to choose pseudonyms and are presented in this study under those chosen names. During my research I kept my digital recorder, research journal, as well as my data files on flash drives locked up within a personal file cabinet. I also only used my personal password-protected laptop to type, transcribe, and analyze the data. Due to the fact that three of the participants are undocumented and do not have any type of protective status, which means that they are at potential risk for deportation if their immigration statuses are revealed, I only met with them once and specifically instructed them not to reveal any information that would index how I could contact them in the future. I did not want to do anything to put them at risk.

Research Site

As I mentioned earlier, I chose to conduct this qualitative PAR study in North Carolina where I reside for three reasons. First, PAR calls for collaborative local studies

that are informed by co-constructed knowledge between the researcher and other local members who are invested in contributing to the community at large. Second, in 2012 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) ranked North Carolina number eight for cities where the most unauthorized immigrants currently reside in the United States (Bruno, 2014, p. 4). While undocumented people only make up approximately three percent of the North Carolina population, it is considered to be one of the top ten destination cities for this population. Lastly due to an established relationship with the *Immigrant Solidarity Committee* (ISC) during my "entry into the community and paying forward period," I was familiar with the members and had established an active presence with other advocates locally. More importantly, this group was very active in the (un)documented immigrant community and very knowledgeable about immigration laws, practices, and in assisting combat local social injustices.

In September 2014, I provided ISC with a copy of my two page overview of my study and asked permission to use the committee as a network to observe, contribute, conduct my research, and implement a *purposeful sampling* method, which is a referral system that is commonly used to get access to hard-to-reach populations. Members of the committee agreed to help me connect with future participants and approved the use of this platform to conduct my preliminary research and collect future *testimonios*. I also detailed the purpose of my study to the group and indicated that I wanted to actively participate within the organization to enhance my knowledge and to give back to the committee and my own community. I vowed not to compromise the integrity of the committee or the identities of prospective participants. I explained that the Institutional Research Board at Indiana University of Pennsylvania had approved it and that I would

obtain informed consent (see appendix B for informed consent form) forms from all participants before I conducted any interviews. I also assured them that I would not request any identifying information due to their undocumented status in the country.

The *Immigrant Solidarity Committee* (ISC) defines itself in their mission on the North Carolina afsc.org website as:

a coalition of representatives of organizations, faith-committees, and committed individuals who seek to make our city and state a more welcoming place for immigrants. We serve as an affirming presence to immigrants and counter the waves of anti-immigrant sentiment by working together for just and humane immigration policy in North Carolina and in our nation.

I particularly chose this committee to use as a research site and referral system due to its established commitment and access to local undocumented communities as well as the fact of the diversity of its members, which engages a wide range of conversations and ideas. For example, the members vary in gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, profession, as well as juridical and socio-economic status. Members include City Council officials, college professors, freelance writers, retired bankers, lawyers, students, community advocate leaders, horticulturalists, religious leaders, and skilled workers. Thus, various perspectives are shared and implemented to support the immigrant community. The meetings are held at a Society of Friends (Quaker) establishment. ISC is a non-denominational committee with its own mission, but it shares some of the same goals with *American Friends Service Committee* (AFSC) such as “respect for human life and transforming social relations and systems” (afsc.org). In

fact, the ISC committee convener is the Program Director of *AFSC-NC* and travels throughout North Carolina to advocate for undocumented immigrant rights.

Connecting with the Participants

As mentioned above, in an effort to show the multi-ethnic make-up that I argue is minimally presented in dominant immigrant discourses, *purposeful sampling* strategies to identify non-Mexican (un)documented participants was implemented. Creswell (2011) explains that *purposeful sampling* is used to “intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the essential phenomenon” (p. 214). I would like to clarify that I was not seeking a sample that is representative of (un)documented migration (communities) in the United States, but rather I sought to explore multiple lived experiences where the participants serve as the experts who can accurately portray the realities and complexities of this phenomenon. Knowing that my research site was made up of individuals who advocate for undocumented people locally and whose mission is based on equality and human rights, this network invited and put me into contact with participants who met the research criteria. Accordingly members of ISC and some participants assisted me in identifying potential participants due to their already established relationship with the prospective individuals. In fact, the director of ISC made several announcements about my study at our bi-monthly meetings and informed prospective participants where they could voluntarily meet with me. Times and locations of where I would be conducting interviews over a two month period were announced and distributed.

Prospective participants had to meet three criteria: First they had to be born in another country besides Mexico. Second, they had to be adults over the age of 21 who

are (un)documented or have lived (un)documented within the United States for a minimum of five years. According to the January 2012 DHS report, “it estimated that the unauthorized population of 11.4 consisted of 10.3 million adults and 1.1 million children under age 18. Among the adults, 5.5 million were men and 4.8 million were women” (Bruno, 2014, p. 4). Thus, I specifically sought to hear from the largest age group. Third, they had to be willing to meet with me for a minimum of three hours and have their experiences published under a pseudonym in my research. Voluntary participants were made aware of the protocol both verbally and in writing. It was also explained that during the three-hour period they would participate in a recorded interview.

I anticipated that the participants would be from Spanish-speaking countries since ISC mostly works with groups who advocate for Latino immigrants. However, since ISC has established connections throughout North Carolina, I was able to connect with a more diverse group than I expected through referrals from other immigrant advocacy organizations. Thus, I interviewed the first five people who volunteered. Accordingly, a total of five non-Mexican (un)documented people residing in North Carolina were interviewed for this study to provide a more in depth historicized and contextualized understanding of their experiences. The participants who volunteered unintentionally diversified my original study more than I anticipated. While two of the participants, Cesaría and Pedro, have adjusted their immigration statuses, they share the experience of being undocumented in this country. Pedro lived undocumented for fourteen years and Cesaría for seven. In fact, mixed status families are common within many (un)documented communities and some (un)documented people are eligible to

adjust their statuses. The other three participants, Fatima, Paris, and Sunil continue to live undocumented.

Introduction to Participants

The central focus of this study as aligned with *critical race theory*, are the five participants' *counter-narratives* which are presented in the form of *testimonio*. The participants are adults who are currently undocumented or who have lived undocumented in the United States for at least seven years. Before presenting their *testimonios*, it is important to briefly contextualize their experiences and realities. The five participants come from different countries and represent a variety of linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. The reality is that undocumented people are diverse and their households often include members who are of mixed-statuses as well. These statuses are not static, but can be adjusted voluntarily or involuntarily through marriage, deportation orders, divorce, or expired government documents (temporary protective status, asylum petitions denied, expired visas etc.).

As mentioned earlier, I was connected with the participants through a *purposeful sampling* referral system by members of my research site. They represent a diverse group of people who currently live or have lived undocumented in the country for at least seven years. They were born in El Salvador, Colombia, India, Morocco, and an Island off the coast of Africa. As a qualitative research study, I purposely use a small sample in an effort to offer a more intimate and detailed critical analysis. Table 4 on the following page indexes more telling information about each participant. The images beside their names represent either the type of work they perform, a hobby, or a place they want to visit. I chose these visual representations because that is what they

expressed that they were passionate about or in Paris' case it is a place where she longs to visit. They introduce themselves in detail in chapter four through their own *testimonios*.

Table 4

Summary of the Participants' Demographics

<u>Chosen Pseudonym</u>	<u>Gender & Age</u>	<u>Birth Country</u>	<u>Age & Mode of Arrival</u>	<u>Number of years (un)documented in the U.S.</u>	<u>Identity & Cultural Factors</u>
<p><u>PEDRO</u></p> 	<p>Male 46 years old.</p>	<p>-El Salvador</p>	<p>-Arrived at 19 years old. -Crossed 3 borders: Guatemala, Mexico, and the U.S.</p>	<p>-Undocumented for 14 years -U. S. resident for 13 years (adjusted status through marriage).</p>	<p>-Mixed status family. -Catholic -Speaks Spanish and English. -Has a construction company.</p>
<p><u>PARIS</u></p> 	<p>Female 52 years old</p>	<p>-Colombia</p>	<p>- Arrived by plane at 38 and overstayed her tourist visa.</p>	<p>- Undocumented Since 1999</p>	<p>-Mixed family legal status. -Catholic -Speaks Spanish and English -Housekeeper</p>
<p><u>SUNIL</u></p> 	<p>-Male 37 years old</p>	<p>-India</p>	<p>- Arrived as a cruise ship worker and disembarked.</p>	<p>Undocumented Since 2003</p>	<p>-Hindu -Speaks Tamil & English -Chef</p>
<p><u>FATIMA</u></p> 	<p>-Female 52 years old</p>	<p>-Morocco</p>	<p>- Arrived by plane at 39 years old and overstayed her tourist visa.</p>	<p>Undocumented Since 2001</p>	<p>-Mixed family legal status -Muslim -Speaks Arabic, Berber, French, and English -Seamstress</p>
<p><u>CESARIA</u></p> 	<p>-Female 37 years Old</p>	<p>-An unnamed Island off the coast of Africa</p>	<p>- Arrived by plane and overstayed her tourist visa.</p>	<p>-Undocumented for 7 years. -U. S. resident for 17 years (adjusted her status by marrying a-U.S. citizen)</p>	<p>-Catholic -Speaks a creolized, Portuguese, Spanish, English. -Educator</p>

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

This study followed a qualitative PAR methodology, which allowed the participants and I to work together during data collection so that I could better understand and contextualize their realities. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) explain that qualitative research examines “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring them” (p.3). By using a qualitative design in combination with *critical race theory* endorsed methods, I provide a contextualized and historicized understanding of the participants social worlds and offer that “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) which many statistical studies do not capture, while simultaneously challenging the power structures that create and maintain the social injustices in which they endure.

Many critical scholars recognize the rigid and exclusionary nature of many conventional research paradigms that dictate whose theories, knowledge, and methodologies are valued as legitimate in the academy, and in turn are having to validate less commonly accepted ways of presenting inquiry and truth claims in qualitative studies. For example, Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith (2008) published the *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Handbook of Methodologies*, which is a collection of non-traditional methodologies and epistemologies that value diverse data collection processes and critical analytical approaches to research. Analogous to these academicians, I recognize that some research practices are not always appropriate or complimentary to studies that include populations whose culture and context are understood and represented distinctively.

Due to the political status of the participants and my personal desire to contribute to social justice research, this handbook was essential in guiding the design of my study. After familiarizing myself with it, I realized that particular methodologies would accurately allow me to conduct, conceptualize, and represent my research and participants' narratives in an equitable yet scholarly manner. With these considerations, a PAR approach within a CRT analytical framework was employed, which breaks down the common hierarchal research relationship where the researcher is often constructed as having authority over the experiences of the participants. Instead the participants serve as the experts in this study and their lived knowledge are presented to counter dominant racialized discourses that tend to only offer a partial narrative that commonly privileges their understandings not those who are affected by the phenomenon. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) advocates for indigenous methodologies that value participants' knowledge and encourage the researcher to work "with, alongside, and for communities" (p.5) instead of what she refers to as conducting "research through imperial eyes" or "colonizing knowledges" (p. v) where the researcher is more concerned with the academy than with the community participants. Accordingly, the overarching approach to this study is centered on how the experiences and realities of the participants as well as my participatory research in alliance with the *Immigrant Solidarity Committee* (ISC) can be used to expose and work towards changing biased discourses, understandings, and treatment of undocumented people.

In alignment with *critical race theory* (CRT), the participants' experiences guide this study and challenge dominant biased constructions of undocumented communities. Their counter-stories are presented as *testimonios*. Daniel Solóranzo and Tara J. Yosso

(2002) explicitly outline the power of *counter-narratives*, which are guided by CRT principles:

- (a) They can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice;
- (b) They can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems;
- (c) They can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position;
- (d) They can teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone. (Solóranzo, & Yosso, 2002, p. 36)

Solóranzo and Yosso (2002) agree that CRT identifies the origin of the problem and also exposes the victims of the injustices. By implementing what they call a *critical race methodology of counter-storytelling* as an analytical framework for education research, marginalized voices are able to leave the periphery and unite with others who share similar experiences, which in turn empowers them to become agents of change who work towards transforming their situations. This study adheres to their suggestions within this framework and uses the *testimonios* of the five participants “to talk back to” racialized discourses surrounding undocumented communities. Table 5 on the following page demonstrates how CRT counter-narratives inform the research questions of this study.

Table 5

Research Questions & CRT Counter-Narratives Crosswalk

<u>Research Question (RQ)</u>	<u>How Counter-Narratives (<i>testimonios</i>) are used to Address each RQ</u>
<p><u>Overarching RQ</u></p> <p>How are the (un)documented participants' lives (<i>testimonios</i>) shaped by dominant immigrant discourses that are positioned within a U.S.-Mexico border framework?</p>	<p>By using counter-narratives in the form of <i>testimonios</i> as the primary collection method, the participants' diverse lived knowledge and experiences of living (un)documented in the U. S allows them to serve as expert (credible) witnesses who offer first-hand accounts of how dominant deficit discourses saturated in <i>racist nativist</i> rhetoric shape their lives, thus compelling readers to 'see,' understand, and be moved to take action to change these biased framings, which align with the goals of critical race <i>counter-stories</i> (Bernal & Solóranzo, 2001).</p>
<p><u>Auxiliary Question A</u></p> <p>How do their <i>testimonios</i> engage and counter this narrowly defined dominant rhetoric?</p>	<p>The participants' counter-narratives expose and oppose dominant racist nativist discourses that tend to restrict immigrant narratives within a border frame, which tends to racialize and criminalize their identities. Their <i>testimonios</i> reveal how race, gender, and class intersect with their immigration status. Thus, this methodology "challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts and theories used to explain the experiences of people of color" (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2002).</p>
<p><u>Auxiliary Question B</u></p> <p>How do their <i>testimonios</i> reveal alternate ways of re-presenting dominant (un)documented immigration discourses?</p>	<p>The non-Mexican participants' <i>testimonios</i> reveal potential to re-present the dominant immigrant narrative by offering diverse experiences that are positioned within non-deficit frameworks and use terminology which index their shared humanity, their contributions to the country, and aspirational goals of becoming full-fledge citizens which offers a transformative solution to these lived realities.</p>

Rationale for Choice of Methods

Atkinson and Delamont (2006) criticize researchers for misusing narrative as data in that they just use it to show and perform, like a dog and pony show, while failing to promote social action. Consequently, this study advocates for the use of *testimonio*, a first-person emancipatory political narrative, as an epistemology and methodology.

Second, it assesses the validity (argument) of *testimonio* as a research method to promote social change. Thirdly, it does not confine participants to imperialistic epistemologies that often frame Western cultures and ways of knowing as more legitimate. Participants in this PAR study are able to express social injustices that they endure in a familiar manner (*testimoniando* / testifying), while working in collaboration with the researcher (who has no hierarchal agenda and who values their knowledge) to create steps to take social action. Thus, according to Cho and Trent (2006), the argument for *testimonio* as a method falls under what they identify as a *transformational validity paradigm* in qualitative research. Cho and Trent (2006) explain in their article *Validity in Qualitative Research Revisited* that two different types of validity questions have developed recently in qualitative research: *Transactional* validity and *transformative validity*. This dissertation follows the latter. Cho and Trent (2006) explain that:

we define transformational validity in qualitative research as progressive, emancipatory process leading toward social change that is to be achieved by the research endeavor itself. Such a process in qualitative research, as a critical element in changing the existing social condition of the researched, involves a deeper, self-reflective, empathetic understanding of the researcher while working with the researcher. (p. 321-322)

This investigation moves beyond transactional validity questions in hopes to contribute to scholarly and local changes by implementing an applied theory process (transformational validity) that transforms current social injustices. Accordingly, this PAR study is grounded in collaborative strategies to address social inequities surrounding

(un)documented people by empowering both the participants and the researcher to work towards achieving results that have validated transformative qualities.

I would like to clarify that it is not my intention as the compiler of these *testimonios* to speak for or romanticize the lived experiences of the five participants, but the goal of this research is to examine less commonly presented accounts that counter and call to change biased dominant discourses surrounding (un)documented realities. Social action is not only achieved by changing biased images and narratives, but by simultaneously deconstructing some western institutional models for conducting research that continue to create *apartheid knowledge* (Delgado-Bernal & Villapando, 2002) where one groups knowledge is often valued over the other (researcher/ participants). Thus, this study purposefully implements indigenous theoretical frameworks, epistemologies, and methods that advocate for the participants. This dissertation values their ways of knowing and uses practices that are familiar to them which have real life changing potential within and outside of the academy.

Testimonios of five adult non-Mexican (un)documented people were collected because there appears to be a gap in representing the diversity of experiences within these communities. I argue that narratives of adult non-Mexicans as well as non-Latinos tend to be less visible in the media and within scholarship due to the current dominant border framing that often indexes Mexicans as the only undocumented migrants entering the country without authorization. While there is a large body of emerging scholarship surrounding (un)documented students (Solóranzo & Villapando, 2005; Malagón, Sanchez, & Solórazno, 2006; Pérez-Huber, 2009; Negrón-Gonzalez 2009, 2013; Aguilar-Valdez, 2013) who were brought to the country as minors by their

parents; I argue that these discourses tend to be more sympathetic than those surrounding adult migrants because they did not have any control over their parents decisions. As discussed in chapter two, the historical racialization of United States citizenship and *apartheid knowledge* (Delgado-Bernal & Villapando, 2002) within the academy continues to produce partial data by privileging biased discourses that fail to address the complexities of the (un)documented migration phenomenon and the diversity within these communities which in turn perpetuates essentialized understandings.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argue that qualitative research in North America has experienced at least eight historical moments. It is now in the stage of what they call a “fractured future (2005-present).” They explain that this moment “confronts the methodological backlash associated with the evidenced-based social movement...the eight moment asks that the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.3). Qualitative researchers like Uwe Flick (2002) are acknowledging that objective inquiry is no longer the aim because it is unattainable, but encourages investigators to replace the goal of validation with triangulation, while including multiple perspectives and empirical materials in a study to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, a strategy that maintains academic rigor (p.226-229). The goal of this dissertation is to not only add to the conversation about how (un)documented migrants are framed within deficit discourses and how their lives are shaped by this biased rhetoric, but its main focus is to work towards transforming social injustices surrounding these communities in North Carolina and

nuancing how the migration phenomenon can be re-presented to eradicate the current *Mexicanized* narrative that unfairly targets some while disregarding others.

Data Collection Methods and Details

I collected and analyzed three types of data to guide my study. First I kept a journal with field notes and reflections from my nine-month (September 2014-May 2015) participatory action research with the *Immigrant Solidarity Committee* (ISC). Second, I conducted open-ended interviews with the five participants, which I transcribed and composed into *testimonios* (see appendix A for interview questions). I digitally recorded one-on-one interviews with all of the participants, but I only conducted a second follow-up interview with Pedro and Cesaría who have adjusted their undocumented immigration statuses. The interviews took place in informal settings and typically lasted between three to four hours and were fully transcribed by me using the computer software *Audacity*.

Voluntary Invitation Protocol

Due to the need to not expose (un)documented statuses, I connected with the voluntary participants through a *purposeful sampling* process where prospective participants were provided with dates, times, and a list of public places (park on Central Avenue between 2-5pm) where I would be conducting the interviews during a two month period (September-October 2014), so that they could show up without having to contact me, which also prevented me from being knowledgeable of their whereabouts. I also was available at my research site where potential participants could voluntarily come in and share their lived experiences with me in a private room. I provided specific instructions on the flyers that the ISC Director announced and distributed. Prospective

(un)documented participants were informed both verbally and in writing that they could not provide me with any identifying information (their names, telephone numbers, addresses, or names of companies where they have been or are currently employed). All participants were required to choose pseudonyms as well.

First Interview Protocol

I explained the abovementioned requirements at the beginning of the interviews onsite verbally before participants signed informed consent forms, which I also reviewed with them. All participants were notified of their option not to continue with the interview and their ability to leave any time they felt uncomfortable or if they changed their minds about participating in this research (Ritchie & Lewis, 2007). I would like to note that to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, all files were stored in a secure place with key access only during the data collection, transcription, and analytical process. As I mentioned earlier, all five participants voluntarily signed informed consent forms (see appendix A) approved by the IRB committee at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. During the interviews, I used prepared open-ended questions (see appendix B) that inquired about participant background information, passage into the country, experiences living undocumented within the country, and questions that elicited responses related to the study's research questions. I would like to note that I did not confine the interviews to these questions because I did not want to restrict them from sharing other important information that might be relevant to my study. In fact, I learned that while the prepared questions guided the interview, our conversations led to even more revealing information.

Following each interview that generally lasted about one to one and a half hours, the participants and I listened to the recorded interviews together after for about the same amount of time. Before listening to the recordings as part of the *member-checking* (Creswell, 2009) process, they were instructed to notify me if they wanted to clarify or amend any of their responses. I also stopped the recorder to seek clarification and/or make amendments and typed the notes on a password-protected laptop immediately. Lastly, after member-checking, I specifically asked them the following questions to ensure transparency, validity, and to understand what they wanted readers to take from their *testimonios*. I asked:

1. Was the information recorded accurately from your *testimonio*?
2. What would you add to your story that was not covered in my notes?
3. What are the most important points that you want readers to know and understand?

I was only able to member-check three participants (Fatima, Sunil, & Paris) *tesimonios* immediately following their interviews due to their undocumented statuses in the country. In aligning with my ethical considerations, I maintained a commitment to protect participants' undocumented identities by not requesting any of their contact information (their real names, addresses, employers names, telephone numbers, e-mail or social media accounts) which would prevent me from having to disclose anything that could indicate their whereabouts or that could potentially put them at risk of deportation if I was ever questioned by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials. Accordingly, Sunil, Fatima, and Paris only had one opportunity to listen, amend, analyze, and approve their recorded interviews on site. However, I was able to

reference the recorded and transcribed interviews, which increased the integrity of the data.

Second Interview Protocol

I was able to meet with two participants, Pedro & Cesaría, for a second time separately to show them a copy of the *testimonios* that I transcribed and composed from their interviews. They both previously lived undocumented in the country and have adjusted their statuses through amnesty and marriage to United States' citizens. Pedro is currently a United States resident and Cesaría is a citizen, so they agreed to meet with me a second time to review their *testimonios* and help me identify themes that emerged from their narratives. During this time we met for approximately two hours each. We re-arranged some parts of their composed *testimonios* to reflect the narrative style and order that they felt reflected their personalities and that they felt made them more engaging to readers. We discussed in detail what they really wanted to emphasize in their *testimonios* and I asked them to give me words and themes that represent their undocumented experiences. Table 6 below details when, where, and for how long I met with each participant.

Table 6

Data Collection Methods and Details

Method	Details	People and Context	Amount/Time
Recorded Individual Interviews	First one-on-one interviews with two adjusted status participants. I used prepared open-ended questions.	I met in two informal settings with Pedro and Cesaria who have lived in the country undocumented from 7-14 years, but have adjusted their statuses and are now U. S. residents or citizens.	Each interview lasted for approximately 3 hours. (Approximately 6 hours total).

<p>Reflective & Analytical Interviews</p>	<p><u>Second</u> one-on-one interviews with two adjusted status participants. We reviewed, amended and analyzed their composed <i>testimonios</i> from our first interview collectively.</p>	<p>I met in two informal settings with Pedro and Cesaria who have lived in the country undocumented from 7-14 years but have adjusted their statuses and are now U. S. residents / citizens.</p>	<p>Each individual interview lasted approximately 2 hours each. (Approximately 4 hours total).</p>
<p>Individual Interviews</p>	<p><u>Only</u> one-on-one interview and member checking with 3 undocumented participants. I used prepared open-ended questions.</p>	<p>Individual interviews with Fatima, Sunil, and Paris @ various informal settings. We reviewed, amended and analyzed their composed <i>testimonios</i> from our first interview.</p>	<p>Each interview lasted for approximately 3 hours. (Approximately 9 hours total).</p>

Transcription Process

Following the first five digitally recorded interviews with the participants, I employed *denaturalization transcription* which Oliver, Serovich, and Mason (2005) recommend for conducting critical discourse analysis. It allows the transcriber to focus on the meanings and perceptions created and shared during conversations (p. 1277). The transcription process lasted approximately five weeks (November-December 2014). I manually transcribed the interviews using the *Audacity* computer software. I listened to the recordings several times and cross-referenced my transcriptions with the recordings and member checking notes (see appendix c) again to ensure validity. I hold a Master degree in Spanish, so I performed minor translations from Spanish to English for one participants' (Pedro) *testimonios* who uses both English and Spanish occasionally. I used the transcribed interviews to compile the five *testimonios* that are presented in chapter four and analyzed by emergent themes in chapter five.

The History and Purpose of *Testimonio*

In the previous section I explained that the primary data collection method for this study is *testimonio*, which is most commonly characterized by three different elements. Nance (2006) describes them as the tripartite combination of “a first-person narrative of injustice, an insistence that the subject’s experience is representative of a larger class, and intent to work toward a more just future” (p. 2). Latin American scholars trace this genre back to anthropologist Miguel Barnett’s presentation of Esteban Montejo’s (1968) *Biografía de un Cimarrón* (Biography of a Runaway Slave). Barnett’s choice to exclude himself as the interviewer and give the testimony of Esteban in a first-person voice as well tell the story of someone who represents a marginalized population, a Afro-Cuban maroon (escaped slave who lived in hidden independent communities), created a style that would continue to be used for *testimoniando* (testifying). While a *testimonio* is generally told by one individual, it commonly represents collective experiences and struggles of the individuals’ community at large.

Testimonio is the lived experiences of the interviewee, but both the interviewer and the interviewee co-edit the narrative so that it accurately and clearly represents the individual (community’s) truths. It is important to recognize that *testimonios* were originally oral narratives, which are now commonly written, except for instances when testifiers have limited literacy proficiencies. For more examples of *testimonios*, read Carolina Maria de Jesus’ (1961) *Quarto de Espejo* (Child of the Dark) which details her experiences as a black woman living in the poorest *favela* in Brazil or Rigoberta Menchu’s (1984) *I, Rigoberta Menchu: an Indian Woman in Guatemala* who exposes the political oppression of indigenous people in her country. For more discussion on the

process and role of this genre, see John Beverley's *Subalternity and Representation* (1999) and *The Politics of Truth* (2004).

Testimonial narratives are widely used throughout the world to share personal accounts of important experiences and events with others. For example, currently in Syria media blackouts are being enforced by the government and the only legitimate sources of information are personal testimonies that are found on social media sites. Thus, these *emergency narratives* are sometimes our only lenses into worldwide crises. Although the technical features may differ from culture to culture, similar narrative forms include: the North American abolition narratives, the Jewish Holocaust narratives, and the Arabic شهادة عيان, to name a few. This study will demonstrate the usefulness and power of the testimonial genre that provides a space for subaltern voices that call for action.

Critiques of *Testimonio*

Ironically personal accounts and eyewitness testimonies are valued in the mass media and widely accepted as universal truth, leaving a deep impression on others judgment due to the emotive effects. Yet, the authenticity of written testimonial literature is often challenged because studies on the human brain have demonstrated that one's memory cannot always accurately recall all events allowing the narrator to consciously or unknowingly exaggerate or exclude information. For example, anthropologist David Stoll's (1999) book entitled *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Guatemalans*, brought public attention to several misrepresentations of how Rigoberta Menchú's (1980), a Guatemalan human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient and mostly widely read Latin American *testimonio*, inaccurately portrayed the injustices of herself

and her family. Some of the experiences that she claimed as her own were actually combined with collective experiences from other members of her community.

Despite this controversy, many Latin American scholars came to her defense and pointed out that excluded information from her *testimonio* should not deter readers from the underlying purpose, which was to expose the political and social atrocities that indigenous populations suffered in Guatemala at this time. In fact, Beverly (2004) reminds us that the purpose of *testimonio* is to give voice to the subaltern: “what is at stake in *testimonio* is not so much truth *from* or *about* the other as the truth *of* the other, of the other’s sense of what is true and what is false” (p. 7). Thus, participants’ *testimonios* in this study offer less commonly presented perspectives that may counter dominant narratives, which tend to perpetuate essentialized undocumented discourses.

The Power of *Testimonio*

Most often scholars not familiar with the Latin American *testimonio* genre generally assume that this method is merely the translation of the word “testimony” in English, which they then minimize to simply a testifier’s witness of a situation. Consequently, *testimonio* as a genre and a methodology has been trivialized and pushed to the periphery because some western scholars are not familiar with its origins, purpose, achievements, and possibilities as a tool for witnessing and endorsing social action. Dorfman (1991) explains that *testimonio* derived as emergency narratives in response to political upheavals that exposed social injustices of people who were victims of unspeakable crimes and violations of human rights under totalitarian rule. He explains that there are four primary functions of the *testimonio*:

to *accuse* the executioners, to *record* the sufferings and the epics, to *inspire* the other combatants in the middle of the retreat. A fourth function which we see less in these texts than in others is to carry out a rational analysis of the problems and the reversals that are being suffered today. (Dorfman, 1991, p. 141)

Conversely, Dawes (2007) asks, “What is the line that separates those who are merely moved from those who are moved to act?” (p. 7) in his discussion on human rights fiction. Caminero-Santangelo (2009) explains that while historical trauma and *testimonio* intersect and share common features (voices of the subaltern bearing witnesses of injustices from an individual experience that is representative of a collective group), the first focuses on the past while the latter is oriented toward the present and the future. She suggests that *testimonio* “is aimed at specific current events that are in need not only of national and international “reevaluation” but of urgent action” (Caminero-Santangelo, 2009, p. 6). In Caminero-Santangelo’s (2009) words, it is the “presentness” of *testimonio* that distinguishes it from other historical trauma literature. The features that differentiate it from the other historical traumas are “temporal” and “ethical” ones (p. 19).

Nance (2006) uses Aristotle’s rhetorical categories of *forensic*, *epideictic*, and *deliberative speech* to analyze the goals and strategies of *testimonio* due to the fact that it originated in the oratory field rather than in literature. *Forensic speech* asks decision makers to categorize past events as just or unjust and its means are accusation and defense. *Epideictic speech* is addressed to the spectators, whom it asks to categorize present actions as noble or shameful and its means are shame and censure. *Deliberative speech* asks decision-makers to determine whether or not to understand a

future action expediency and in expediency. Accordingly, Nance (2006) posits that the first two types of speech are subordinated to the latter and proposes that deliberative speech be the paradigm for *testimonio* because it persuades the reader to act in favor of social justice (p.23-31).

In response, Pérez-Huber (2009b) extends Nance's position and encourages the use of *testimonio* as a methodology in her article *Disrupting Apartheid of Knowledge: Testimonio as Methodology in Latino/a Critical Race (LatCrit) Research in Education*. She explains that *testimonio* can make three important contributions to critical race research as a methodological tool. First, *testimonio* allows for participants to work in collaboration with the researcher, honoring their lived experiences and knowledge. As a result, participants play a crucial role in deciding how knowledge about their experiences is produced in the research process. Second, similar to critical race counter-stories, *testimonio* recognizes the power in telling one's story that is rooted in traditions of storytelling in Latina/o, African American, and Native American communities (Booker 2002; Yosso 2006). Third, locating *testimonio* within a *Chicana Feminist* epistemology provides an explicit method of data analysis, and guides the research strategies used throughout the research process. She explains that the similar elements, purposes, and goals of *testimonio* within a *LatCrit* framework make it a powerful tool for critical race research, where the very tenants of *LatCrit* inform the research process (Pérez-Huber, 2009a, p. 650). Pérez-Huber discusses how *testimonio* can be used as a method across races, classes, languages, religions, and genders. She explains that it is a method of witnessing and exposing injustices of the subaltern with the purpose of empowering and advocating for a more humane present and future.

Testimonio is not a methodology to “tell a story just to tell it” to invoke a sympathetic reaction from the reader, rather it is an in-your-face witness of injustices that require the audience to be so uncomfortable that they feel obliged to become participatory agents of change.

Atkinson and Delamont (2006) in their article *Rescuing Narrative from Qualitative Research* discuss the misuse of narrative data and narrative analysis due to the failure of researchers to “treat narratives as ‘accounts’ and as ‘performances’” (2006, p.166) so that they are rigorously analyzed and used to call for social action. In other words, narratives are analyzed in terms of their rhetorical, persuasive properties, and their functions in constructing particular versions of events, justifications of action, evaluations of others, and so on (2006, p. 167). The authors emphasize that narratives are social phenomenon that should focus on the social aspects, context, meaning, interaction, and action. Accordingly, this is in fact what *testimonio* accomplishes in this study.

Composed *Testimonios*

In honoring the Latin American oral tradition of *testimonio*, and in alignment with the objectives of the PAR methodology which encourages the researcher and participants to collaboratively use their subjective experiences and witnessing to expose and work towards local and systemic injustices, I chose to present the participant’s first-person narratives in their entirety. *Testimonio* is a “source of knowledge, empowerment, and political strategy for claiming rights and bringing about social change” (Benmayor, Torruellas & Juarabe, 1997, p. 153). Without having a holistic understanding of the participant’s experiences with social injustices, it may be difficult for the reader to

engage completely and feel moved to take action, which in turn may weaken the power of the *testimonio*. In addition, People of Color's narratives and contextual understanding of their lived realities have historically been fragmented and/or minimally presented in dominant discourses, thus I purposefully include the participant's full not partial experiences to emphasize the need for more inclusive historicized rhetoric.

Participants' *testimonios* have been minimally composed in an effort to ensure readability, fluency, and to prevent repetition and distraction. While all of the participants were asked the same questions, some of their responses and experiences led to discussions about other issues that they have encountered. Accordingly, I choose to present their *testimonios* in a non-linear narration in an effort to demonstrate the diversity of experiences that have shaped their lives and to lead their narratives that I felt best represent their personalities, struggles, and successes. Three overarching themes emerged from their *testimonios* that guide the analysis of this study.

Theme Development

The five counter-narratives that were collected, transcribed, and compiled as *testimonios* in this PAR study were analyzed within a *critical race* theory (CRT) framework. These methodological and analytical approaches are interested in participants' insider perspectives (views) on how social structures of power shape their lives. By employing a CRT analytical lens, participants' *testimonios* revealed how the intersection of *race* with various forms of subordination like gender, class, and immigration status affect(ed) their experiences of living (un)documented in the country. I do not make any claims that participants' *testimonios* are representative of a larger group. In fact this dissertation challenges essentialized lived (un)documented realities,

but rather it offers multiple experiences and perspectives that nuance the generalized understanding of (un)documented migration. Table 7 indexes the theme development process that I employed in analyzing the participants' *testimonios*.

Table 7

Theme Development and Analysis Matrix

What do I want to know from participants' experiences?	What theoretical concept am I addressing?	How will I analyze the data?	What analytical tools will I use?
How are the participants' lives shaped by dominant immigrant discourses that are positioned within a U. S. -Mexico border framework?	1- <i>Testimonio</i> . 2- Critical Race Theory (CRT).	1-I will actively read and re-read participant transcribed interviews and field notes.	Transcriptions of participant interviews.
How do participants' experiences counter these dominant discourses?	(a). Do participants' experiences align with tenets of counter-narratives / <i>testimonios</i> ? (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2001; Nance, 2006).	I will member-check recorded and/or transcribed interviews with all participants to ensure accuracy.	The participants and I will listen to their recorded interviews together and I will meet with the 2 adjusted-status participants a second time to review and dialogue about their transcribed interviews.
How are the participants' experiences similar?	(b). Do participants' experiences index tenets of CRT, which I use to answer the research questions?	I will co-construct themes that participants and I feel best represent their <i>testimonios</i> .	
How are the participants' experiences different?			
How can participants' experiences offer alternative ways of representing these biased discourses?	-Intersectionality with racism and other forms of subordination. -centrality of experiential knowledge. -challenges to dominant ideology. -commitment to social justice. (Solóranzo, 1998)	-I will compress the co-constructed ideas into larger overarching themes.	-Color-coded <i>testimonios</i> that index examples of the 3 overarching themes.

The overarching three themes of *(mis)perceived identities*, *silenced struggles*, and *aspiring citizens* emerged from the five participants' *testimonios*. This co-constructed theme development was a three-phase process. First, following the individually recorded interviews, each person listened to their own recordings with me and identified words, themes, and phrases that they want to emphasize from their experiences living (un)documented as well as what they want readers to take away from their *testimonio*. I created my own list on my immediate observations as well as we listened. I made all these notations on my password-protected laptop. I combined all of the participants' suggested themes, phrases, and words with the ones that I observed into a compiled list.

In the second phase of this process after all five *testimonios* were composed from each transcribed interview, I employed inductive also known as "open coding" (Straus and Corbin, 1990) which derives from emergent themes from the interviews that were compiled into *testimonios*. I paid attention to reoccurring words, phrases, and experiences to begin to categorize possible major and minor themes from the transcriptions. While the frequency of themes is relevant, this study is more interested in the interpretation and representation of data. A post-structural approach is used to show concerns with, "struggles over representation" (Johnston and Sidaway 2004, 281). Conceptual categories were multidimensional and I kept an *audit trail* as well as color-coded the themes so that I could reference the contributors' demographic information and the context easily. I considered various modalities when analyzing the data. For example, I reflected on implicit and explicit language, speech styles (register, intonation, switching from languages, etc.), non-verbal cues, expressions of individual vs. group

identities, perception vs. realities of social and political structures, shared and individual experiences with immigration laws and practices, personal vs. societal associations and perceptions of immigrants, contributions, and specificity versus vague language.

I listened to the recordings several times and read and re-read the transcripts as well. I carefully listened and looked for topics that the participants emphasized and reoccurring themes throughout their narratives. Then, I began coding them by creating a chart where I grouped similar expressions and words from the participants' *testimonios*, so that I could visually recognize recurring themes. I used hand written concept maps to see these themes as well as to make and show connections. I re-examined the themes several times to make sure there was sufficient data to support the model. I manually hand-coded the data so that I could revise the coding system as needed and with the hope that it would force me to be more hands-on, which helped me revisit the codes more frequently. I coded and recoded the themes and adapted them to ensure that were representative of all of the data. This process was frustrating as I grappled with naming these categories and narrowing down the themes to accurately reflect the majority's experiences. Finally, I narrowed the themes down from our combined lists.

The third stage of this process was collaborative as well, but only two of the participants, Pedro and Cesaría, were able to contribute. I met with Pedro and Cesaría for a second time individually since they no longer are undocumented in the country due to their adjusted statuses and do not face any risks of being deported. We had the opportunity to review their composed *testimonios* from the transcriptions of their interviews and this allowed them a second opportunity to make any amendments and to member-check. I also read aloud my notes (see appendix c for the member-checking

notes) with them based on their interviews to ensure validity. Lastly, we discussed the ten major themes from our combined ideas that I compiled from stages one and two, which we all felt were representative of all of their experiences. Only two participants, Pedro and Cesaría, were able to re-examine the themes with me twice. Lastly, we discussed the major themes that emerged from their *testimonios* that we all felt were representative of all of their experiences. Through dialogue, we were able to hear each other's feedback, so that we could narrow down the categories. The ten themes that the participants and I initially agreed upon and co-constructed were:

1. *We do not want anything for free* (We are hard-working. We want to be good examples for our children/families. We contribute to the U.S. We don't want to take anything from anyone).
2. *We struggle not having our papers* (no driver's license, fear of deportation, depression).
3. *We come from all over the world* (We are not from the same country).
4. *We have different identities* (religion, races, ethnicities, gender).
5. *We have dreams/aspirations that we want to accomplish, that is why we came to this country.*
6. *We would like a pathway to citizenship.*
7. *We want the same things as American citizens* (We are human beings too).
8. *We get exploited and taken advantage of because people know that we don't have the same rights as Americans* (cheap labor, robbed, sexual abuse, and lawyer scams).
9. *We are not criminals or terrorists.*

10. *We miss our families and aspects of our cultures that we would like to share with our kids and loved ones (we would like to go back and visit our homes and/or have family members come here).*

Once participants and I identified and agreed upon the ten major themes listed above, over a two-month period I narrowed the ten themes into three categories because many topics were related and therefore could be grouped together. The ten original co-constructed themes were compressed into the following three categories:

1). *(Mis)perceived Identities:*

- We come from all over the world. We are not from the same country.
- We have different identities (religion, races, ethnicities, and gender).
- We are not criminals or terrorists.

2). *Silenced Struggles:*

- We get exploited/taken advantage of because people know that we don't have the same rights as Americans (cheap labor, robbed, sexual abuse, and scammed by lawyers).
- We struggle not having our papers (no driver's license, fear of deportation, and depression).
- We miss our families and aspects of our cultures that we would like to share with our kids and loved ones (we would like to go back and visit our homes and/or have family members come here).

3). *Aspiring Citizens:*

- We have dreams and aspirations that we want to accomplish, that is why we came to this country.

- We do not want anything for free (We are hard-working and we want to be good examples for our children/families. We contribute to the U.S. We don't want to take anything from anyone).
- We would like a pathway to citizenship.
- We want the same things as American citizens. We are human beings too.

After abridging the themes into three categories, I color-coded the participants' composed *testimonios*, highlighting sentences and paragraphs that aligned with each corresponding colored theme. I did this to ensure that I could find where in their *testimonios* these themes could be located, referenced, and cited. I referred to the participants' demographic chart to ensure that their diverse identities as well as their common experiences living undocumented in the country were reflected by these themes. I also aimed toward themes that were representative, transparent, and that demonstrated the connections between participants' individual identities, yet similar shared undocumented experiences so that readers could also visualize these correlations as I do. The themes are progressive in nature. First, they begin by indexing (mis)perceptions about undocumented migration in dominant discourses. Next, the lived realities and struggles of the participants reveal how immigration practices, laws, and biased rhetoric shape their experiences. Lastly, the aspirations of the participants index why they came to the United States and demonstrate their desire to continue to be productive 'authorized' citizens. These overarching themes that emerged from the participants' *testimonios* guided my detailed analysis in chapter five as well as are used to address the research questions of this study in chapter six.

Summary of Methodology

This chapter has introduced the design of the study and the research context as well my role as a researcher-advocate in this participatory action research (PAR) dissertation which seeks to add to existing scholarship that advocates for as well as work towards local social change for (un)documented communities in North Carolina. It has outlined ethical considerations taken as well as how my “two-year entry-to the community and paying forward period” prior to conducting my nine-month PAR study informed my methodological choices. This PAR dissertation positioned within a *critical race* theory (CRT) framework informed my decision to collect, transcribe, code, and analyze the participants’ counter-narratives, which are presented as *testimonio* in this study. Their lived underrepresented experiences of living (un)documented are at the center of this study, thus I draw from their expert knowledge to provide a deeper and nuanced understanding of how dominant immigrant discourses commonly marginalize and oppress People (immigrants) of Color by racializing and criminalizing their identities as well as framing and depicting them in biased frameworks.

I have fully disclosed my biases as well as my role as researcher-advocate in this study. Thus, my hybrid status has allowed me to use my position as an activist to gain inside knowledge about the participants’ worlds and my privilege as a researcher afforded me the opportunity to work collaboratively to conduct a study that argues for social change within the (un)documented communities. By implementing a CRT lens to analyze the participants’ *testimonios*, co-constructed themes were identified from their counter-narratives and can be used to re-present the current essentialized dominant discourses surrounding (un)documented migration in the United States. The following

chapter presents the five participants' *testimonios* in their entirety and index individual experiences that connect to the larger overarching themes which will be discussed in detail in chapter five and used in chapter six to address the research questions.

CHAPTER IV

NON-MEXICAN *TESTIMONIOS*: THIS REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED

The title of this chapter is an adaptation of a famous 1970's song entitled *The Revolution Will Not be Televised* written by Gil Scott-Heron, a controversial African-American musician and poet who wrote this poem which offered a socio-political critique of the lack of media coverage of African-American communities as well as it indexed how dominant groups control media (discourse) coverage and are selective in who and what they cover. Similarly to Scott-Heron's observation in his song, this dissertation has argued that the non-Mexican undocumented participants' experiences have been marginalized resulting in less commonly *televised* coverage of their realities as well. In an interview with Scott-Heron (2010), he reminds the public about the significance of his poem which was later turned into a song. He says:

That song was about your mind. You have to change your mind before you change the way you live and the way you move...the thing that's going to change people is something that no one will ever be able to capture on film. It will be something that you see and all of a sudden you realize, "I'm on the wrong page" or I'm on the right page, but I'm on the wrong note, and I have to get in sync with everyone else to understand what's happening in this country." (Scott-Heron, 2010)

Scott-Heron explains that revolutionary change is recognizing the need for transformation and doing something to make it happen for the betterment of the community. The participants' *testimonios* may be less commonly televised and appear to be individualized because they are written as first person-narratives, but they

represent part of the 11.2 million collective realities of people living in the country undocumented. Accordingly, they share their experiences in an effort to change how undocumented communities are understood, treated, and portrayed because it shapes their lived realities.

Their *testimonios* counter how dominant discourses tend to narrate (televis) a single (essentialized) undocumented migrant story which commonly hides diverse experiences of witnessing and living. The participants' counter-stories are presented as *testimonios* in this chapter to disrupt dominant essentialized immigrant discourses, to expose injustices they face, and to call for social change in the manner in which (un)documented people are often unfairly constructed and treated. As mentioned in chapter three, ten emergent themes were identified (by the participants and I) from the participants' *testimonios*, which I compressed into three due to connecting factors and to prevent repetition. Accordingly, each participant's diverse narratives commence with an excerpt in bold letters from their *testimonios* to index the three overarching themes of *mis-perceived identities, silenced struggles, and aspiring citizens*. I present their full *testimonios* to position their lived experiences of being undocumented in the United States at the center, aligning with the principals of *critical race theory* (CRT) which guided me to use participants expert knowledge to direct our co-constructed analysis. I focus on individual emergent themes from each of their *testimonios* because some topics were not shared experiences by the entire group which further opposes dominant ideologies of essentialized (un)documented identities. Next, I examine how their individual themes connect to the shared larger ten co-constructed themes that I

compressed into three larger ones, which were introduced in chapter three and will be examined in detail in chapter five. Finally, I summarize the findings of this chapter.

Counter-Narratives: *Testimonios*

In chapter three I explained the four goals of *counter-narratives* that Solóranzo and Yosso (2002) outline which guide my analysis. In alignment with their goals, I present the *testimonos* of the participants in an effort to demonstrate the various faces that are affected by undocumented migration as well as to index diverse experiences and realities that expose and challenge essentialized border rhetoric that tend to dehumanize, criminalize and racialize an estimated 11.2 million people in the United States. I intentionally position the *testimonios* of Cesaria and Pedro, who have lived undocumented in the country between seven to fourteen years, but have since adjusted their statuses first. In examining Cesaria and Pedro's *testimonios*, I realized that they offer a different angle (lens) at exploring how undocumented peoples' lives are shaped by deficit dominant discourses as well as by United States immigration laws and practices. By Pedro and Cesaria discussing and analyzing their lived realities of being undocumented in retrospect, they are able to juxtapose their experiences as well as they have had the time to truly examine how many aspects of their lives have changed as a result of an adjusted immigration statuses. Cesaria and Pedro have also lived the longest in the country, thus they provide insight over a longer period of time on how United States immigration laws and practices have changed over the years as well as they may feel more protected to speak openly. Their *testimonios* also offer useful insight into other variables within their countries that motivated them to leave which will be revealed in their counter-narratives.

Pedro's Languages

I would like to preface Pedro's *testimonio* by indexing that he is bilingual and uses both Spanish and English within his counter-narrative below. In solidarity with Sharon K. Deckerts' (2015) position that Spanish is not a "foreign" language for people like Pedro since it is his first language, thus I purposefully choose to resist the traditional model of putting the English translation of his comments into normal letters and italicize his natural Spanish-English comments. Instead, I intentionally reverse this model to question what Deckert (2015) rightfully asks, "what is considered *foreign* in that moment?" (S. Deckert, personal communication, April 22, 2015) and to index that Pedro's use of both languages is common among bilingual persons. As the translator of his Spanish to English comments, I also recognize that "speech is a very complex system in which many different social, cultural, and psychological factors come into play" (Zambrano-Paff 2011, p. 200). Accordingly, during the translation process of his Spanish comments to English, I used my knowledge of different Spanish varieties. For example, Pedro uses the word "maras" which is a commonly used word within El Salvador to describe a group of people, typically who are part of a gang, which the most being the infamous *la Mara Salvatrucha* (MS13). In many other Spanish-speaking countries the word "*pandillas*" is typically used to describe gangs.

Pedro

I laugh when they call undocumented people *wetbacks* because on one side it is true, but they will never understand the sacrifice, the struggle, or the danger of cruzando el río grande. Es bien duro! Pobrecita mi gente. Qué Díos les bendiga (*crossing the río grande. It is very hard. My poor people <term of endearment>. God bless them*).

I had to walk like a mute. We could not talk because they would recognize our voices and we could get deported. We could not buy food unless somebody else bought it for us. I mean if you brought a little extra money on the trip, you had this option. If we spoke they would recognize our Salvadorian accents and they would know that we were illegal in their country. I was not scared crossing through my country; crossing through Guatemala and Mexico is when you start to get scared. You realize that you are not in your country. Everything is different. You speak different. You eat different food and know that these are not your people. The food was very limited. So, many times we did not eat much in Mexico. I remember being hungry and thirsty a lot. Yes, I remember my trip because one who travels by land suffers a lot to come to this country. I had to cross over three countries; all of El Salvador, because I'm from a small town in the mountains, then Guatemala, and all of Mexico to *la frontera (border)*. I decided to come to the United States when I was nineteen years old. My oldest brother left El Salvador and crossed three or four years before me and was living in Los Angeles, California. We are six siblings; four boys and two girls. We all finished High School, but, my father couldn't afford to put us all through college, so, *los mayores (the oldest siblings)* had to look for other opportunities to help maintain the family economically. *La Guerra (the civil war)* was another motivation to leave the country. There was a conflict between the *paramilitares* and the *FMLN guerilla* over government control and communism. *Los sinvergüenzas (those shameless people)* killed Archbishop Romero in 1980 during a mass. Boys starting from the age of 15 were being recruited to fight. The

guerilla was more aggressive than the army in recruiting, but they never forced my brothers and I to join, gracias a Díos (*thank God*).

Las mámas (*the mothers*) never want their children to leave because they don't want the families to separate. They suffer worrying about us crossing over because they hear stories of people's children getting robbed and dying on the way. There were a lot of *Salvadoreños* immigrating to the United States when I did. I traveled by tierra (*land*). I paid like \$1,000 dollars to the coyote (*smuggler*), which is very cheap now. I rode in a car from El Salvador to Guatemala and then took a bus that dropped me off in Mexico. I jumped on la bestia <a *notorious train*> like most people in Mexico following the coyote <*smuggler*> who was leading our group. I hid in rivers from la migra <*immigration officials*> and heard about people drowning... I did it all... ¿Cómo te explico? Es una experiencia que uno no se puede olvidar (*How can I explain it to you? It is an experience that one never is able to forget*)... Oh yeah, then, we took a car through the desert and passed over la frontera (*the border*) hiding in a truck with paletas de comida encima de nosotros (*pallets of food on top of us*). There were both men and women coming over with me, but I didn't know any of them. I didn't see any children crossing until we reached the Mexican border. In Mexico I noticed that there was children crossing over with us.

When you reach the border you get very scared because you see people getting arrested. We were hidden in a truck with pallets of food on top of us that was going to the United States. It took us about a month and fifteen days, more or less, for the entire trip from El Salvador to la frontera (*border*). We crossed over

and my brother and his friends came to pick me up at a house. No, everything was not that easy, but we made it. I will say that the girls and women suffer a lot more because there is a lot of walking; there is nowhere to really bath good, and there is a limited amount of food or water. I pretended that I was one girls' husband because she came alone from El Salvador and many girls get taken advantage of in these cases.

For the first couple of months I was very nervous living in Los Angeles because I was scared that someone would deport me. I lived with my brother and two other guys in an apartment. At the beginning I was excited about working and making money, but after a while you start to miss your family, friends, and your country. Living in the United States without your papers is like living in *la oscuridad* (*darkness*). You work all of the time, come home and sleep, and you wake up and do the same thing every day. Yes, they let you work here, pero no hay beneficios (*but there are no benefits*) really. Number one, you don't get any benefits. Number two, you miss your family and your country. Number three, you can't go back and visit your family for holidays like *la Navidad* (*Christmas*). You are here, but you don't have papers. You miss your family back home, but you can't go back either. It is nice though, when you are able to send money back home to help your family. Now the laws are stricter. Before we could get licenses to drive, but now you can't. People are getting deported because they are driving without a license, but they have to work to live so they have to drive. If you do not have a social security number, you can't get a license. I work in construction, so I

go to places all over; wherever there is work. Public transportation is not an option for people in this type of work.

I lived in L. A. for five years and I have been living in <names city> in North Carolina for about 22 years. I like <names city in North Carolina> porque es una ciudad tranquila (*because it is a tranquil city*) and my kids live here. My oldest brother and I moved to North Carolina because we heard there were lots of jobs and we had a Salvadorian friend here. Being undocumented in <names city in North Carolina> is a little different than L. A. Pues, son ciudades diferentes (*well, they are different cities*). For example, in L. A. they have Hispanos (*Hispanics*) from every country and a lot of Chicanos (*Mexican-Americans*). In L. A. there is a lot to do, but they have a lot of gangs too. I lived in a neighborhood where I couldn't go down certain streets por las rivalidades de maras (*because of gang rivalries*) and because I wasn't Mexican. It's harder to find work because they ask for your social security a lot in L. A. Most people in <names city in North Carolina> look at Hispanos as all the same. They think that we are all from Mexico and illegal. Most people don't treat you mean here because they think that we are good workers. They always tell us how good we are at our jobs y luego empiezan a explotarnos (*and then start to exploit us*). They pay us less. They don't pay us what they pay people with their documents. Sometimes they don't pay you at all and lie and tell you that the contractor didn't pay them either. When I first came to the United States I never thought about trying to get my papers. I just wanted to work for three or four years, save money, and go back to El Salvador and build a house and have my own business. I changed my mind

several years later because in the nineties the government had N. A. C. A. R. A. for people who came from certain countries in Central America. I think if you could prove that you got here before 1989 or 1990 and you left your country because of the violence of las guerras (*the civil wars*) you could apply for political asylum. My oldest brother and I both applied for this asylum through this program because we both entered during the war and before the deadline. We got different lawyers because he moved on another side of town with his girlfriend. He got an American lawyer and I had a Hispano (*Hispanic*). I paid my lawyer about \$2,000 and he that said he would fix my papers through this program. After waiting a couple of months and not being able to contact him, one day I saw him being arrested on the news for scamming Hispanos out of their money. I was so angry and devastated really. I didn't have any money to apply again and he had most of my documents. I was depressed for a while, but I had to keep going. Anyway, my brother got his TPS <temporary protective status> and eventually got his residency with his lawyer.

My youngest brother crossed over maybe two or three years later. He suffered more than my older brother and me. His crossing took twice as long. He had to hide in the dirty waters and in the desert. He lost about 15lbs and he was already flaco (*skinny*). When he arrived in <names city North Carolina> we all lived in an apartment together for a little while, but I had a wife and we have different personalities so we separated ourselves. We worked together in construction, but like I said we are different and ended up working in different companies. My oldest brother got his own company because he has his papers. My younger

brother and I ended up working for him and other places too because my older brother wanted to boss us around.

In <names city North Carolina>, my younger brother got married to an American and I came here with my Chicana <Mexican-American> wife who was pregnant. I did not want to apply for my papers with her at that time because I did not want my wife to think I just married her for that reason. I had my pride. We argued a lot because I was stubborn. I didn't want her to help me get my papers because I didn't want her to throw it in my face later. I was young and very macho then. We were married for about five years and had one son. We ended up getting a divorce. About five years later I got married again to another American. I did not tell her that I was undocumented until she started talking about marriage. I was scared to tell her porque era muy bonita, más jovencita que yo y vino de una familia de clase media-alta (*because she was pretty, younger than me, and came from a middle to upper class family*). I thought she would leave me, but she didn't. One day I told her that I did not have a social security number and that I was illegal. She did not even know what it meant to be illegal in the country, but she learned a lot with me. She did not tell her family or friends.

She started reading everything about being illegal. She found out from my Salvadorian friend's wife who is American that we could get married and apply for an amnesty. The amnesty was when Bush was the President. They were applying, so they were telling us everything to do. She said that we had to get married and apply before the April deadline in 2001. I really did not want to get my papers through marriage. My brothers always told me that a woman will

always use that to control you, but she told me that if we did not get married and apply that she would leave me. So, we secretly got married and went to a lawyer and found out about the process. It was a lot of work for her and it was not easy because when I was caught the first time crossing over they took my finger prints. If they did not have my finger prints than I would not have been considered a criminal, but because of that I had a record in the U. S. I also got a DUI in North Carolina. This made my case harder, pero gracias a Dios (*but thank-God*) I eventually got my temporary papers and we had a public wedding six months later even though we were already legally married. We had a daughter four years later because she was in school. We were married for ten years, but four of those years we were separated. I never really appreciated her helping me get my papers then, but now I am very grateful to her today. I see how my family and friends suffer now who do not have their papers and know that if it wasn't for her pushing me that I would be in the same situation.

My younger brother applied with his American wife to adjust his status. He got approved and was just waiting on a letter in the mail with the date of their interview with INS. He and his wife moved and changed their address at the post office, but did not change their address with INS. They waited like a year and contacted their lawyer because they never received an appointment. His lawyer found out that they put him on the deportation list because he did not show up for his interview. They sent him an appointment date to his old address, but he never got it because they moved. If you don't show up to government courts, it is a federal crime you know? Anyway, he became bitter and stayed to himself. He

ended up getting a divorce. It was sad, but really it was his negligence. He screwed up.

La verdad es que Dios siempre me bendice porque me permite ver a mi familia en El Salvador de vez en cuando (*The truth is that God always blesses me because he allows me to see my family in El Salvador from time to time*). My greatest fear when I didn't have my papers was that my mother would die and I could not go home to her funeral. Gracias a Dios (*thank God*) my mom and my sister in El Salvador can travel on tourist visas to the United States. To have a U. S. visa is like winning the lottery. A U. S. visa is very hard to get in my country. My older brother who has his U. S. residency and his American girlfriend helped my two sisters and my parents get tourists visas to come and see their babies when they were born. They sent letters to the U. S. embassy in El Salvador petitioning for them and gave them money to pay for their visas and tickets. My baby sister and my mother used to come over to visit and to take care of my older brothers' kids while he and his girlfriend worked. My baby sister got divorced in El Salvador about ten years ago and she and her two little boys had to move in with my mom. She decided that she would come to the U. S. and work in construction with us because she wanted to save for her kids to go to college in El Salvador. She ended up coming to <names city in North Carolina> to work as a housekeeper for six months on a six month tourist visa. She returned to El Salvador and bought a ticket to come back like two weeks later. We told her not to come back so quick because she might lose her tourist visa but she is an *Alvarado*, so she is stubborn and determined like my father's people. So, she

came anyway, but got stopped by customs coming into Texas. They lied and told her that they had proof that she was working in North Carolina and that was against the law with a tourist visa.

They told her that if she did not confess that she would go to jail. She eventually got scared and confessed. They sent her back to El Salvador and she lost her visa. She didn't have a job in El Salvador and had two little boys to support. So, one day she called us and told us that she was going to use her saved money to hire a *coyote* to help her cross the border to get back to the United States. She loved making her own money because she was a housewife in El Salvador and her husband would not let her work. Mi mamá (*my mother*) and the whole family begged her not to come, pero es bien terca (*but she is very stubborn*). It took her about a month to cross over. She has been here for about six years working as a housekeeper. She moved in with un mexicano (*a Mexican guy*) about 5 years ago and they have one child. He doesn't have his papers either. Mi mamá brings her kids to visit when there is money to buy tickets. So, there are five of us in the United States. Only two of us have our papers. Mi medio hermano de parte de mi papá (*my half-brother on my dad's side*) came over about 8 years ago. He finally got approved for a U. S. visa when he was like 45 years old. He first would just come over to visit us with his family, but eventually he got divorced and came over with a *coyote*. He did not want to come over on his visa and risk losing it. Mi mamá (*my mother*) and my sister are the only ones in El Salvador and my dad died about 13 years ago.

For the first couple of years I was happy here. I was working. I was making good money sometimes. When you come here, you think about how you will be able to help your family back home live better. You do help them a lot, but later you pay for everything. Working day and night and being without your family is hard. Honestly, we were not poor-poor in my country. We had food, a house, and a small coffee farm. I don't know if it is worth it to be here undocumented. I suffered a lot and I still suffer because I'm older now and my body is tired from years of physical labor. Sometimes I think I should have just stayed and worked in my father's land. Maybe I would not have the material things I can get here, but I would have had a simple life with my family and have enjoyed my life more. Here, I just work.

When I first arrived in Los Angeles I worked at McDonalds. Then I worked *in una fábrica (a factory)* at night for 12 hours. When I came to North Carolina I worked as a dishwasher. Then I washed cars at a carwash. The last 14 or 15 years I have worked in construction. In construction they may yell at you to work faster, but no one has ever said anything racist to me, pero los americanos piensan que son superiores que nosotros los hispanos (*but Americans think that they are superior to us Hispanos*) though. What they do is they don't pay you on time sometimes. They make you wait to get paid and they talk to us in a manner that is aggressive. They expect the immigrants to work every day, even on Sundays while they go to church. They want us to work on holidays when they do not work. Nos tratan como fuéramos animales o paganos (*they treat us like we are*

animals or pagans); like we don't get tired and like we don't have families or a religion too.

The first year I arrived in L. A. I was scared every day. Every time somebody knocked on the door I thought it was the police or la migra (*immigration officials*) coming to deport me. I only talked and hung out with people from my country. I didn't have any work skills when I first came. Since I have been in North Carolina, I learned how to build and do a lot of things in construction and that has helped me get work. About ten years ago, I opened up my own construction company. I have a lot of experience and I am good at my job.

Desgraciadamente, no hay mucho trabajo ahora (*unfortunately, there is not a lot of work right now*). It is harder for undocumented people now. Before, you could get a license in North Carolina and in California. You could have a bank account and insurance for your car. I had a social chueco (*fake social security card*), but now they have machines that can tell if you have a fake one. As long as you didn't commit any crimes, you were okay. Now, the police might stop you driving and if you do not have a license and insurance. You can get deported easier. Undocumented people have to ask for rides sometimes or just drive in fear.

I wish Americans would understand that we, I say "we" because even though I have my residency now I still know what it is to be undocumented; we want the same things they want for themselves and their families. We want to work. We want to provide for our families. We want our kids to go to school and get a good education. Most of us are not criminals. We are just humble immigrants. Somos seres humanos (*we are human beings*). Like I said before, we just want to work

and take care of our families. I think the government should give people who have been here for at least seven years permission to work at least and the opportunity to get a license. They don't have to give out citizenship. Mi gente solo quiere trabajar (*my people just want to work*). Certain people can't come over to the United States legally. U.S. visas are for rich people. In order to get a U.S. visa in our countries we have to have capital. We have to have money in the bank, land, and a house in our name. Then, you have to have about \$100 for the application. Remember, the average salary is about \$300 a month in El Salvador. If you don't have these things, te niegan (*they will deny you*). There is also an interview with the U. S. embassy. I did not apply for a visa because everything was in my parent's name. I didn't have any money in the bank because I worked on my father's land and lived with my parents. If I applied they would have denied me. My sisters and my parents got tourist visas because my older brother had his U.S. residency and his own construction company. Well, my older sister in El Salvador went to college and became the magistrate in our little town so she had connections too. The mother of my older brother's kids was a White professional woman. She and her family wrote letters to the U.S. embassy for my parents. Plus, my parents were old so they probably didn't think that they would want to stay in the U.S.

When I got caught coming over the first time I tried to cross, we got sent back into Mexico after we were in jail for some days. They finger printed us and just sent us back into Mexico. I told them that I was Mexican, so they would not send me all the way back to El Salvador. The border control gave us food and water

after they caught us and we ate in jail. This was a positive experience you know because we were very hungry and dehydrated. I don't know if they talked mean to me because I didn't speak English then, but I don't think so. They didn't have many bilingual border control agents at that time.

I have never participated in a rally for undocumented people because I was scared. I was scared that I might get deported; pero (*but*) it makes me proud to see los jovenes (*the youth*) coming out to protest for themselves and their families. Most of these kids are bilingual. They can speak and tell people how their parents have suffered to give them a better life. They are fighting for the people who cannot. They are fighting for their future. These kids are American even though they were not born here. They go to school here and think like Americans.

I think that there are undocumented people in the United States from all of the Americas. I think most undocumented people come from Mexico. First, it is a big country with lots of people. Second, it borders the United States. I think most undocumented people enter the country through la frontera como yo (*the border like me*). Out of 100%, I would say about 10% come with a visa and don't go back. On the Spanish news they always talk about the dangers of crossing the border.

I think about half of Americans think that we are criminals and that we want to take their jobs and benefits. The other half thinks that we are hard-workers and just want a better opportunity. There are many stereotypes about *Hispanos* that are not true. La gente generaliza mucho (*people generalize a lot*), but they are

ignorant. I think at first when they see *una cara hispana* (a Hispanic face), they may think that all *Hispanos son ilegales* (*all Hispanics are illegal*). I don't like the word "illegal alien." It makes me laugh because how do you compare a person to a Martian from out of space? We are all humans. Undocumented is the appropriate word because that is what it is, we don't have our documents.

In North Carolina, maybe people think that all *Hispanos* and undocumented people are Mexican. In California son más informados (*people are more informed*). In North Carolina, a lot of Americans think that I am Mexican. People have asked me "what is Mexico like?" When I tell them that I am from El Salvador, they ask if it is close to Mexico. Sometimes I get offended, not because I don't want to be Mexican, but because I'm proud of my country. My kids love El Salvador too even though they are American. My son is in college. He is a good kid. I'm proud of him. He has opportunities that I didn't. He knew that I was undocumented for a long time, but my baby girl does not know. Her mother and I never talked about this with her. I want her to live her life without worries. She loves El Salvador because that is where I am from and my family, pues es su familia también (*well, it is her family too*). She will not really understand my struggle because she is American, but I know that she would be sad if she knew because she worries about me. She is very protective of me. She doesn't like it if anybody talks bad about me. I want her to focus on her school work and enjoy life. The main reason that I am still in this country is because of her. My body is tired. I have worked in construction for 20 years. I feel old now and would love to be in my country, but my daughter needs me and there is no work there. My son

is a big man now and does not need me like mijita linda (my *beautiful little girl*).

I'm thankful for my kids.

I think that it is important to hear *testimonios* from undocumented people from other countries than Mexico. First, yes we come from Mexico, but we come from Central America and South America too. We are not all the same. We have different experiences and we are all important. Second, we are all human beings and we all deserve equal rights. It doesn't matter if you come from Switzerland or anywhere else, we should be treated the same. I was undocumented and some of my family is still undocumented, yes, but we are the same as everybody else. Trabajamos (*we work*). Pagamos nuestros biles (*we pay our bills*). Creemos en Dios (*we believe in God*). I mean, we try to treat people nice and follow the laws. We make mistakes too just like everybody else in this world. Somos seres humanos (*we are human beings*).

Analysis of Individual Themes (Pedro)

Within Pedro's *testimonio*, some topics emerge that are not shared experiences with the other participants. First, he continuously vocalizes his pride as a type of performed masculinity as well as a pride in his Salvadorian identity. He discusses historical information about El Salvador which motivated many to flee the country in the eighties due to a 12 year civil war. Second, he references the trauma and suffering that he and his other siblings experienced from crossing three borders to arrive in the United States. Next, his worldview seems to be guided from an "us" versus "them" position in referring to U.S. born citizens and Latino (un)documented immigrants in particular. Lastly, he offers a lot of knowledge and insight into significant historical

immigration acts and practices within and outside of the United States. While these experiences fall under the larger collective themes, his experiences are unique in that he is the only participant that arrived by land, that had a civil war going on in his country at the time of departure, and who clearly expresses an affection for his country & culture. I will begin by discussing these themes mentioned in order.

Border Crossings, Spanish Language, and Latino Diversity

First, I would like to index how Pedro's *testimonio* counters many (mis)perceptions about crossing into the United States by land. Dominant essentializing discourses tend to prescribe to ideas that an innate solidarity among all Latinos exists and that the Spanish language is not shaped by different cultures which have and continue to create diverse dialects, accents, and creolized versions. For example, at the beginning of his *testimonio* when he recounts his crossing, Pedro says:

if we spoke they would recognize our Salvadorian accents and they would know that we were illegal in their country." Next, he adds, I was not scared crossing through my country; crossing through Guatemala and Mexico is when you start to get scared. You realize that you are not in your country. Everything is different. You speak different. You eat different food and know that these are not your people.

While he refers to Spanish-speakers collectively as "Hispanos," and recognizes some shared experiences within these communities throughout his *testimonio*, he also understands the cultural distinctions between them as well which evidenced in this excerpt. Pedro indexes for people unfamiliar with border crossings as well as those who

are only informed by deficit United States-Mexico border rhetoric which unfairly targets Mexicans and in turn tends to lead them to assume that undocumented people are only crossing one border, but in fact people from countries other than Mexico have to cross several borders and risk being jailed and deported in each country. He reveals “I had to cross over three countries because; all of El Salvador because I am from a small town in the mountains, then Guatemala, and all of Mexico to la frontera (*border*).” He also details how his experiences crossing borders was different for his siblings and women. Pedro recalls his own experience when he says “the food was very limited. So, many times we did not eat much in Mexico. I remember being hungry and thirsty a lot.” He also explains how he maneuvered between countries. He says:

I rode in a car from El Salvador to Guatemala and then took a bus that dropped me off in Mexico. I jumped on la bestia (*the name of an infamous train*) like most people in Mexico following the *coyote* who was leading our group. I hid in rivers from la migra (*immigration officials*) and heard about people drowning...I did it all.... Como te explico, es una experiencia que uno no se puede olvidar?

He mentions as well how gender plays a factor in crossing and indexes how he felt that he had to help a young lady travelling alone from his country. Pedro explains:

the girls and women suffer a lot more because there is a lot of walking; there is nowhere really to bath good, and there is a limited amount of food and water. I pretended that I was one girls' husband because she came alone from El Salvador and many girls get taken advantaged of in these cases.

He clearly distinguishes the vulnerabilities that women face in crossing over and indexes how they can be taken advantage of sexually. As a result he felt the need to protect the

one he mentions above. Pedro also recalls that his younger brother's crossing was different than his. "He suffered more than my older brother and me. His crossing took twice as long. He had to hide in dirty waters and in the desert. He lost 15lbs and he was already flaco (*skinny*)." While they all suffered along this journey, Pedro clearly remembers suffering from hunger, dehydration, fatigue, as well as hearing others stories of people drowning, getting arrested, robbed, raped, and dying in route. Although, Pedro has been living in the United States for more than 20 years, he recounts his experience as if it were yesterday.

Salvadorian Pride and Historical Memory

Pedro demonstrates within his *testimonio* that his identity is shaped by his affection towards aspects of his Salvadorian culture, family, and baring witness within his birth country which in turn guides his worldview. For example, he expresses his as well as his children's pride in being Salvadorian. He says "I'm proud of my country. My kids love El Salvador too even though they are American." He clearly is fond of his Salvadorian homeland and also reveals that he never came to the United States to stay initially, but that he wanted to return to his country and build his life. He states:

when I first came to the United States I never thought about trying to get my papers. I just wanted to work for three or four years, save money, and go back to El Salvador and build a house and have my own business.

While Pedro enjoys the material things that he could achieve in the United States, he seems to continuously remember and reference how he misses El Salvador. He recalls "at the beginning I was excited about working and making money, but after a while you start to miss your family, friends and your country." Pedro not only demonstrates his

continued connection to his country of birth, but he also expresses a concern for the people of his country by providing historical contextualized images of the civil conflict within El Salvador in the 1980's. He recounts:

There was a conflict between the *paramilitares* and the *FMLN guerilla* over government control and communism. Los sinvergüenzas (those shameless people) killed Archbishop Romero in 1980 during a mass. Boys starting from the age of 15 were being recruited to fight...There were a lot of Salvadoreños (*Salvadorians*) immigrating to the United States when I did.

Pedro's *testimonio* offers several examples that challenge generalized knowledge about what motivates people to come to this country undocumented, border crossings, as well as his explicit memory opposes *apartheid knowledge* (Yosso, 2002) which privileges objective written accounts of past events, but questions the validity of oral history traditions that commonly exist and are valued within *People of Color's* cultures because of claims that people cannot remember in detail events over long periods of time.

“Us” versus “Them” Perspective

In the opening paragraph when Pedro describes his journey to the United States, he recognizes how crossing through Guatemala and Mexico that the accents, foods, and people are different from his culture. However, he seems to take more of an “us” versus “them” stance when he discusses issues between United States born citizens and naturalized as well as *aspiring citizens*. He explains:

in construction they may yell at you to work harder but no one has ever said anything racist to me, pero los americanos piensan que son superiores a nosotros los hispanos (*but Americans think that they are superior to us*

Hispanos... They expect immigrants to work every day, even on Sundays while they go to church. They want us to work on holidays when they do not work. Nos tratan cómo fuéramos animales o paganos (they treat us like we were animals or pagans); like we don't get tired and like we don't have families or a religion too.

Although Pedro expresses that many "Americans" make generalizations about Latinos, he also seems to categorize native born citizens collectively. For example, throughout Pedro's *testimonio* he tends to construct an essentialized "American" identity. Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1979) refers to this as "summational statements," which he explains are generalized comments about a region and all of its residents (p. 255). Pedro's construction opposes the common westernized archetypal or imagined "American" identity that often symbolizes democracy, independence, freedom, and fairness. Instead he perceives "Americans" to be the opposite. It is evident in the quote above that based off his own personal experiences working in construction that he has witnessed how some United States born citizens have distinct expectations for immigrant workers.

Caroline H. Vickers and Sharon K. Deckert (2013) explain that "identity is co-constructed in ongoing interaction in relation to the particular contexts in which the interaction is occurring" (116). Consequently, identities are often co-constructed based on mutual (mis)perceptions, (mis)understandings and/or feelings of belonging and not-belonging. For example, Pedro's belief that "Americans think that they are superior to us Hispanics" seem to reflect how he has been treated and how he has observed other Hispanic workers being treated. This is evidenced in the second part of the quote when he exposes selective practices which expect (require) immigrants to work when United

States born citizens do not have to because as he states, they (Americans) do not perceive “them” (Latinos) to be of the same (human) race. He explains: “I wish Americans would understand that we, I say “we” because even though I have my residency now, I still know what it is to be undocumented. We want the same things they want for themselves and their families.” Throughout Pedro’s *testimonio*, he tends to express himself as if he is speaking for all undocumented people by repeatedly using “we” and occasionally “mi gente” (*my people*) to demonstrate a shared understanding, compassion, and solidarity. At the same time he clearly constructs “Americans” to share a similar type of collective ideas, beliefs, and practices.

N. A. C. A. R. A: The History and Pedro’s Perspective

Within Pedro’s *testimonio* he discusses the 1997 *Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act* (NACARA) which offered asylum to certain people who entered the United States (un)documented before 1990 from specific countries and who were fleeing from civil and/or political unrest. While the title of this act seems to be geared towards assisting people from Central America, it also allowed people from former Soviet Bloc countries (Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, the former Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia) to apply for this asylum as well. This somewhat misleading title demonstrates how the diversity of (un)documented immigrants is subtly obscured by immigration practices that have historically tended to target some (Latinos) and protect others (Europeans) (Ngai, M., 2004). First, this title may be misleading because every country from Central America was not eligible for this asylum. Second, those who were nationals from countries that qualified could not have been apprehended by INS at the time of entry into the United

States. In other words, this means that if a Salvadorian had been caught trying to enter into the U. S. like Pedro by border patrol and was finger-printed, he would not qualify for N. A. C. A. R. A although he entered before the established deadline. N. A. C. A. R. A indexes the many ambiguities of United States immigration laws and practices. For example, it assisted those who managed to enter the country before 1990 without being caught by INS officials, but at the same time it denied asylum to people who fled the same countries due to the same civil unrest and persecution within their countries because they were not lucky enough not to get caught and finger-printed.

Pedro's *testimonio* offers insight into this particular asylum that both he and his brother applied for, but only his brother achieved. This information is important for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that undocumented people can adjust their statuses. They are not permanently fixed. Second, it reveals how two people from the same country can qualify for a particular immigration law, and only one can be approved due to various ambiguities. In Pedro's situation he reports being swindled by a lawyer that targeted and scammed immigrants. However, even if his paperwork would have been submitted as promised by his lawyer, he may not have met the criteria due to the clause that allowed only people who successfully entered the country without getting caught (finger-printed) to apply.

Pedro's Counter-Narrative: Connections to the Three Overarching Themes

While Pedro expressed individual experiences that emerge out of his *testimonio* that are not shared by the other participants, they still connect to the larger overarching co-constructed three categories of *(mis)perceived identities*, *silenced struggles*, and *aspiring citizens* that will be discussed more in detail in chapter five. First, Pedro reveals

how people have assumed that he is of Mexican descent because he is Latino, but throughout his *testimonio* he constantly demonstrates his pride and concern for people from El Salvador. In his crossing he recognizes differences between the diverse Spanish-speaking countries that he passes through in route to the United States although deficit immigration discourses tend to homogenize Latino countries in particular and hide the diversity. Pedro indexes several examples of linguistic and cultural differences that he notices and he also discusses how and why he feels that when “Americans see “una cara hispana” (a Hispanic face) they assume that the person is “illegal” which falls under *(mis)perceived identities* (theme one).

The struggles that Pedro endured traveling by land as well as his experience of witnessing and leaving his country during a civil war (1980-1992) distinguishes his *testimonio* from the other participants. First, the other participants had temporary permission to enter the country and were not confronted with any hardships entering the country either. Next, living in a country during a war exposed Pedro to traumatic events as well as it put him at risk of being forcefully recruited by both fighting parties. While living in the United States he reports being taken advantage of by an immigration lawyer resulting in his N. A. C. A. R. A application that possibly could have adjusted his status not being submitted. Accordingly, these *silenced struggles* (theme two) were distinct from the other participants’ experiences, but he still shared various similar obstacles of living undocumented for 14 years.

Before Pedro adjusted his status, he was an *aspiring citizen* (theme three) and his life since as a permanent United States resident for 13 years has demonstrated his investment in being a productive citizen and a role model for his two United States born

children. Now Pedro has been able to travel back and forth to his country of birth. He also has achieved his goal of owning a small construction company which are common aspirations of most people despite their immigration status. His *testimonio* opposes dominant deficit immigration discourses that tend to homogenize undocumented peoples ethnicities, character, and motivations for coming to the country. First, he shows that family immigration statuses are not static, but can be adjusted and are often mixed causing the entire unity to be affected. For example, his kids are U. S. born citizens, he and one of his brothers are United States permanent residents, and three of his other siblings are undocumented.

Second, he is from a country other than Mexico who recounts his experiences with multiple border crossings to arrive to this country. Next, he contextualizes reasons why many Salvadorians fled to the United States during a specific time by offering insight on a 12-year civil war that occurred in El Salvador and an asylum which motivated many Salvadorians to migrate to the country. Lastly, his *testimonio* exposes how some *aspiring citizens* can fall through the cracks of the United States immigration system. For example, the ambiguity of the criteria for N. A. C. A. R. A. applicants is revealed as well as his brother being put on the deportation list because he failed to show up at the scheduled interview time because he moved and did not receive the appointment. Due to the fact that his brother only changed his address at the postal office and not through INS (note Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) is now part of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)), he was placed him in removal proceedings without him being aware resulting in his petition to be denied. Pedro's *testimonio* as well as Cesaria's, the participant of the next counter-narrative, are

unique in that they offer an insider and outsider perspective. While they can reference their experiences living undocumented, they also can openly examine these lived realities without feeling threatened now that they have adjusted their statuses and are United States residents and citizens.

Cesaria

We need to look at all of the different reasons why people come here and not just what's convenient for the United States, you know? Its' crazy when they are like let's just look at the Mexican story, you know? Not everybody who is undocumented crossed the border or speaks Spanish.

At first nobody talked about legal status in this country, at least among communities from my country. Most of my friends in the U. S. were from one of the islands of my country, if not all of them. At that time, that was just something that we didn't talk about, but I do remember that there was a friend of mine and she was cool, but her parents according to my parents ran their mouth too much. One day when I was at my friends' house...First, you have to understand when my friends came over to my house, my parents went into their room and we hung out. My parents were not around us. They felt like I was with my friends and they didn't need to be in the middle of this. Plus, they liked when my friends came over because they knew I wasn't out running into mischief. When I went to this friends' house, her mother was always there talking to us and being the cool parent. One day I remember her asking me in Portuguese, "tem papéis?" (*Do you have your papers?*).

My parents trained me on what answer to give because people from my country can be nosey. Some can be very nosey and people go and use that information.

“We,” my people, might even call “*la migra*” <a popular Spanish term used to describe immigration police who arrested and raided places where undocumented people lived and/or worked>. A couple of people have gotten deported because they were undocumented and their friends or family have gotten mad at them and called the immigration police. This happened to a good friend of my mother’s after being here for some time. She owned her home, but she was here undocumented. I mean she lived in America most of her life, but she was sent back to my island. I think she is in Lisbon now. So, when my friends’ mother asked me “tem papéis?” which means “do you have your papers in English?” I did exactly what my parents told me to do or say. I said “you can ask my parents that question.” When I got home and I told my dad that she asked me about my papers. He asked me “what did you tell her?” and I said; “you need to ask my parents.” Yeah, that was the last time that they talked to her. I was in high school. So after that she was dead to my dad and to my mom since that day. They never spoke to her again. My parents did not know who was genuine.

There would be people trying to help you, but they could use this information for spite as well because there was competition sometimes in our communities. If you had your papers the undocumented people might say that you think you are better. For example, because I went to a prestigious high school some people were making envious comments to my parents. They would ask them “why didn’t you just send her to the public high school? Not, realizing that my sisters were at a private school. They didn’t know our story. My parents wanted the best for me.

They were very private people and they knew that the people in the community talked. They mostly worked and came home. They weren't at all of the parties. My dad was a working man. He worked in construction at first before he worked in a factory. He went to work and came home. Back then on the weekends we went riding around the park and stuff like that. Now thinking back that's exactly what my husband and I do with our kids today. We work during the week and on the weekends we will take the kids to the park and do activities. My dad was really good at maintaining a family. Now looking back, he, well both of my parents had that structure. So, I was very lucky that they stayed focused. A lot of parents came to the U. S. and they gave their kids best of everything...I'm talking about the new sneakers and all of the latest things in style. We didn't have the best of clothes, but I had all of the school materials. I had a computer. Most, no, none of my friends owned a computer. My dad was very intentional about why he brought us to America. So, he wasn't concerned with the clothes and all of that and I see that in myself right now. Our lives were not horrible in my country, but he wanted better for us.

My name is Cesaría and I was born on an island off the coast of Africa. It was formerly a Portuguese colony, so my first language is a creolized Portuguese. I was a twelve almost thirteen year old fifth grader when I left my country to come to the United States. I did not know how to speak English before I arrived in the United States. The only English that I ever heard was from Michael Jackson songs that I heard on the radio. My dad came to the United States before the rest of the family. My mom would bring my three sisters and myself about nine

months later. When I first found out that we were coming I was happy. I saw movies, television shows, and heard music from the United States and imagined what this great place would be like. I'm not sure if my dad came to the United States with the intention of staying. We have never discussed this topic. I do think that he planned on staying here for a while.

My mom was a nurse and worked at the hospital. My dad had a very common job of men from my country. He worked overseas on Dutch cruise ships and he would go out to sea as a fisherman and stay months at a time. This was a common practice of most men. In my country, my mom finished high school and studied some trades after as well. She studied cosmetology and professional typing. My dad finished fourth grade.

My parents came to the United States similar to reasons that most immigrant families come. First, they came for their children. They had three daughters and they wanted us to get a good education and have the most opportunities possible. My country only gained its independence from Portugal in the late 1970's so there weren't any universities where we could study after high school. It was very pioneering and kind of unique for my dad, an African man, to say "I need to take my daughters, all three daughters, to the United States to give them a shot at life by educating them." He didn't say "we need to marry you off." He said "we need to educate them," so my dad was very cutting edge for his time. All of us were permitted to come to the United States on temporary tourist visas. I was a pre-teen at the time, so I didn't pay attention much to the process. My parents told us what to do and we did it. It seemed to be an easy process

because we had visas and airplane tickets to come. Looking back, I think that it might have been easier for my family because we owned a house and my parents had stable jobs. I'm thinking that if they saw that if you really had nothing to show for yourself, what would keep you in the country? So, that would make it harder, but because we had an established house and family and all of that, I think being a little more established helped us get the visas. My mom travelled to the capital alone and brought the visas back. We were minors so we were attached to her passport.

I remember the exact date that we arrived in the United States and that it was about a seven hour flight. I had been on airplane before because I had to go to Lisbon to get my tonsils removed and I had travelled between the islands of my country. The day we came to the United States it was raining and one of my little sisters was sick. I remember her vomiting and I had to help her. We were received well by immigration officials in the airport because we had tourist visas. I think they felt compassion for my mom who was travelling with three young girls. My dad was living with my aunt and uncle before we arrived. Once he knew that we were definitely coming he was able to rent a one-bedroom apartment so that our family could live alone. My parents slept in the bedroom and my sisters and I had a bunk bed in the living room. I was the oldest so I slept on the top bed. My five-year old and two-year old sister shared the bottom bunk because they were little.

I remember after settling in, I felt homesick. I was very homesick. I was homesick because I have an older sister in my country. She is not my biological sister. She

was hired as my nanny and I had never been away from her. She pretty much raised me. So, I had a closer relationship to her than I did with my parents. So, it was kind of like now I'm being raised by strangers. My dad was at sea most of the time and my mom was there yes, but I spent a lot of my time with my older sister. And so I'm thirteen in the United States without her and I'm freaked out. I was like what the heck? Now, I have to do things. I mean they always made me do chores here and there, but we had ladies in my country that would come and clean. I always made my own bed, but now I had to do a lot more...Help with my sisters and so now I had these strangers telling me what to do so it was kind of overwhelming. These strangers I'm referring to were my parents of course. Sometime after I arrived in Rhode Island, my mom registered me in school. It was 1989 so I lived through a little history. I had friends from Ukraine and Poland. The school was divided into two. There was an international house and a mainstream house as it was called. The American born children were on the mainstream side and the immigrant children were in the international house. There were certain classes like math or science that we did take with the mainstream kids. I remember derogatory immigrant jokes now looking back as an adult. I remember some of them being racial. There was this kid from my country and he was dark-skinned. I remember the teacher, my science teacher, calling him a macaco (*a monkey*). He might have learned that from another Portuguese speaking student but he called him a "macaco" all of the time. If that was now you know that was not going to fly. So, I remember the racist jokes. I remember

the derogatory comments. I remember the impatience of the lunch ladies with the ESL students.

As an ESL student in the international house, I remember the teachers spoke Portuguese or Spanish. I felt safe. I enjoyed being at school because I also saw other kids from my town that I did not know had moved to America. So, I had friends who were from my neighborhood now, not just from my island, but from my neighborhood. So, I felt safe. So, it wasn't a traumatic change in the way that I could still speak my language and many teachers, neighbors, and friends were from my country.

Well, the funny thing is that I didn't go into mainstream at my first school. I went into mainstream because of my English Teacher. She has since passed away, but my English teacher took an interest in me. She was an Irish-American woman. She thought that I was smart enough and one day she said "hey lets go talk to your parents so you can take some tests because I think you are smart and you can win this scholarship for this private girl's school." She told me about other schools too where she thought that I should go and take these entrance tests. So, I took tests at three prestigious private K-12 schools. I didn't like one school, so I sabotaged the test. I said to myself "I'm not going here, just in case somebody makes me go here. I'm going to sabotage the test." So, I knowingly and I can admit now that even when I knew the answer to something, I intentionally wrote the wrong answer because I didn't want to go to the school. I just didn't like it. I thought they were snobby. I dint like the vibe. The second

school was a private Quaker girls' school and everyone seemed nice. I ended up going there.

I spent 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th grades at the International House and then in 10th grade I moved up to a public high school. So, this put me into the even more mainstream of all mainstreams. Well it was not really mainstream because I was with a lot of the richest, mostly White girls, in the city and that's not really mainstream. That's like the elite. You know their moms and dads were like the executives and the owners of all of the local businesses and you know driving around in Mercedes. My younger sisters went to another junior high school because we ended up getting a bigger apartment and we moved to another school district in the same city. We moved to a different location where they divide the students, so they ended up going to another junior high school and to the high school that I would have gone to had I stayed in the public school system.

I like to think that I was kind of smart for a thirteen year old because with my parents going to work I had to take care of my sisters. So, I had to grow up quick. I did not know anything about our visas expiring at first. Parents did not discuss this with children. I remember my parents and their discussions with their friends. They would talk about trying to meet with a lawyer at the time on how to adjust our statuses. I also remember at the private high school they would keep asking me to fill out a form with my social security number and I would reply that "I don't have one." So, I slowly but surely started to understand the importance of a social security number. I did not know what it was or why you needed it, but I'm

thinking everybody is looking for this social security number, so this thing must be important.

I don't remember anyone being suspicious or rude when I told them that I didn't have a social security number. They were just like make sure that you bring it next time and I shook my head every time, but I never did. At my private high school a lot of the things that we had to do required a social security number. There were international trips that I couldn't go on. There were trips across the Canadian border that I could not participate in either. Eventually when I found out that I was undocumented, I was coached by my parents to say that we were going through the immigration process and we just didn't have my number yet. I was undocumented for seven years. I was walking on egg shells because more and more I'm realizing the implications of not having a social security. I realized that anything could happen at any moment. I just told myself "Cesaria stay in your lane and do what you are supposed to do; remember they only come for the criminals, the people who come and make this a bad place...you know you are not a criminal...you are doing what you are supposed to do...so they are not go to throw you out because you are studying...you are doing what you are supposed to for your parents so they are not going to come for you. They don't come for people like you." I didn't have a driver's license. I didn't really think about getting one. I understood that I needed to make sure that if by the time we were to do our paperwork that I didn't do anything to jeopardize this opportunity. I knew the immigration people knew people and they could find out if you did something illegal like using somebody else's social security number. Some girls

were getting pregnant and some guys were getting into problems with drugs. My rationale at that time was stay in my lane and not to do anything that would get me in trouble.

My parents, my two little sisters and I were undocumented, but my dad's family in Rhode Island had their papers. My great aunts, my dad's siblings, and my cousins were all U. S. residents or citizens. I had resentment because I was undocumented. I was angry at my parents for bringing me to the U. S. and me not having my papers. I was resentful because my friends were moving off to college. If I had parents who had all of this money and who could pay for my school I could go because you did not need a social security number. You just needed someone to pay for your schooling. So, if I had a social security number that meant I could apply for scholarships and stuff like that and the state or someone else could have paid for my higher education. I'm seeing all of my friends going on and writing their college essays and I'm writing mine, but I know it is going anywhere.

I got my social security number and permission to travel after four months of submitting my application for residency through marriage. While I was waiting, I applied to a college in Rhode Island and that was the only school that I applied to because I wanted to attend because of their sports team. I was a huge fan and still am. I only wanted to go there. So, that whole year that I was doing the immigration process to be able to have a social security number...because I knew that a social security card was all I needed. I didn't need a green card. I just needed that number. So, we got married, and I filed for all of that stuff. It was a

matter of months for me to get my social security so I enrolled in *City Year*. I didn't waste any time sitting around while I'm waiting for my social security number to come in the mail.

City Year is a program where you serve your city for ten months. It's kind of like *AmeriCorps*. It's the same idea of volunteering, but it's not volunteering because they pay you. So, what I asked them to do because I was still going through the immigration process was...I said "listen, I don't have my social security card number yet, but I'm going to get it in like three months because the program is starting in September." I asked them not to pay me and explained that I would work for free until my social security number comes. So, I was working from like September to November I believe when my card came and that's when they started paying me. The thing is we might have had an issue because they gave me all of my checks. They just put my checks to the side and they gave them to me once I got my card. The program was awesome. I served <a city> in Rhode Island by working with students from poor backgrounds at a local elementary and middle school. In February my acceptance to the college in Rhode Island arrived. I didn't sit around waiting I was constantly taking advantage of opportunities. I heard about *City Year* when they did a presentation at my high school because we did a lot of service in high school. We needed service hours to graduate. So, *City Year* came and we did one day of our service with them and I said to myself that's what I'm going to do while I'm waiting for my social security card to come. *City Year* gives you a scholarship to attend college, so I used that money towards my tuition.

I was 19 when I adjusted my status. I met my friend's friend. We became friends. I introduced him to my parents and introduced the idea of marriage to my parents and my parents gave me their blessing to go ahead and get married and go through the process of adjusting my status. We got a lawyer and he was there every step of the way. He was a really really good lawyer. My future husband and I were friends, so the immigration interview process was very easy. Plus, I guess I have always had the gift to gab. We had to take pictures during holidays to prove that it was a legitimate marriage and take them with us.

I had an awesome lawyer. He is still my friend today. What we did was we filed everything quickly. It was the best money that I ever spent. We went from marriage to citizenship quickly. The process was 3 ½ years because my husband at that time was a U. S. citizen. So, after 3 years if you marry a citizen, you can become a citizen too, and if your spouse is not a citizen it took five years. So, my lawyer because of the brilliant man that he is filed the paperwork six months before the three year required waiting period before I could apply for my citizenship because he knew that they were backlogged and usually didn't get around to it for another few months. So, it was like right around three years that I got my letter saying to come and take my finger prints because I already had my green card. So, he told me to file early for my citizenship because they are not going to get to my paperwork until three years. So because I filed early, I got it in 3 ½ years. People asked me "how did the heck did you get your papers so quick?" My lawyer was like "do you know how many people file from Rhode

Island?...Go ahead and file it... If it is too early believe me they will send it back.”

They never sent it back.

My sisters were both still minors. So, my dad’s goal was to make sure that whatever immigration path they took that it was before my middle sister turned 18 so that they would not have to do her stuff separately, which is why I chose to get married. But, his thing was we have to hurry up and figure out how to do this so that whatever he did; my mom and my two younger sisters were automatically taken care of because they were minors. So, our lawyer found a loop hole in the system dealing with political asylum. I did not petition for them. They were going through their process around the same time that I was applying for my citizenship. So, they were like a matter of months, if not a year behind me. When I became a citizen, I remember going to immigration court in Massachusetts because I was one of the supporters for them to get their green card. I was a citizen, so the rationale was if they left the country or got deported; it would be a great disservice and harm on an American citizen. I think it had to be three compelling reasons or factors for them to apply for asylum so the reasons were: 1) extreme hardship to an American citizen, which was myself; 2) a medical situation, my sister had *periodontitis*, a bone mass loss disease which means that it is hereditary and eventually your bone mass in your gums will deteriorate and you can lose all of your teeth, which happened to my cousin at a really young age. She was like in her twenties. So, we had a dentist, who was from my country serving here in the U. S. He wrote the courts a letter saying that we don’t have any doctors in my country that could properly treat this disease if she has to

leave the U. S. I don't remember the third factor why they had to stay in the country, but those were the two compelling reasons. So, out of all of that they eventually got their green cards.

I knew people from different countries who were undocumented during the seven years that I was undocumented. There were people from my country, Latinos from various countries, and people from Eastern Europe. During the late eighties to the nineties I think that U. S. citizens were oblivious to this whole concept of having your papers or not. They were just like are you a citizen or not? It was a black and white understanding. They like totally missed steps about the different statuses like undocumented, TPS, and green card. Citizenship is a completely different thing. Up until this day I don't think most Americans understand. They usually just ask if you are a citizen.

If you told me to do what I did back then today, I would not do it. I would not do it. I would not do it. Did I say that I would not do it? There is no way. I had to get married to stay in this country. I remember our interview with the immigration officials. I have been through that process twice because I got divorced and married again years later to my current husband of eight years who is from my country. We went through the paperwork and interview process to get him U. S. residency.

As an educator today, I hear from some of my international students that today there is no way that I would get my citizenship in 3 ½ years. It was 1995 when we submitted the paperwork and it was 1998 or 1999 when I became a citizen. I was a junior in college because it was 2000 when I graduated from college. I was a

junior because I took a year off. So, I should have been class of 1999. I had an exam when I took my citizenship test. I had a final exam at 2 o'clock and I was taking my test and I remember the sentence that I had to write in English was "I had a dog." I took the written test and I passed. I might have gotten one wrong because I was getting cocky with it and I read the answer wrong, but I wrote that one sentence during the interview session. Yeah, "I had a dog" was what he made me write. Then, I said, "I don't mean to rush you, but I have an African Politics class exam that I have to take and the professor said that I have to be on time" and so that's how quick it was. There is no way that I would have gotten married today to get my papers. There is no way. I would have rather gone back to my country.

We rarely hear about Asian, European, Caribbean, or African undocumented or documented experiences. I think because these communities don't have as strong a presence like Latinos. The presence of Latinos is important in terms of numbers because that means more voters. Politicians have politicized the immigration debate in this country. They have turned it into a Mexican and American Immigration issue as if all immigrants are Mexican. It wasn't until I moved down South that I interacted with Mexican communities. I had friends from El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. I don't know when we got to the point that all of a sudden the Mexicans are our immigration enemies and our issues? Immigration, the way they paint it on television; it's all about the "Hispanic" people. They don't even have the dignity

to even call them what they want to be called. So it's usually about the "Hispanics."

They have made it a personal thing. It's not about the immigrants anymore.

During the nineties, at least within the immigrant community in Rhode Island in the eighties and nineties, I knew that I had undocumented friends around me. We didn't really know everyone's statuses. We didn't have those conversations. Now, it is more out in the open and you are able to exist but you are also fearful of who is going to show up at your door step. The fear hasn't changed. I think that the politicians have made it a political thing and they don't care about the lives of the people. They have made it a personal thing. They care about voters' opinion on these topics.

I think there is a thing about race in this country. I have heard from my immigration lawyer friends when they go up to the detention centers in New Hampshire and in Boston. You have the Canadians and people from other European countries that will be out within a couple of hours because they have the lawyers who walk in and get them out without a problem it seems. I think the color of the skin helps. They tell me the Sub-Saharan Africans and Latinos with the brown and black skin will be in there for months at a time.

To get a U. S. visa outside of the U. S. depends on the relationship that the U. S. has with that country and how that country is perceived in the U. S. For example, in the media Nigerians get a bad "rep" not just by the United States, but they get a be "rep" from everybody. If you are Nigerian, try getting a visa going to China. Good luck with that. I have had Nigerian students who even for study abroad at

my previous institution who went through trying to get a visa to go do study abroad in China and they came up with all kind of excuses not to accept them. Do I think that President Obama should use his executive power to implement a pathway for the non-criminal undocumented people in this country? is a loaded question, but I will say that President Obama is only one man. Yes, he can sign an executive order. I don't think he can do everything. He is still a politician. I don't care what color skin he has. He is still a politician. So, we can hold him up to whatever standard, but ultimately he is a politician. Secondly, I think that this is a societal issue. There is a problem and that has to do with racism. Ultimately, the people who are representing us in congress represent the constituents and the people that are voting for them. The undocumented immigrants were not voting for them. So, they are going to do what their constituents, those who are voting for them are saying...telling them that you need to vote this way or else you lose our vote and I think that has been one of the biggest issues why things don't move forward whether with immigration or with gun laws. Whether it be organizations or just people who are voting for you that's why it doesn't move on. Everybody is trying to get elected or re-elected. Everything is just totally political and politicized. It doesn't have to be. All of a sudden immigrants we have turned into criminals and terrorists. If they want to change something then the governments should change their trade treaties because it's what has created this monster. It's not just from the United States, but from Europe, and these other so called "first-world" countries that are benefiting too. Trade treaties, job demands and needs, as well as opportunities to make more money are making

people want to go somewhere or migrate somewhere different. Why are you blaming it on the people? These trade agreements and “developed” countries with large companies function off of and require cheap labor which is usually fulfilled by undocumented people.

I think that it is important that we should be telling our stories. I think that’s why I started telling my story. Before, I still had that fear. I had the fear that I’m undocumented and thoughts of being illegal, but I talked to some of my colleagues and I was like you know what I need to tell my story because it’s because of people telling their stories that the movement is so huge now and some people are able to get some relief from it you know. I don’t know if you saw the documentary *Detained*. I showed it my first year of teaching. It’s like 25 minutes long. It is in the library. It documents stories about a raid in a New Bedford, Massachusetts factory and it talks about the inhumane way in which undocumented women especially were treated while nursing... The children being sick and that’s when something woke up again in me.

That’s when my immigration story and the awareness of other stories rose up in me again. The lawyer who tried the cases and the filmmaker came to my school to talk about it with my students. It was so sad. It was so disheartening, but that needed to come out because it was like part of those strings of raids that started gaining national attention. I think the humanity in people woke up and were like “okay we understand that there are people here illegally, but do we have to treat them like animals?” We don’t treat our own murders or the rapists this way. They have rights. They eat good food. They work for their cigarettes and whatever.

They are on *Facebook*. Yes, you can have a Facebook account in prison. Don't get me started...

Yet, these people who are working hard, who have babies, and want to be United States citizens, and this is how you treat them. "You are shackling women?"

Yeah, I still have a hard time watching that movie especially after becoming a mother. I think it is important for us to tell our stories. One becomes ten thousand then one million. By telling our stories we are embarrassing world governments.

We are putting them on front-street while reminding them of the realities and injustices they look over in their countries. It is not just the United States. You know as much as we want to blame it on the United States it's a problem worldwide where rich countries need and want cheap labor so they can maintain their economies and lifestyles, but they refuse to accept the laborers fully into their countries and make provisions for them.

I have always been able to speak. I have always had a voice. I didn't let me being undocumented stop me. Now, as a naturalized U. S. citizen I can speak freely. I have always been outspoken, but there was always a certain level of fear, but now I can just freely say what I want you know and now I feel like it is my duty to speak for those who may not be able to speak. So if an undocumented person came up to me and said "I need you to help me?" I mean if it is something that I am able to do professionally and personally, you better believe that I'm going to do it. So, I would try and help the undocumented community out as much as I can. If somebody needs a translation of a document, a birth certificate or whatever, into Portuguese, Creole or Spanish, I'm going to

do it. If somebody needs me to refer them to a lawyer, I give them my lawyer's telephone number. Umm, if it something that I can do myself like simple paperwork or whatever, I'm going to do it because it is a way to pay it forward. There were a lot of people who were willing to help me get through the process. It was tough as a teenager you know to not be able to do certain things, especially haven gone to an elite high school. If I had of gone through an American U. S. public school maybe I would have had a different experience, but I was going to an institution where people had a lot of money and that is another conversation on its own of what that looked like for an immigrant, an African chick who was undocumented, you know (laughs)? It was frustrating having to explain why I couldn't do certain things.

I have thought about it and I don't have an answer to how you fix the immigration problem in this country. I know it's not putting up borders. It's not putting up fences, I mean it's not. It's just been happening for too long. People are always going to come here looking for opportunities. I think it is political why we haven't gotten certain things fixed. I think they do have a way to fix it, but it might upset too many people. I think that the *Morton Memo* and *D. A. C. A.*" are temporary Band-Aids, but guess what; if it means that people are not getting deported, than I am okay with that. As long as it is helping the people that are living in fear, I have to support it.

In the movie *Detained* there was a family from El Salvador and they wanted to come here because of the gang violence in their country. They actually shot up most of one woman's family. And she said the gang members came to her house

and said “you are next, we will kill you next,” so she left and she had newspaper clippings about the violence and she said that “I’m looking for political asylum because they are going to come from me, they are going to kill me,” and if we can prevent somebody from having to go back into that situation, I will support it. We did not have those temporary protective statuses then and she actually ended up being deported after that raid in New Bedford and they took her to the detention center without notifying her husband. They deported her back to El Salvador.

There are various reasons why people come here. It could be for economic opportunities. Your life or lives are being threatened on a daily basis, military conflicts, and religious persecutions. It is complex. It is complicated the reasons why people come here. I know that my father brought us here because there were no universities in my country. There was no life beyond high school. As a new state or new country, he wanted us to have better opportunities and he knew that the United States would be better because of educational opportunities. That is why he took us here instead of Holland who also has a sizeable population of people from my country. But, because we had more family here, he chose to come here, but the reasons why people come to the United States are varied and you can’t put it under one category. It may have to do with military conflicts, coups, and things like physical and financial hardship created by the countries that pushed from and pulled into. We need to look at all of the different reasons that people come here and not just what’s convenient for us. It’s crazy when people or the news just look at the Mexican story, you know?

It's situational how I self-identify. I try to make it all-encompassing; I have said before that I'm an African woman born on my <names African Island> and who lives in America. Other times I have said that I am an African-born U. S. citizen and sometimes I have said that I'm a native of my country American citizen. It's situational depending on with whom I am talking because sometimes if I say I'm from my country, they say "What, from where?" especially since I moved down south. I used to think that North Carolina is friendlier than the other southern states. It was more open, but with these recent laws not letting undocumented people get drivers licenses. I'm not sure.

Some of my students are undocumented and they have opened up to me about their status. I like their confidence of the young people today, publicly announcing that that they are undocumented. They have like a certain level of confidence and they are fighting for their rights. I didn't have that confidence. I kept quiet because I felt like the very next day that the police would come and take me to a detention center and I would be shipped back to my island. So, I like how confident they are and they don't bad mouth the United States government. They just want some rights. They want the right to be a successful citizen of this country and what they have done for this country is also great. You know, they are working hard, the majority is not getting into trouble, they are working hard, at least those are the people I know. I'm not going to generalize everyone because that has been my experience, but I have been in contact with and in touch with hundreds of people and with one exception, but he turned his life around, but that is a different story. Nine out of 10 people who I know that have been or are

undocumented have been the models of success, like me included. Everybody has gone beyond what maybe most people have expected. Most of my friends from my country in my close circle are college degree-having, family men and women, decent job-having, no jail time, legal issues-having people. The only difference is that they are immigrants.

I want to talk about undocumented children because most of my undocumented experience I was a child between 13 and 18 because the age for a legal adult in the U. S. is 18. I have heard all of that negative talk about parents bringing their kids here against their will and then they become undocumented and put them at risk of being deported and will never be able to change their statuses. People ask, “why are you putting your children through this and why are you bringing your children to put them in these situations?” There is a lot of criticism of these parents. Let me tell you that it takes a whole lot of courage to leave what you have known all of your life to come to somewhere new because you trust and you believe in yourself and you know that you want to do this best thing for your child.

Because I’m a mother now, I understand my parent’s decision. We were not in the middle of war. We were not in the middle of any of that. Our lives were not being threatened, but when I tell you that my father is the smartest man that I know for understanding that... yes, my livelihood wasn’t being threatened and with my father having a limited education, he knew it is a matter of life or death to have educated girl-children and that is the most gutsy thing he could have done. So, I say to people who are criticizing parents about putting their children in this

situation, “this should show you the severity of the situation because you are going into the unknown” and I can’t begin to understand how my parents ended up making that decision, but they did and I support them for that. Yes, in the moments that I did not know where my life as heading I resented them and I was angry at them, but now I totally understand. They were doing, no they have always been doing the best that they could for us. Not for themselves, but for us. Because when you are a parent that is exactly what you do. You put your children first. I need people to start understanding that for undocumented parents to take their children through that process is gutsy and it’s because they feel like it is detrimental. They need to take their children out of situations in order to give them a better life. There is no other option.

I think that my sisters and I are successful. I mean it depends on how you measure success, but I think that we are successful. The reason why I know is because my parents said “we need to come to the United States to give you a better education.” All three of us have advanced degrees; every single one of us. I have two advanced degrees. My youngest has a terminal degree in her field and so does my middle sister. So, I measure our educational success on my parent’s purpose for bringing us here; a better education and to be productive citizens. We are productive citizens. Not only do we have an education, but we are decent human beings. So, that was the gutsiest of decisions they made and it turned out well. So, people please stop judging parents. I need them to start praising parents for whatever corner of the world that they are coming from.

To give your child a shot at life is the upmost selfless move that you can make ever. Regardless as to whether I saw eye-to-eye with my dad or mom, I'm conscious that he did what he had to do to give us the best, you know he loved us. He could be lying on some beach, but he gave all that up for me. So, he may not show it. He might not tell me. Well, now actually he tells me that he loves me once a day. Even if he didn't tell me that he loves me. His actions speak louder than everything and I understand that now. I may not have gotten it as a teenager, but who does get anything as a teenager? I know my dad loves me and nobody can tell me that he doesn't because of what he did for us. So, I need folks to stop judging parents for making decisions like that because they want the best for their kids just like everyone else.

We hear testimonies from a variety of marginalized communities like gay communities; disabled communities, veterans, and so on. These may be different spectrums, but when we hear stories, we sympathize. We put a face with it. So, what I need us to do is remove the one-faceted face of the U. S. immigrant undocumented community, which is the Mexican one, and we need to start putting the African, the Caribbean, the Asian, the South-East-Asian because when we say Asian everybody goes Chinese, but I mean everyone from continental Asia; Vietnamese, Korean, Laotian, etc.

Analysis of Individual Themes (Cesaria)

Three distinctive themes emerge from Cesaria's *testimonio* that make her counter-narrative unique from the other participants. First, she did not want to reveal her country of birth which is near continental Africa which I argue represents an

underrepresented undocumented population. Second, her parent's main motivation to come to this country was to give their daughters access to higher education. Her *testimonio* is distinct in that she arrived to this country as a twelve year old child who describes her struggles of matriculated through United States middle and high schools undocumented. Thirdly, as a current educator with a terminal degree, her *testimonio* offers her own personal experiences as well as a critical academic analysis of race, politics, and foreign relations. The fact that all of her sisters have advanced degrees today and have adjusted their statuses to become United States citizens, counters essentializing narratives that commonly stigmatize being undocumented as a fixed status and opposes notions that these communities only provide un-skilled services in this country.

Legacies of Stigmatization and Fear

Cesaria is the only participant who did not want her country's name to be revealed. Honestly, I was surprised at first about why she wanted me to refer to it as an island off the coast of Africa because I know that she has a dear affection for it based on our conversation and I didn't really understand her apprehension initially since she is no longer undocumented and didn't need to protect her identity. However, during my analysis I became to understand her reservation. I reflected on some of my own objectives for my dissertation which one is to challenge the essentialism of undocumented people and considered that maybe too she shared the same position. After deeper reflection and the re-reading of her *testimonio*, I concluded that two factors led to her decision. First, Cesaria did not want her country or its people to be stigmatized. Second, she had been taught by her parents not to talk about this topic out

of fear that immigration officials could come and deport her or now revoke her citizenship. This is particularly telling because although she is now a United States citizen, the threat of being exposed is very real and life-changing. Her fears are rightfully validated by her personal experiences of witnessing a family friend being reported to immigration officials by a close friend and deported back to her country. She explains in her *testimonio*:

a couple of people have gotten deported because of they were undocumented and their friends or family have gotten mad at them and called the immigration police. This happened to a good friend of my mother's after being here from some time. She owned her home, but she was here undocumented. I mean she lived in America most of her life, but she was sent back to my island.

During our interview, I recall Cesaria after reviewing her *testimonio* explaining to me that for a long time after she adjusted her status that she still had some fear about telling her story because she was a naturalized citizen and was scared that immigration officials might discover that she obtained her residency by marrying a U. S. citizen and revoke it. In her *testimonio*, she explains that it was not until she watched a documentary entitled *Detained* and becoming a mother that moved her to share her story. She explains:

It documents stories about a raid in New Bedford, Massachusetts factory and it talks about the inhumane way in which undocumented women especially were treated while nursing...The children being sick and that's when something woke up again in me. It was so disheartening, but that needed to come out because it was like part of those strings of raids that started gaining national attention. I think the humanity in people woke up and they were like "okay we understand

that there are people here illegally, but do we have to treat them like animals?”

We don't treat our own murderers or rapist this way...Yet, these people who are working hard, who have babies, and are aspiring United State citizens, and this is how you treat them. You are shackling women?

The shared experience of being a nursing mother at the time, a person who was once undocumented, and now having undocumented students in her class inspired her to open up about her own experiences living undocumented for seven years. In her *testimonio* she expresses her admiration for the courage of the undocumented youth today coming out and exposing their identities despite the risks to fight for their human rights. Cesaria reveals:

They have a certain level of confidence and they are fighting for their rights. I didn't have that confidence. I kept quiet because I felt like the very next day that the police would come and take me to a detention center and I would be shipped back to my island.

Cesaria's understands the courage of the undocumented youth today in exposing themselves despite being afraid of being deported and putting their families at risk as well. Her *testimonio* reveals that although she is now a United States citizen, the trauma of living in fear is real as well as the stigmatization of groups of people and accordingly I understand her choice in keeping her country anonymous.

Dreams of a Higher Education

In her *testimonio*, Cesaria's parents' main reason for migrating to the United States were to give her and her two sisters' opportunities to obtain the “American education dream.” She explains that her country did not receive independence until the

1970's, and as a result higher education institutions did not exist within the island when she left in 1989. Citizens had to travel to Portugal or other countries to obtain degrees. Although as a teenager she recalls being resentful towards her parents for bringing them to a country to where they would have to live undocumented which would also prevent her from being able to apply for financial aid or scholarships; in retrospect she admires her parents courageous decision for risking everything to provide them with a higher education. She recounts:

My country only gained its independence from Portugal in the late 1970's so there weren't any universities where we could study after high school. It was very pioneering and kind of unique for my dad, an African man, to say "I need to take my daughters, all three daughters, to the United States to give them a shot at life by educating them." He didn't say "we need to marry you off." He said "we need to educate them," so my dad was very cutting edge for his time.

As a child she was resentful at her parents for bringing her to a country where she would become undocumented and not be able to participate in school field trips or apply for financial aid to be able to go to college. However, now as a mother of three, she understands her parents' decisions and rationale. She explains:

Because I am a mother now, I understand my parents' decision. We were not in the middle of war; we were not in the middle of any of that. Our lives were not being threatened, but when I tell you that my father is the smartest man that I know for understanding that yes, my livelihood wasn't being threatened and with my father having a limited education, he knew it is a matter of life or death to

have educated girl-children and that is the most gusty thing that he could have done.

As I explained earlier in this chapter, Cesaria's *testimonio* is unique because she can speak to the experiences of being undocumented and being a United States citizen and how her feelings and outlooks have changed over time which allows her to provide a nuanced analysis that juxtaposes the challenges of undocumented migration from various lenses. First, she describes her lived realities of being an undocumented youth having resentment towards her parents for bringing her to a country where she would face obstacles in obtaining a higher education. As an adult and mother, now she understands the courage of her parents to risk everything for the betterment of their children. Her *testimonio* reveals her lived experiences of navigating and understanding the immigration system in this country. Lastly, as an academic she indexes the politicization and racialization of United States immigration practices.

Racialization and Politicization of Immigrants

Lastly, Cesaria's *testimonio* is unique because she now holds a terminal degree which challenges essentialized narratives that tend to portray undocumented people as only performing un-skilled jobs and being low wage workers. She offers not only personal accounts of her journey living undocumented in the country, but she provides a critique as an academic that is evidenced in her almost 13-page *testimonio*. For example, she discusses how certain factors such as race and political issues like the relationship that particular countries have with the United States determine how different immigrant groups are perceived and treated. In her *testimonio* she says:

I think there is a thing about race in this country I have heard from my immigration lawyer friends when they go up to the detention centers in New Hampshire and in Boston, you have Canadians and people from other European countries that will be out within a couple of hours because they have lawyers who walk in and get them out without problems it seems. I think the color of skin helps. They tell me sub-Saharan Africans and Latinos with the brown and black skin will be in there for months at a time. To get a United States visa from another country depends on the relationship that the U. S. has with that country and how that country is perceived by them as well.

Cesaria reveals personal conversations with her immigration lawyer-friends who clearly witness the racial and economic disparities and unfair practices that are present in detention centers. They have confided in her about the racial divide and the privileging of European and Canadian immigrants over those of African and Latino descent. She goes on to further reveal that these policies are put into place and explains that issues surrounding undocumented migration are politicized to gain win over the majority's votes. She explains:

There is a problem and that has to do with racism. Ultimately, the people who are representing us in congress represent the constituents and the people are that are voting for them. So, they are going to do what their constituents, those who are voting for them are saying...telling them that you need to vote this way or else you lose our vote and I think that has been one of the biggest issues why things don't move forward whether with immigration or with gun laws...Everything

is just totally political or politicized...all of a sudden immigrants we have turned into criminals and terrorists.

By Cesaria indexing how undocumented migration is politicized, she explains why certain rhetoric is used surrounding this population to sway voters. In her *testimonio* she explains that undocumented migration is a worldwide phenomenon. Thus, the motivation behind the movement of people is encouraged by various variables such as: better economic, education and job opportunities elsewhere. It is also caused by trade agreements, political instability, violence, government corruption, and religious as well as ethnic persecution. While there is no one reason to pinpoint the phenomenon of undocumented migration, the *testimonios* presented in this dissertation index how these diverse communities' identities are racialized, criminalized, and often used as political issues.

While three individual themes emerge from Cesaria's *testimonio*, her narrative connects to the larger overarching themes that were co-constructed by the participants and I as well as counter dominant undocumented migration discourses. First, as an African-born woman with a terminal degree who adjusted her undocumented status, her *testimonio* opposes commonly *misperceived identities* (theme one) that are often associated with these communities. Second, Cesaria reveals the fears that she confronted daily, her frustration with not having access to certain resources as well as not feeling confident to vocalize her opinions due to her immigration status were *silenced struggles* (theme two) that she shared with the other participants. Lastly, her similar goal of adjusting her immigration status from *aspiring citizen* (theme three) to a full-fledge legitimized United States citizens has come to fruition.

Fatima

The lady look at my name on the application and ask me “where does your name come from?” I said, “from Morocco.” She ask me “what is my religion?” I told her that I am Muslim. She told me, “I’m sorry, but if some customers know that you are Muslim they may not want you to help them.” I think after 9/11, people think that Muslims are terrorists. I do not cover myself. If you look at me you will not know that I am Muslim.

My name is Fatima. I do not want to use a fake name because this is my story. I was born in Morocco. I have fifth grade education. My mother and father left me when I was a little girl and my uncle raise me. I will not say that my uncle did not love me. He took me out of...um...obligation. I don't have any brothers or sisters with the same blood. I have one cousin who I call my brother. I never work in Morocco because my uncle did not want me outside of the house much. Most of my life in Morocco I spent inside my house because my uncle did not want me to be in the street, after the sun goes down. He let me go to sewing school, but I could not work because I would get out late. My first language is Arabic. I learn to speak French in Morocco also. The first time that I learned English was when I came to the states.

It was my dream to come to the States. I wanted to learn English in Morocco, but it was hard for me. I thought that I would never speak English. I came here because I got engage to a Moroccan man who was a U. S. citizen. He got me a visa and I came to North Carolina. I was excited and nervous on the plane. I came over on the plane with a friend because her kids live in North Carolina and

she was coming to visit them. When I came here I did not want to go back to Morocco. I wanted my freedom. The truth is I was nothing in Morocco. Nothing! Every day would pass and I was in the house except when I would leave to take classes for sewing. I wanted my freedom, not to go to parties. I just want to see life some. My uncle was very strict.

I fly from Morocco to New York and then New York to Charlotte. I had bad experience with immigration in New York. It was a lady who was like Chinese and she gave me a hard time because I didn't speak English. She was acting very rude with me and looking at me mean and talking loud. I did not understand what she was saying. She needed my finger print, but I didn't understand what she was saying. She grabbed my hand really hard and squeezed my finger and ...um...slammed it ..against the...um...the pad. My finger was hurting for weeks. After she realized that I do not understand anything and that I was in pain, she call somebody else to help me. That lady was very nice and show me step-by-step what I need to do.

After two or three months living in North Carolina I got married and everything was smooth. I never think about my visa any more. I did not speak English and I did not know how anything works here. I learn English with people. I talk to kids. I watch T.V. and I listen to the same words every day... and I learn that way. I learn English on my own. I did not have a dictionary or go to school. I just listen a lot. I was frustrated because I go to the store and I can not ask what something is. After two months in North Carolina I got a job doing alterations. I learn how to sew and do alterations in Morocco. I take classes there. When I first came to

North Carolina it was hard because I could not speak the language, but little by little I walk around and I feel like I was alive. For the first time I feel like I am alive. Everything change when I found out that my visa expire. I was very scared and stopped eating because I am nervous. I lost a lot of weight...a lot of weight. The wedding was not a real wedding. The papers were not real papers. I was not really married. We broke up. It was horrible. He told me to go back to Morocco, but I do not have freedom there. My heart was broken. I move in with my Moroccan friend. I did not know what to do. One day at work my boss from Palestine tell me that he need everybody's social security number. I kept telling him that I would bring it and he never pressure me. One day he ask me "what is wrong?" because I lost so much weight and I took the risk to tell him that my visa expire and I am illegal here. He told me to go to a lawyer and see if the lawyer can help me. The lawyer tell me that I am on a list for deportation. I was scared. He told me to keep working and stay out of trouble and nothing will happen to me. In 2001, I hire another lawyer. I had a court date and I had a car accident and miss the appointment. She got me another court date because I had an excuse. The next court date, I show up but my lawyer forgot. I went to her office all week, but her secretary said that she is out of town. Finally one day her assistant call me and tell me that they can't do anything, that they could not do anything to help me. She told me I had to get married. She told me to keep working and nobody would come for me. I was nervous because it was not easy for me to think of marry someone just like that. I found out later that my lawyer did not show up for court because she was in jail and

they took her... license... because she was taking people's money and telling them false information. I felt so sad. I thought about getting marry for my papers, but I did not want to marry someone and put my son in a bad place. I don't trust anybody because I have been through a lot in my life. I had boyfriend after my first marriage...but you know the marriage is not real. We broke up because he start to abuse me. He knew that I was illegal and he would come to my apartment and make me have sex with him. He said he will call immigration if I don't. I was scared to call the police because I thought they will deport me. It was horrible. One day I could not take it. I told him that I would not have sex with him anymore and I tell him that he can call immigration. I didn't care anymore about getting deported. I feel like nothing. After that he left me alone and he never called immigration. I have never told anybody that (crying). I have been through a lot of things.

I do not want to marry anybody for my papers. I do not want anybody around my son to hurt him like they hurt me. My son is my life. He is everything for me.

Really the only think that I ask from this country is to give me a chance to grow my ten year old son and send him to college. After that I don't care where they send me. The only thing I want is to grow my son.

Driving every day is scary. I have to drive 40 minutes to my job every day because I want my son to go to good school. I moved to an apartment in a neighborhood where he can go to good school. When I see a police car, I get scared. I drive other people. It is scary. I cannot take bus because it does not come to where I live. I have to work two times a week at night and I am too

scared to have to walk far to the bus station alone. I have to drive. Last week, they call me from my son's school. He was sick. I had to go pick him up and go to work that night. My friend take care of him. If I take the bus I don't have enough time.

The company that I work for know that I do not have my papers and some of my friends at work. The managers treat me rude sometimes because they know that I don't have my papers. Sometimes I feel like they work me like slave, but there is nothing I can do. I am a seamstress and they make me work all day and take clothes home with no extra pay. I have been working with this company for 13 years.

I know people who do not have their papers, but most speak Spanish. My ten year old son know that I do not have my papers, but he does not understand everything. One day the news came on and it was talking about the people who want to be the President of the United States. One said that if he won that he would deport all illegal people in the country. Obama said that he will help these people work here. That night my son cry and cry and can not sleep because he worry that they will come for me. He wait to see who would win and President Obama won and he was jumping up and down.

My dream is to become a citizen. My son was born here, so he is a citizen, but I am not. My son ask me to marry American man, but he does not know how some American men abuse me. He does not understand that it is not easy to get marry. I was with my son's father for many years and he can help me get my papers anytime, but he won't. He is a police officer. I sacrifice everything for this

man. I love him so much, but he took advantage of me. Now, I can't trust any man. He never said he is going to call immigration on me. He make promises to marry me and fix everything, but every year he make excuses. He knows I don't have a driver license and I drive and he never calls and checks on me and my son. He comes in and out of my son's life. He told me to move over to this neighborhood for our son and he promise to pay half, but he don't give me anything. This year... after ten years, I need help. I went to social services and I have to give my son father's name to apply for help. The lady asks me if he gives me money and I say "no." The worker help me get papers for child support. I turn in the papers. The social services they help me. I was so scared. Now, for the first time I get money from him, but he tells me that he will never come and see my son again. He wants me to stay with no papers because he wants to control me. My son...his heart is broken because his dad is not in his life, but I tell him that his dad love him because I don't want him to get depressed. I used to buy gift for father's day for him and invite him to my house, but he never show up. He told him he was coming and my son would wait. One year he told me "mommy please don't buy any more presents for him. He is not coming."

When my driver's license expire, I was so scared. I told my son that we might have to move to Morocco. He cry and beg me to stay here. He says "I am American and I want to stay here." The sad part is that I do not have a place to take him if we have to go back to Morocco. We would be homeless. My uncle pass away six months after I came here.

I feel like I'm living in jail because I do not have my papers. Every day is very stressful. I get sad sometimes because I see everybody around me happy and they don't have to worry about this. If I get my papers, I will have a lot of opportunity. People come to this country because there are a lot of opportunity. If I get my papers one day I want to go back to school to study more English. I want to have my own business. I want to have freedom for my son. I want us to do more things together that we cannot do now because it is very hard. I have to drive to work but I am always scared because I do not have a license. I had a license, but now it is expire. Now my license is no good, I worry that they will stop me and my son will never see me again and I will never see him. Every morning I cry when I tell my son goodbye because I don't know if I will come back or not. His father does not come and see him. He does not have anybody but me. I don't have anybody but him because my uncle is dead.

Being in this country without papers is very hard, especially if you have kids. If I do not have my son I think I will not worry so much. If I get deported I can deal with it alone. If I get deported with my son, he will be an orphan. I am afraid to go back home because I don't have home in Morocco. My home is here with my son. My son is a good boy. The school, they love him. His teachers love him. They say he is so good. I have been through a lot in my life and when I have my son he change my life. He gives me hope. He is my life. I am nothing without him. He was born here. He is citizen. He does not know Morocco. He is American kid. His father is American police officer and he took advantage of me. He can help me get my papers, but he won't. I think my son hates his father in

secret. My son Mohammed does not want to go to Morocco. He says “mommy I am American boy.” I am fifty years old now. I don’t care about my life. I want to give my son the best. He is young and he has a chance. He is American. He is smart. I will work every day for him. I get scared sometimes when I think what will happen to him if I get deported. I cry. I cry.

I go to work and I hear people complain about little things and I think in my heart they do not know how lucky they are to have a social security number and a license. If I had these two things I would not ask for anything else. My company they treat me like I am less than everybody else. My manger she treat me different. I feel it. Some workers ask me why I let my boss talk to me like that.

They tell me that she need me and they tell me to quit and get a better job. They don’t know that I don’t have my papers. If I have my papers, I will quit.

Last week, I was working late and I was working with the dresses and I fell down.

I slip and fell and knock over the iron board. I was screaming because I have pain in my shoulder. My manager came in and saw me on the floor screaming.

She look around and see what made me fall. She see the ironing board and iron

on the floor and she pick up that stuff before she help me. After she pick up the

iron, she put out her hand to help me get up. I get up in pain and I told her that I

want to go home. She said okay and told me to take some Tylenol. When I got

home, my friend brings me something to wrap up my shoulder and arm. I had so

much pain. I came back to work the next day and one of my friends at work saw

me and ask me what happen. I told her. She ask me if the other manager file

accident report. I tell her “no.” She tell me that they have to file report. The other

manager looked at me like she is mad with me. She takes out the papers and writes the report and tell me that I can go to the doctor and they will pay for it. I go to the doctor and they give me some pain medicine and take picture of my shoulder. My shoulder was out of place. They want me to have surgery, but I am scared. I don't know if I will do it.

The reason we immigrants are here is because we want to work. I just ask the government to give us a chance. We work hard. We want to work and have a family. If people do big crimes they should not get papers. I pay taxes for thirteen years. There are some Americans who do not pay taxes. They do not want to work. If I do not get my papers I will not get social security. I pay my taxes and they take money from my check for this.

On the news they always talk about Latinos. I say to myself what about me? I feel left out. They always just talk about Latinos. They talk about Mexico and jumping <she means crossing> the border. Latinos have a lot of people to help them because they want their votes. Yes, there are lots of Latinos here, but what about the rest of us? We are here too. I like Spanish people, but we don't have nobody. Many people come up to me and try to speak Spanish with me. They think that I am Latino. One time I tell a woman who is speaking to me in Spanish, "I don't speak Spanish " and she look at me like I am lying. My American customer, when they hear my accent, they think I speak Spanish and try to practice with me. When I tell them that I am from Morocco they are surprised. In the store when we have customers who speak Spanish. They call me because I

am foreigner and I guess they think we can understand each other (laughs). I learn a couple of words and I try to help everybody.

When I come to this country I learn about race: Black and White. In Morocco, Black, Brown, and White people go to the same Mosque together. Here, they have Black church, White church, and Spanish church. Many Americans think that all illegal immigrants are from Mexico. I do not know what is my race.. When people ask me, I say "I am nothing." I say "I am human." I am the same as everybody. I know what the word *discrimination* is now because people treat me bad many times. One time, I am working and my boyfriend brings me lunch. He is American. After he leave, a lady in the store where I work say to me that "you foreign women are taking our men." She tell me that I need to date my own race and leave their men alone. She does not know American men treat us worst because we do not have power. I have problems with my accent too. One day, I was helping a customer and she tell me she needs somebody who can speak English clearly. I have a lot of stories. One time I went to the hospital and the nurse ask me my religion. I was scared to tell her. I thought they would do me something bad, but she says to me they have to ask everybody these questions. On T.V. they show a lot of Muslim terrorists. I am illegal and Muslim. I feel more scared. I was scared to go to the hospital because I do not have my papers, but I was very sick. I have many stories. Many Americans are nice to me, but some people are ignorant. I thank God every day that I have a job and he protect me and my son.

On the news when they talk about illegal immigrants, they always talk about Latinos. Latinos, Latinos, Latinos! It is not fair. Some people say they do not want Mexicans here, because they watch the news about people jumping <she means crossing> the border. They do not understand. I am illegal too, but I am from Morocco. I speak Arabic not Spanish. Maybe, if people know my story...maybe they will understand more...maybe they will see that I am a good person. Yes, there are people who come and do drugs and do crimes. They make it bad for us. Now people think we are all criminals. I am not a criminal. I am a mother. I work. I pay my bills. I pay my taxes. Most of us just want to work. Yes, we are illegal, but we are people too. I am Muslim, yes, but I'm not terrorist. I pray to God and try to be a good person. People who have their papers don't care about people like me. I am nobody. I am nothing to them. They treat their dog and cat better than me. People who do not have their papers like me, they understand what I say. They suffer and sacrifice a lot because they want better life for their families. They have my same tears and my same hopes.

I always watch the news about immigration because I have hope for change. I know that God is big. I come to work one day and I ask my friend if she hear on the news that President Obama may help illegal immigrant kids get their papers. She did not know what I was talking about. People who have their papers don't care about immigration. She tells me "I don't want to be mean, but President Obama need to stop let illegal people in the country. They just want to take all of our stuff and we don't know if they are terrorists or killers." I tell her that I am immigrant too and I am not a criminal. I tell her that immigrants just want to work

and want their kids to have opportunity. She says “oh no Fatima you are different. You did not sneak across the border and you don’t have a lot of kids.” She says the “President should not help people who break the law.” I tell her that “I am illegal too.” After I say that I feel scared, but I want her to know that I am the same as these people. She was shocked that I am illegal. She asks me lots of questions. I told her my story and she cry. She says that she did not know and she want to help me because I am a good person. Now, she reads everything about immigration and try to help me.

If I get my papers, I want to help people too. I want to volunteer. I want to help little girls like me who don’t have any mothers. I want to teach them to sew. I want to give them love, so they don’t get abuse like me. I don’t want them to know abuse. Me and my son go with a American family to give food to homeless people. I cook food for homeless people one time a month. We go under the bridges. I want to help people more, people like me who don’t have their papers. I want to tell people who are down and have no hope, “God, he is big. If I can make it, anybody can. I have no parents. I don’t have good education. I was poor from Morocco, but God show me how to sew.” I can make any dress. I sew and make money. I have customer at work and they come to my house. I don’t have abuse anymore. I have nice apartment. I have a car. If I have my papers, I can do more.

I am happy, but I want to be happy so when I lay my head on my pillow I have no worries that they will deport me. I want things for my son. I want to help other people. I want to take my son to see my country. I want to buy a house. I want to

have my own company. I have so many things that I want to do. God always is with me. He never put me down. I have gone through a lot of things, but he is here. He pick me up. I want people to know that I am not an angel, but I want to be an angel to help everybody. I don't know. God brought me to this world different and I want to help people and give them love. I want to give what I did not have. I have love now from my son, but many people don't have anybody. I have suffer a lot but God bless me a lot.

In December...2009...my friend call me and invite me to her house to pick up food for me and my son. I go to the parking lot of my apartment and put my son in his car seat. He was little. I turn around and a man put a gun to my head and push me back in the car and say "give me your purse." I give it to him. Thank God, he left after he take my purse. After that, I am so scared. My son is scared too. Ever since then I am always scared. I don't want to go outside. I don't like for my son to go outside after the sun is down. People think I am crazy, but I am scared. I put chains on my door at night. I work and come home. I did not call the police because I do not have my papers. When I tell people this they tell me that I need to talk to someone to help me. I have been through so much. I am so scared to leave my house. All of my friends tell me that I have to trust people again. After my bad experience with men, I make a promise to God that I will never let another man in my house. I did not know anything when I come to this country. Men take advantage of me. They lie to me. They break my heart. Now, I think that men are bad. Especially, I think men take advantage of people like me from another country with no papers. I have a girlfriend from Colombia who does

not have her papers like me and her boyfriend abuse her too. They know that we do not have power to talk. If you go to the police or immigration nobody is going to believe you. They put you in jail and deport you.

I don't want anything free. I don't go to the government for help. I want to show my son a good example. I want him to see his mom work hard. In the future he will work hard for his family too. I have to get Medicaid this year for my son because he has allergy and asthma. The medicine is too expensive. I do not want to do it. I was ashamed. The doctor tell me to get insurance for him because he is American. That is the only thing I ask from the government. I never want to get child support, but my American friend tell me to go because I need the money. She help me. My son is ten. I tell his father I need help and need child support. He tell me that he will never come see his son again if I go to court. He tell me that he will call immigration on me. I was scared, but I did it. I have child support for 6 months now. My American friend says that he will get in trouble if he calls immigration because he is a police officer and that is against the law. I feel sad for my son because his dad does not want to see him anymore. He never sees him a lot, but I know that his heart is broken.

I think the immigration laws are not fair. It is not easy for everybody because maybe they have problems with the law, big and small problems. Everybody's situation is different. I think it is very hard for Mexicans because they are close to the United States and have to jump <cross> over the border. They do not have visas. I think it is more hard for people who have to jump <cross> the border. I know a Mexican woman who jump <cross> the border and now she has

American husband. They apply for her papers, but they do not give her anything because she does not have a visa... a passport...nothing. They told her she has to go back to her country and her husband have to apply for her to come here. In Morocco, only people who have lots of money in the bank get visa. If you do not have money, they think you will go and stay. A lot of people want to come here, but they cannot because they cannot get a visa.

I never go to protest <she means "rallies"> to fight for immigrants. I am scared. I cannot put myself in places like that. They may take me away from my son. I am a illegal person, I am always scared that somebody will deport me and take me away from my son. I am always scared. I walk scared every day. I am afraid to go to the store alone or be outside after dark. It is hard for me to sleep at night time. I tell some people I trust that I am illegal, but not many because you cannot trust people. Maybe, they will call immigration to come and get you. I thank God and trust him only. Honestly, I don't think that protest stuff helps me. I try to be patient and give thanks.

I know there are illegal people from everywhere in the United States. I know illegal people from Africa, Spanish countries, and Europe. Most people think Mexicans are illegal, but there are people from everywhere. I don't know the word "undocument...undocumented," I know "illegal." I do not like the word 'illegal' because that is what they call you. "Illegal" makes you feel like a criminal, like you have no life, and that you need to go back to your country. I think that if some people know that I don't have my papers they will treat me like I am not human being and like I need to go and get a life. Some people are nice and

some people are mean. It doesn't matter what color they are or what color I am. There are good and bad people.

I don't think people treat me bad because I am from another country. They treat me bad because I don't have my papers and they know I can't talk free. People who don't have their papers get treat bad because they are scared and can't speak up. If I talk, where will I go? I don't have family here who has their papers to help me. I don't have family in Morocco to go back to. I do not have family except my ten year old son. I have to stay quiet now, but I know there is a God and I have hope.

Analysis of Individual Themes (Fatima)

While all of the participants experiences are compelling and they all face(d) various struggles being undocumented in the country, Fatima's *testimonio* was the hardest for me to collect and compose. For months, all I could remember were her tears recounting her experiences of her multiple abuses by men, her abandonment by her parents, her fear of her son becoming an orphan like her if she ever gets deported, and being afraid to reveal that she is Muslim. I was so moved by her strong religious faith despite her trauma, her humble spirit, and openness with me. She revealed to me at the end of the interview that she had never told anybody about some of those experiences and she thanked me for listening to her because she felt better as a result. I was not prepared mentally for the emotions that I would confront during and after I collected and composed these five *testimonios*.

I was so focused on collecting *testimonios* about how to address social justice concerns regarding immigration policies and practices within undocumented

communities, I had forgotten about the deeper problems of humanity like relationship abuse, abandonment, childhood trauma, and mental and physical pain. For example, Fatima was wearing a shoulder sling when I met with her, but I would not learn until later in her *testimonio* that it had resulted from a fall at work which would call for several surgeries. Within Fatima's *testimonio*, three individual themes emerge that are not shared by the other participants. First, Fatima's experience with religious discrimination which supports her fear to reveal her Islamic faith is unique. Second, she has multiple experiences with mental, physical, and sexual abuse by American men who she believes used her due to her undocumented status in the country. Lastly, she is the only participant who does not have family support because her parents left her as an orphan at an early age.

Religious Discrimination

The quote that I highlighted at the beginning of Fatima's *testimonio* explains how she applied for a part time job as a seamstress, but because of her Arabic last name, she was told that customers might not want to work with her because of her Islamic beliefs and was denied the job. It is argued that the September 11th terrorist attacks in 2001 (9/11) caused Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to be governed by a newly designed Department of Homeland Security in 2003 which would (un)consciously now construct immigrants as national "security threats" to justify increased border control. Although Fatima explains that no one would know that she was Muslim if they just looked at her because she does not cover herself, her fear of being seen as a terrorist and being mistreated is revealed when she seeks treatment at a hospital and they inquire about her religious beliefs. She explains:

One time I went to the hospital and the nurse asked me my religion. I was scared to tell her. I thought that they would do something bad to me, but she told me that they have to ask everyone these questions. I know that the TV shows a lot of Muslim terrorists. I am illegal and a Muslim. I feel more scared I was already scared to go to the hospital because I do not have my papers, but I was very sick.

By presenting diverse *testimonio*'s of undocumented people like Fatima, issues of religious discrimination are exposed which is not a common topic surrounding these communities. For example, since the September 11 terrorist attacks, government officials have used these incidents to justify increased militarization of the United States-Mexico border as well as racial and linguistic profiling of people from certain countries and those who wear Islamic clothing have been increasingly targeted. However, during my dissertation research and advocacy work in North Carolina over three years within undocumented communities, I did not encounter any data or hear concerns from undocumented people who faced religious discrimination in the United States. Fatima was the first person who brought my attention to this issue. In retrospect, I realize that my research site mainly reached out to undocumented Latinos at Catholic and Christian Churches which may have contributed to my unawareness.

Mental, Sexual, and Physical Abuse

Fatima explains in her *testimonio* that she does not trust men due to multiple negative experiences. First, she recounts how she was brought over to the United States on a tourist visa which she was led to believe was a fiancé visa by an American of Moroccan descent. Her alleged fiancé posed a false wedding ceremony to make her

believe that they had gotten legally married. She eventually discovered the secret and realized that she had become undocumented because she only had permission to be in the country for up to six months. Later after leaving this man she began to date another man who she tried to break up with after incidents of abuse, but he threatened to have her deported if she did not continue to have sex with him. She reveals that he raped her for a period of time until she felt worthless and eventually was so broken told him that she didn't care if he got her deported and warned him that she would call the police if he did not stop abusing her. Next, years later, she falls in love with a police officer who she has a son with and who makes promises to marry her to adjust her status, but never fulfills his promises. He would come in and out of their lives for years without paying child support for ten years. Lastly, she was assaulted and robbed at gun point in front of her son in a parking lot. The trauma from these abuses has left her scared to leave her house and bring men around her son.

Fatima's *testimonio* reveals several forms of abuse as well as it indexes how she is *othered* in various ways. Previously I mentioned how she has faced discrimination due to her immigration status and Islamic beliefs. She also revealed that she feels that immigrant women are targeted and mistreated by American men. However, her *testimonio* demonstrates that she has been unfairly treated by both men and women due to discriminatory beliefs. She recounts:

Another time, I was working and my boyfriend came to bring me lunch. He was American. After he left, a lady that was in the store where I work came to me and told me that "you foreign women are taking our men." She told me that I need to

date my own race and leave their men alone. She does not know that American men treat us worst because we do not have power.

Fatima's *testimonio* reveals a common fear by many undocumented people; to report crimes due to their immigration status. They fear being deported and in turn end up having to endure abuses and injustices. What is ironic about Fatima's situation is the fact that the father of her son is a police officer. The father of her child who is charged to enforce laws does not want to abide by them. Although Fatima says that he never threatened to get her deported, he does tell her that if she seeks child support for their son through the court system that he will never come and visit him again. Now that her child is ten years old, a woman who works for social services convinced and helped her get child support from her son's father. Fatima also recalls a friend who was getting abused by her boyfriend, but she was afraid to contact the police. She says:

I have a girlfriend from Colombia who does not have her papers like me and her boyfriend abused her too. They know that we do not have the power to talk. If I got to the police or immigration nobody is going to believe you.

Fatima and her friend are somewhat justified in being afraid to contact the police due to programs like *Secure Communities* also known as *287(g)* which allows states to partner with ICE which gives local officials the authority to inquire about immigration status and arrest undocumented people and hold them for ICE officials to detain and place in deportation proceedings. For example, in Alamance County in North Carolina, Latino leaders argued that Latinos were being racially profiled and targeted because police were accused of strategically setting up checkpoints near predominately Latino

neighborhoods and near social venues that they frequented. Immigration programs like this deter undocumented people from reporting crimes and trusting local police officials.

Abandonment and Fear of Homelessness

Fatima is the only participant that does not discuss or reference her family from her birth country. She recounts at the beginning of her *testimonio*:

My mother and father left me when I was a little girl and my uncle raised me. I will not say that my uncle did not love me. He took me out of obligation. I don't have any brothers or sisters with the same blood. I have one cousin who I call my brother. Most of my life in Morocco I am inside my house because my uncle did not want me to be in the street, especially after the sun would go down.

Her situation is unique in that she identifies herself as an orphan and explains that her uncle who cared for her after her parents died also passed away shortly after she moved to the United States. Fatima reveals that "if I get deported with my son, he would have to be an orphan. I am afraid to go back home because I don't have home in Morocco." Despite the hardships that Fatima knows that both her and her son would face, she still hopes on adjusting her status one day so that she can give back and help young girls. She explains:

If I get my papers I want to help people too. I want to help little girls like me who don't have any mothers. I want to teach them to sew. . I want to give them love, so they don't get abuse like me. I don't want them to know abuse.

Fatima's *testimonio* reveals a variety of experiences that I argue are often obscured due to dominant narratives which are commonly couched in United-States-Mexico border rhetoric that tends to target people of Mexican descent hiding the diversity and

obstacles of all of the members of undocumented communities. Fatima's *testimonio* uncovers her individual identity such as her generous spirit, Islamic beliefs, Arabic language, and Moroccan culture which counter *(mis)perceived identities* (theme one) that are commonly associated with undocumented people who are often racialized and constructed to speak the same language and practice the same religion. Fatima's experiences of mental, sexual, physical and labor abuse also connect to the second overarching theme of *silenced struggles* that many undocumented people endure secretly out of fear of being exposed and deported. Lastly, Fatima indexes how she is an *aspiring citizen* (theme three) by paying taxes every year, and demonstrating her devotion and concern for her U.S.-born son's livelihood because they do not have a home in Morocco to return to or a willing adult to care for him in the United States if she is deported. She also desires to contribute to society by helping the homeless and young girls who do not have parents like her.

Sunil

The government is not helpful when they treat you like you are a terrorist. They group everyone in one category. I am a worker born in another country without a social security number and I do not have legal permission to work in the country, but I am not a killer or a threat to this country. I love this country. I just want a fair chance.

I have been in the United States for eleven years. I have lived and worked in this country since 2001. I do not feel American and I do not feel Indian either. I don't know what I am anymore. I don't know what it all means. It makes me depressed and sad to feel like I don't have anything to live for sometimes because I don't have a legal status. I run a business and I work hard cooking. I bust my ass! The

restaurant owners and the workers depend on me. I have been mistreated by co-workers and management. They have threatened to call immigration on me if I ask for a salary or for fair wages. They only pay me for the hours that I work. I have seen many undocumented people be mistreated because of their legal status. There are people who were born here who are lazy. It makes me angry when I see people here who don't take advantage of what this country has to offer. The government is not helpful when they treat you like you are a terrorist. They group everyone in one category. I am a worker born in another country without a social security number and I do not have legal permission to work in the country, but I am not a killer or a threat to this country. I love this country. I just want a fair chance.

I feel useless sometimes and have anxiety about being undocumented. I can be deported at any time for nothing. It makes me angry. There are so many people who are born here and do nothing, but they beg for money. I work hard, but they get to stay here because they were born here. Some people stay home and drink and are unemployed, but I work so hard. I get really depressed and frustrated, but I remember; I came here and I had nothing and I became so successful.

Today, I am a Head Chef in a restaurant. This is a big accomplishment. I am so proud of myself, but I cannot share it with my family in India. I cannot earn the money that I would get if I was a citizen. I feel like my life has many restrictions because I do not have a social security number to work and live here legally.

My name is Sunil and I am thirty six years old. I was born in Thanjavur, India. It is in southern India. Both of my parents were born there as well and continue to live

there today. Growing up, my mom tended to the farm, cared for the kids, and home life. My dad was a full time farmer. He grew chilies, rice, peanuts, lentils, and sugarcane. He also raised cows, chickens, and goats. My parent's education levels are different. My dad has his bachelor's degree and my mom only finished second grade, maybe. My mom cannot read or write. We grew up speaking Tamil and I learned English in school as well as other languages when I began to work. My mom does not speak English, but my dad, my brothers, and sisters understand and speak it a little. There are a variety of languages spoken in India.

I am the oldest of three children. I am the only one out of my family who wanted to come to the United States. Amal is thirty-two. He is the second oldest son and is an electrical engineer who lives in India. Archana is the youngest daughter. She is twenty-eight and is a homemaker like my mom. She finished high school and junior college and lives in India as well. I finished high school and dropped out of college to pursue a culinary arts degree in Mumbai. I was studying chemistry, but I was bored and I was very passionate about cooking. Plus, I could make money quickly by cooking. I knew that I wanted to come to the states, so I moved to Mumbai to work and I learned different languages. I also learned how to cook different dishes. Because I was a hard worker and cooked very well, I was able to get a job as a cook on a large cruise ship. It was hard work, but I got to travel and see people from all over the world.

I decided to come to the states in 2003 because I wanted to make money so I could help support my family in India. Plus, I had big dreams for myself. As I

explained earlier, no one else in my family had any desire to come to the States. My decision was my own and my family supported me even though they did not want to come. I traveled alone to the United with a C1-D visa. This is a visa for cruise ship workers. I got here and was issued an I-94 form which gave me temporary permission to be in the country. I walked off of the cruise ship one day and never thought of the danger really. I will never forget when I came to the U.S. It was like a dream! I felt lots of emotions. I was nervous. I was very excited and scared at the same time. I was afraid, but I knew in my heart that I could do it. I was so focused. I knew that I would become a great chef.

I knew overstaying my visa was a mistake, but I knew in my heart that I never wanted to go back to India. I came to Memphis first and then went to New Orleans. In New Orleans, I took a plane to Boston where I knew someone from my country. I have lived most of my time in the States in Boston, Massachusetts. I lived there with friends. They helped me a lot. I met my girlfriend in Boston about three years ago. I did not tell her that I was undocumented until recently when we found out that she was pregnant.

I just came to North Carolina recently with my girlfriend. She is American and I just recently told her about me being undocumented. At first she freaked out because she was pregnant and was scared that somebody would come and get me or her and separate our soon to be family. She did not know anything about what being undocumented meant really. It is hard for her because she doesn't want anything to happen to me and she knows some people will not have understanding if they know that I'm undocumented. She wanted us to come to

North Carolina because this is her home. Rosie's <girlfriend> family is here and I don't have family in this country. North Carolina is different from Boston, but I like it so far. She convinced me to come and talk about my story with you because her friend is a member of your group. I did not want to talk about this with her or with anyone. She has been asking me to share my story with you for more than a month because she said that people do not know that there are people from India who are undocumented. We argued about why I did not want to talk about my experiences. It makes me sad, angry, and scared. Honestly, it is embarrassing. This is not something that I talk about with anyone, not even my friends. We just live our lives and work. Rosie told me that her friend has known you for many years and that you can be trusted. She says that you want to know about undocumented people struggles in the states. It is not easy to talk about this. It makes me frustrated and sad. I have to keep working and living my life. I don't really have time to think about this.

Being undocumented makes everyone suffer. It's hard on my family in India and the people who love me here like Rosie. My family in India does not sleep. They always cry. They always worry if I'm in jail and if I have food. They feel like I am not talking to them enough. They haven't seen me in eleven years. My parents are in their sixties. I have always had hope that I would become legal one day. I also knew that if I could not become legal, I would die here. When I first got here I was more focused on making money than worrying about becoming a U. S. citizen. Things were good and I fell in love with the American society and the way

of life here. I never had any plans of bringing my family over, but they would want to see what I have accomplished though.

I am scared of being deported. I stay with people from my own country to keep from being deported. My friend's friends got deported, but they were committing crimes. At the same time I have had friends who came here the same way that I did and they just got their status changed by having someone marry them. I keep having lawyers tell me that it won't work for me. I am so scared that it won't work. They tell me that they cannot adjust the status of the visa that I have. They say that I will have to go back to India for 10 years before I can return legally. My girlfriend and I plan on getting married. We will try to adjust my status through marriage, but I am scared that I will never be able to return or get approved because lawyers in Boston told me that the visa that I entered the country with cannot be adjusted. They tell me that I have to go back to India and serve a 10 year penalty first and then I can apply to come here legally. I have lived and worked here for eleven years. I am a chef. I have a girlfriend and soon a wife here. My life is here.

When I got here in the states people were rude. They made me wait for hours in Memphis and New Orleans. The only person that was nice to me was an Indian person in Boston who picked me up from the airport. He gave me a coat. I was cold. It was winter. I didn't have a coat. I walked outside and it was freezing. I ran back inside. I had never felt cold like that before. I walked back inside like three times it was so cold. I remember an officer came over and asked me what was wrong probably because he thought that I was up to something. I was scared that

he might ask me for my documents. I left the airport and stayed in a small apartment with a person from my country. I got a job as a cook. I worked long hours, but I was determined to become a chef. I worked at several restaurants. I would work extra hours and I cooked very well, so I kept getting promoted up I guess, but I still made less than Americans. They knew that I didn't have my social security. Everyone depended on me and I knew that I had a lot of skills and knowledge because I was trained in Dubai and I have experience from cooking on the cruise ship.

I don't think that immigration processes or laws are fair at all. It's easier for people from Nepal and European countries to come here. It is very hard to get a visa to come here because of the country where I was born. The only reason that I got a visa was to work on a cruise ship. Maybe if you are a rich Indian and have connections you can come to this country easy. I think that if anyone comes here and works hard and does not commit any crimes that they should be allowed to stay here. This is a place for everyone to do well. There are so many good people who come here to do good things. I am one of them.

I know people from all over the world who are undocumented. I think that most people come here on visa and just stay once it expires. The ones I know are from India. I think that people in the U. S. treat us okay as long as they don't know that we are undocumented. Most Americans do not know that there are undocumented Indians in the country. They know about Hispanics because it is on the news. I think they think that India is too far away for us to get here illegally. It is not common for my friends and I to talk about being undocumented. We just

work. When I told my employers that I was undocumented, they looked at me different. I don't care about the names they call me. It doesn't bother me at all. I came here different than the people who crossed the border, but we are all here without proper documentation.

I have never participated in any rallies or protest for undocumented immigrants. I don't like to do those rally things. I am afraid. Maybe one day if I get my status adjusted, I will do it to help others. I don't know anything about that thing (Morton Memo) you mentioned. I think if you don't commit a crime, you should be able to stay period. But I know one guy who got deported.

Instead of it being about our status, I think Americans need to remember that we are people. We have families like them. The only difference is... I don't know. I think that the way they look at undocumented people is like we are taking something from them. This is not true. I work hard cooking in a restaurant. I am a very hard worker and that is what America is supposed to be about. If you work hard you get rewards. Of course if someone commits a crime they should go. No questions asked. They should leave, but if you come here and work hard and follow the rules you should have an opportunity. I just think people should see that we are good honest hard working people who came here because things in our country are so bad that we couldn't take it. There is a reason why we came here. They should know that it is not because we want to take from this country. The people here should try to live in our countries just for a week they wouldn't last. Coming here from India...it was a huge adjustment. I have busted my ass! Nobody has given me anything. I have worked for everything. I came here

because things were bad in my country and I could not make money. It was just really bad for me. This is a country of immigrants and one day things will change. I have hope.

Individual Emergent Themes (Sunil)

Sunil's *testimonio* is revealing because some of his experiences are unique from the other participants due to two factors. First, he is the only one who arrived by sea. This mode of entry by sea into the United States is not commonly discussed or examined in rhetoric surrounding (un)documented immigration. Second, he was the only participant who appeared to be reluctant and uneasy about sharing his story which is also evidenced by his counter-narrative being the shortest in length. I would also like to insert that Sunil is the only participant without a child.

Arriving by Sea

Sunil's *testimonio* support my argument that dominant United States-Mexico border rhetoric hides the diverse modes and people who enter the country. While I knew that there were a sizeable amount of people from India who had fallen out of status in the United States because they overstayed their visas, I was unaware of people becoming undocumented by entering the country with a C1-D visa. Sunil reveals:

I traveled alone to the United States with a C1-D visa. This is a visa for cruise ship workers. I got here and was issued an I-94 form which gave me temporary permission to be in the country. I walked off of the cruise ship one day and never thought of the danger really. I will never forget when I came to the United States. It was like a dream.

A *C1-D visa* is a combination of two visas. First, the non-immigrant *D-visa* is issued to sea vessel or international airlines workers who travel to United States. The *D-visa* usually requires a *C1* (alien in transit) visa which allows employees to be able to travel within countries for work purposes only (travel.state.gov). Accordingly these non-immigrant visas are rarely able to be adjusted inside the United States without an extreme hardship or asylum approved petition. Accordingly, Sunil expresses his frustration with this policy. He explains:

My girlfriend and I plan on getting married. We will try to adjust my status through marriage, but I am scared that I will never be able to return or get approved because lawyers in Boston told me that the visa that I entered the country with cannot be adjusted. They tell me that I have to go back to India and serve a 10 year penalty first and then I can apply to come here legally. I have lived and worked here for eleven years. I am a chef. I have a girlfriend and soon a wife here. My life is here.

Due to the fact that people who enter into the country with a *C1-D visa* arrive without inspection, if they remain in the country they are considered to have arrived *illegally* and are considered undocumented. Unlike three of the other participants who entered with tourist visas (temporary permission), they passed through *Immigration Customs and Enforcement* (ICE) inspection and were cleared, but Sunil did not.

Uneasiness Telling His *Testimonio*

It was very apparent through Sunil's *testimonio* that he has mixed emotions about sharing his experiences. He clearly explains that his girlfriend convinced him to participate because this is not a topic that he feels comfortable discussing. He says:

She convinced me to come and talk about my story with you because a friend is a member of your group. I did not want to talk about this with her or with anyone. She has been asking me to share my story with you for over a month. Because she said that people do not know that there are people from India who are undocumented. We argued about why I did not want to talk about my experiences. It makes me sad, angry, and scared. Honestly, it is embarrassing. This is not something that I talk about with anyone, not even my friends.

His girlfriend, who was present for the interview, explained that she wants him to tell his story to help him heal from the various ways in which his status is affecting his life. She witnesses his pain and frustration, but recognizes that she is unable to truly understand how it makes him feel. Sunil explains in his *testimonio* that although he is a successful chef, he has various emotions surrounding the fact that he does not earn as much as he should, that he cannot travel to visit his family in India, and that he faces being deported if he is discovered. He reminds me again in the interview about his uneasiness in discussing being undocumented. He says “it is not easy to talk about this. It makes me frustrated and sad. I have to keep working and living my life. I don’t really have time to think about this.” He explains his nervousness about the possibility of having to return to India for 10 years before he can apply to enter the United States legally. He also shares his concern for how his status is affecting his family. He explains “my family in India does not sleep. They always cry. They always worry if I’m in jail and if I have food. They feel like I am not talking to them enough.” Being undocumented not only affects the individual, but it concerns all of the people in this person’s life.

Although Sunil expresses his uneasiness about being undocumented, his

testimonio is very telling and his emotions align with the other participants' continuum of feelings. For example, he continuously expresses his desire as an *aspiring citizen* (theme three) to be a full-fledge authorized member of the country. He explains that he "loves" the United States and even feels conflicted about his Indian and United States identity due to the fact that he has lived in the country for 11 years. Sunil also addresses the everyday realities of being undocumented such as being treated differently, being unable to drive, and underpaid. However it appears that his most *silenced struggle* (theme two) is facing the harsh reality that he may have to continue to live undocumented without a pathway to adjust his status or risk never being permitted to re-enter the country if he decides to return to India to serve the 10 year penalty for entering the country without permission. Sunil's mode of entry by sea and him being of Indian descent counters the *misperceived identities* (theme one) of how undocumented people enter and from where they originate.

Paris

I don't like the word undocumented. It sounds so ugly. They should just call us who we are. We are people from other countries working and living in the United States.

My name is Paris and I am from Colombia. I am fifty-two years old. In Colombia there were ten people in my family; my parents, seven daughters and one son. My mother has never worked. She is a stay-at-home mom. My dad was a coffee and banana farmer, but when he got older he could not work because he suffers from heart problems and had to sell his farm. I finished high school and one year of a technical college to become a Dental Hygienist in Colombia. I worked for two

years as a Dental Hygienist in Colombia and I stopped working after I had my daughter.

Only two of my ten family members live in the United States. One of my sisters was a head nurse, but she is retired now. Two of my other sisters studied in the university, but they have never worked. In Colombia, it is hard to find work even if you have a degree. My brother helped my dad and my other sisters are housewives. My sister who is in the United States came over with a visa and is lives without her papers like me.

Honestly, I never wanted to come to the United States. I was recently married and my husband wanted to come and work. So, he applied for visas for us and I told him that I will go to the interview for the U. S. visa, but I told him that "I'm not going." They gave us tourist visas and he went to the United States and I stayed in Colombia with our daughter. He kept begging me to come and told me that our daughter could learn English. Eventually, he convinced me and I came over with my daughter to join him. I came and stayed for one year and I returned to Colombia with my daughter because we had marriage problems. He convinced me to come back and we stayed together for about two to three years and eventually we separated. This time he left and I stayed in North Carolina with our daughter.

The image that I had of the United States was that it was a country where you had to work very hard and for long hours. I had been told by other Colombians that Americans pass the day working and they don't have any time to enjoy life. I never wanted to come to the United States because I lived comfortably in

Colombia, but my daughter really wanted to come to the United States. She watched movies from here and wanted to learn English. She was only eight years old, but she was very fascinated with coming here and that is really why I came and stayed the second time. Many Colombians told me that you had to work very hard in the United States and you spend all of your time working and I did not want that. It is true. I was not used to working so much and for so many hours in Colombia like I do here. It was very hard for me to get used to working so much here, but now I am used to it.

I am the youngest of the family, so my family did not want me to come because they loved me so much. I took care of my parents and helped them the most because I was the youngest. My father was very sad when I left because he thought that he would never see me again. He was right. I left in August and he died in December. I could have gone back to his funeral because I had my visa at that time, but I did not go back because it was too painful and I wanted to keep the memories of him that I had when he was alive.

Our visa was good for five years. In Colombia, you are only allowed to travel for six months at a time with the visa, but it is good for five years. At one time in Colombia it was very easy to get a visa and you could renew it by mail after five years. For example, we were in the United States, but we renewed our visas from here and they gave us permission for another five years. So, I had two visas for ten years. Before the second five-year visa expired I travelled back to Colombia for one month. The third time I wanted to apply for another five year

visa, they told me that I had to present myself and I could not because I was in the United States.

I came to the United States fifteen years ago in 1999. The visa process was easy for us because my husband had a government job. We both had permanent jobs at the time. I worked at a clinic full-time. We also had a house. Some people are lucky and they do not have to do anything. They just show up for the interview and they don't even look over or verify their documents. They just give them the visas. I don't know why some people are lucky and others are not. I think it depends on the person who is working. It is random. Some people they make go through an interview and others they just give it to them without an interview. We had to go through an interview I think just because it is a random process. I really cannot tell you why they make some people go through interviews to get visas and verify their documents and others they just let pass through.

When I was coming over on the airplane to the United States I was nervous and happy at the same time. I was happy for my daughter, but nervous about living in a new country. The first day we arrived I was happy, but the next day I was so bored and wanted to return to Colombia. I cried and cried. I knew that life in the United States would be a life of working because many Colombians who lived in the United States already warned me.

When we arrived we lived in an apartment with my brother-in-law and his family in North Carolina. We arrived during the summer and I remember thinking that I would not be able to take the dry heat here. It was horrible. I felt like I was going to die with that heat. I eventually started taking free English classes at the local

community college. I didn't speak a lot of English because I felt very insecure about my pronunciation and accent, but I wrote very well and I understood a lot. I had to stop going to classes because I got a job working in a factory during that time. When I first started working at the factory, I didn't think that I was going to make it more than three days because I had to stand up the entire time. I worked from 7am to 4pm and my legs hurt me so bad. When I got home every day I was dying from being so tired. I had no choice, but to get used to it and I worked there for three years. When my husband and I separated, he went to New York for six months and then returned to Colombia. I had gotten used to life in the United States and my daughter loved it here, so we stayed. I started working at night cleaning offices. I did that for about three years also until the cleaning contract ended. It ended because they started checking and asking for the workers social security numbers and we did not have one. We were hard workers and worked extra and I think they wanted to get rid of us because we earned the most. I never have tried to get false documents like a social security because nobody asked me for one until years later when I worked with another Colombian without her papers cleaning offices. They let both of us go because we did not have a social security card. Unfortunately, my daughter was in an accident and we got money from it and we were lucky because with this money we could pay our bills and eat while we were unemployed. It was unfortunate, but it was a blessing because I did not have any money saved.

When I first came to the United States, I never thought I would come to stay. I only asked my employer for permission for three months to miss work. I went

back to Colombia for a short time, but there was an earthquake at this time and our apartment was damaged and we didn't have insurance. So, that was another reason that I decided to come back to the United States. My daughter also has loved the United States since the first day that we arrived and she was young and learned English very fast. My brother-in-law helped my daughter and I a lot when my ex-husband left and eventually my daughter and I got our own apartment. I have been working ever since and going forward ever since.

When my daughter got older she married a Colombian-American and got her residency through marriage, but they are separated right now. She can travel back to Colombia, but she does not want to because she knows the American life more than the Colombian life. Plus, she is mad at her dad because she feels like he left her and never really helped us economically. I would love to go back to Colombia to see my mom, my country, and my family.

I have never really accepted the word or thought of myself as "illegal" or "undocumented" until I got stopped by a police officer one day. I remember that I was very nervous because I did not have a drivers' license because I can't get one. When he came to my car, he said that his computer showed that I did not have car insurance, but I did because I never stopped paying it. He told me that I had to park my car and he took off my license plate. He was very nice and took me to my house because I could not drive with an expired license plate. He didn't ask for my license and he did not call to tow my car, so I was very lucky because he was nice, but honestly that was the first time that I was scared to death.

Before I really was not too scared driving because I always drive very carefully

and respect the laws. This was last year. Before if you were stopped without a license, they would arrest you and probably deport you, but now because I think a lot of officers know about people who do not have their papers. They know that we are not criminals; we just can't get driver's license because we do not have social security cards. My daughter took me to the DMV to show proof that I have insurance and everything is fine now.

I think that I am not too nervous about driving and working now even though I don't having my papers because my daughter is a permanent U. S. resident. Everyone tells me that because she is a resident and if they know that I have someone who can petition for me and who depends on me financially that they will not deport me. In other words, she can petition for me with a lawyer.

Many people come to the United States from other countries to look for a better future. In some countries, there is a lot of poverty. The truth is that most people who come without permission are desperate because they don't have work in their countries. Most people are happy here even though they have to work hard because they can earn money, provide for their families, and send money back to their families in their countries. I know a family who recently came to the United States from Colombia who lived comfortably back home. They came on temporary visas and plan on staying here because there is a future here. The wife takes whatever job and works hard because she wants the best for her two kids.

What I mostly see on the news are many people dying, women getting raped, and killings of young kids near the border. It makes me very sad really. I think

that most Americans think that we are all Mexican, but the funny thing is that no one has called me Mexican. Many people where I used to work were Mexican, only two of us were Colombian. I think there were people from Honduras, but the majority was from Mexico.

I think that the immigration laws need to change in the United States because there is a lot of injustice. For example, many people are stopped by the police and they do not have their licenses and they deport them. They do not care that their children will not have their parents anymore. This is a small crime that many Americans commit, but they treat people without their papers like criminals. We may not have a social security number, but we are working and live here too.

I never think that one day I will get deported because if one thinks like that it can torment you. Because my daughter has her residency, I do not feel scared because I have someone who can petition for me. She has to become a citizen first and go through the process and then she can petition for me. It will only take her about two months to apply and become a citizen and she can petition for me and about three months later I can get my temporary documents. My daughter was a medical assistant and when she was living with her husband she would miss work a lot. She was immature and irresponsible. She separated from her husband before and then went back to him and didn't have to work, but she never gave the hospital notice that she was not coming back. So, now that she is back living with me, she cannot get her job back because she was not responsible. Now she does not have a job and she is separated so she cannot apply for her citizenship because she does not have a job or any money. It will

cost her almost one thousand dollars if she gets a lawyer to process the paperwork and take the test. I have to pay all of the bills and everyone tells me not to give her the money, but to let her be responsible and do it on her own. The truth is that she is spoiled and lazy now. She did not have to work when she was married. There is nothing that I can do until she applies for her citizenship. I would like to go back to Colombia right now because my mom is really sick right now.

My sister who lives here in North Carolina and I have not talked in years. She is very different from me. She does not have her papers, so she cannot help me. Plus, we do not talk. One of my sisters and her family came to the United States once, but they did not like it and never returned. Another sister also came three times, but she didn't like it here either. Really I think that they want to stay close to my mother to make sure that she is taken care of.

I think that it is easier for Latinos from South America to get visas because they are a little better off financially and many are educated. The American people that I know have a good image of Colombia. Many Mexicans who come here are very poor and they have to sneak across the border. They cannot get visas and fly into the United States. The same goes for the people from Central America because they are people from humble countries. I think it is easier for people who come from economically stable countries where most of the people are educated. I think it is easy for people from Europe and Canada to get permission to come here also. I don't think there should be special preference for people from certain countries. It should be the same for everyone. For example, people from Central

America have gotten special treatment. They can apply for TPS <Temporary Protective Status> now because they have gang violence and have this advantage, but us Colombians cannot. Some Colombians come to the United States applying for asylum because there is a lot of violence in Colombia, but it is very hard to prove because they have to prove that their life is being threatened. I think that most people who don't have their papers in this country are from Mexico because that's what it says on the news. I think that most people come here crossing the border like many Mexicans because they live close to this country. Other people come with tourists visas like they are coming for vacation or to visit their families, but I think the majority stay once they get here. I have never really seen Americans mistreating people without their papers, but I have heard stories. Mostly, I have seen people without their papers who find a way to get them be mean to people without their papers. When they get their papers, some of them change and think that they are better than you are. They try to humiliate or put you down. For example, I had a friend who got her papers and after she would always talk about what they say on those news and how the government is going to deport people without their papers.

I tell my story with hope that people will understand that we all want the same things. We want the best for our families. I also ask that people remember that this country was built and continues to be built by immigrants. We have always worked and continue to work. We are not looking for anything for free. We want to work, but we need help so that we can work with permission and we need everyone to support laws that allow us to work with permission. I think that my

story is like others, but different because I did not want to come to the United States. It may also be different because it was easy for me to get a visa to come here. Sometimes I think that if I stayed in Colombia my life would have been easier because my daughter could have studied to become what she really wants because the costs of the universities in Colombia are cheaper. It is not cheap in Colombia, but most families can afford to send their children to college if they want to and they pass the tests. I cannot afford to send her to college here. I have hope that my daughter will mature and that I will get an American citizenship one day.

Individual Emergent Themes (Paris)

Paris' *testimonio* discusses three themes that are not revealed in the other counter-narratives. First, she expresses that she never wanted to come to the United States, but did so out of a commitment to her marriage and child. Second, her opinions about migrants of Mexican descent and from Central America seem to reflect dominant immigrant discourses that are commonly filtered through a United States -Mexico border lens which stigmatizes people who live near and/or cross this border to enter the United States. Lastly, she is also the only participant who expresses that she does not like the word *undocumented* to describe herself or others who are in the country without documentation.

Reluctance to Come to the United States

Paris reveals that initially she never wanted to come to the United States because other Colombians who had returned from living abroad told her that life in the United States involved a lot of working and that there was not a lot of time to enjoy

family and friends. She explains that she came to the country out of obligation to her marriage. She states:

Honestly, I never wanted to come to the United States. I was recently married and my husband wanted to come and work. So, he applied for visas for us and I told him that I will go to the interview to get a U.S. visa, but I told him that “I’m not going.” They gave us tourist visas and he went to the United States and I stayed in Colombia with our daughter. He kept begging me to come and told me that our daughter could learn English.

Although Paris was eventually convinced and motivated by her daughter’s enthusiasm to come to North Carolina, she expresses throughout her *testimonio* that she enjoyed her “comfortable’ life in Colombia and questions if she made the right decision. While many people are generally excited to be able to obtain a United States visa, she on the contrary initially decided to remain in Colombia with her daughter while her husband lived abroad and she also returned after a year of living in North Carolina as well. While the other participants had clear goals of why they wanted to come to the United States, Paris had a different outlook on the country. She states:

The image that I had of the United States was that it was a country where you had to work very hard and for long hours. I had been told by other Colombians that Americans pass the day working and they don’t have any time to enjoy life. I never wanted to come to the United States because I lived comfortably in Colombia, but my daughter really wanted to come to the United States. She watched movies from here and wanted to learn English. She was only eight

years old, but she was very fascinated with coming here and that is really why I came and stayed the second time.

Paris' only real motivation to come to the United States was her daughter. She explains in her *testimonio* that:

I think that my story is similar to others, but different in that I originally did not want to come to the United States. It may also be different because it was easy for me to get a visa to come here.

Several factors of Paris' *testimonio* are unique. For example she is reluctant to come to the United States. She did not have any real personal aspirations to come to the country as well as she rejects immigration terminology and processes. Her *testimonio* is unique in that it counters generalized perceptions that all immigrants want to come to the United States. Another distinction in her counter-narrative is revealed in her quote that appears in bold letters at the beginning of her *testimonio* which explains that she does not like the labels ("illegal" or "undocumented") that are commonly used to refer to people living in the country without documentation. She explains that she has never imagined herself in this manner and believes that she should be identified as "a person from another country who lives and works in the United States." While she is rightfully justified in not being labeled and being stigmatized by criminalizing dominant immigrant discourses, some of her other comments seem to reflect ethnic stereotypes that essentialize images that are commonly associated with United States-Mexico border rhetoric. For example, she explains below her opinion about the visa process in different parts of the world. She says:

I think that it is easier for Latinos from South America to get visas because they are a little better off financially and many are educated. The American people that I know have a good image of Colombia. Many Mexicans who come here are very poor and they have to sneak across the border. They cannot get visas and fly into the United States. The same goes for the people from Central America because they are people from humble countries. I think it is easier for people who come from economically stable countries where most of the people are educated. I think it is easy for people from Europe and Canada to get permission to come here also.

Paris clearly distinguishes between immigrants who live close to the southwestern border from those who do not. She describes people from the first group as being “less educated,” “humble,” “poor,” and “unable to get visas to fly” because “they have to sneak across the border.” On the other hand she uses more privileged language when referring to the latter group who live further from the border. For example, she describes South Americans as being “better off financially,” and “educated.” She also adds people from Europe and Canada to the latter *advantaged* group. Her comments clearly reflect essentializing images and language that I argue border rhetoric create which in turn stigmatizes and targets specific groups of people.

Table 8 below illustrates how the three overarching themes that emerged from the participants' *testimonios* are revealed. The process and discussion of themes is discussed in detail in chapter five. Table 8 summarizes and visualizes each participants' basic demographic information and indexes examples from their *testimonios* that relate

to the three overarching themes of *(mis)perceived identities, silenced struggles, and aspiring citizens.*

Table 8

Theme Development and Participants Cross Walk

<u>Participants</u>	Theme # 1 (Mis)perceived Identities	Theme # 2 (Silenced Struggles)	Theme # 3 Aspiring Citizens
<p>PEDRO -Undocumented (17yrs.) -U. S. resident (14 yrs.) -Born in El Salvador -Catholic -Owns his own construction company. -Father of two American children.</p>	<p>-He has been perceived to be and has been called <i>Mexican</i>. - He feels experiences of people from El Salvador are underrepresented. -He expressed generalizations that some make about people who cross the U. S. -Mexico border without authorization. Counter-story: Immigration statuses are not fixed, but can change. His experience adjusting his status tends to be underrepresented. He is non-Mexican.</p>	<p>-He suffers mental trauma from his journey crossing three borders to arrive in the U. S. - He was unable to demand equal pay or complain when he was not paid by employers. -He could have become a U. S. resident through N.A.C.A.R.A. in the nineties, but was scammed by a lawyer who stole his money. -He missed his family members in El Salvador who he could not visit because of his status.</p>	<p>-He appreciates today that he was able to adjust his status through marriage and is now a U. S. resident. -Of his 5 siblings; 2 are residents & 3 are undocumented. All of his family members want to be U. S. citizens. -He wants to be present in the country to raise his two American children. -He has his own business and aspires to take the citizenship test within the next couple of years.</p>
<p>FATIMA -Undocumented -Born in Morocco -Muslim -Seamstress -Mother of American son.</p>	<p>-She has been perceived to be and has been called "<i>Mexican</i>" due to her appearance and accented English. -She believes that Muslims are often portrayed as terrorists in the media. -She was denied a job because she is Muslim and is scared to tell people about her religious beliefs. Counter-story: She entered the country with permission, but overstayed her fiancé (tourist) visa -She feels Morocco</p>	<p>-She did not report sexual abuse, armed robbery, or being scammed by an immigration lawyer out of fear of deportation. She recognizes that she needs therapy & does not trust men due to this trauma. -She drives in fear every day because she does not have a license. -She is scared that she will get deported & her son will become an orphan like she was in Morocco. -She felt pressured to marry for her papers.</p>	<p>-She has paid her taxes every year in hope that one day if she is allowed to be a U. S. citizen she can show that she has been responsible. -She wants to send her son to college and open up her own alteration business. -She wants the same things as U. S. citizens. -She hopes future U. S. immigration laws will offer a pathway to citizenship for undocumented people.</p>

	and Muslim stories are underrepresented. -She is non-Mexican (Latino).		
<p>CESARIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Undocumented (7yrs.) -U. S. Citizen (17 yrs.) -Born on an island off the coast Africa. -Catholic -Educator -Porttuguese Creole 	<p>(Mis)perceived Identities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -She has been perceived to be and called <i>Latina</i> because of her appearance and surname. -She thinks that dominant discourses have politicized undocumented migration and focus on Latinos & U. S.- Mexico border. -She feels diverse experiences have been underrepresented in the media about living undocumented in the U. S. <p>Counter-story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -She is not Latino. Immigration statuses are not fixed, but can change. Her experience adjusting her status tends to be underrepresented. -She is non-Mexican. 	<p>Silenced Struggles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -She resented her parents for her being undocumented causing her to be unable to participate fully in school as a student. -She was scared to talk about being undocumented for a long time due to fears that people would get her deported even after she adjusted her status. She felt pressured to marry to adjust her status. -She recalls racist jokes. 	<p>Aspiring Citizens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -She did not want to do anything that would jeopardize her future while she was undocumented because she had hopes of adjusting her status one day. -Her mother, father, and sisters are all naturalized U. S. citizens & she is the mother of 2 U.S. citizens. -She has taken advantage of higher education opportunities unavailable in her country (Ph.D.) here in the U. S.
<p>PARIS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Undocumented (14 years) -Born in Colombia -Catholic -Cleans houses -Spanish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -She believes that Americans assume that she is Mexican because she is Latina, but has never been called Mexican to her face. -She feels her country is underrepresented. <p>Counter-story:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -She entered the U. S. with permission, but overstayed visa. -She is non-Mexican. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -She drives in fear every day because she does not have a license. -She yearns to go back to Colombia and visit her mother before she dies. -She earns less due to her status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -She has hopes that her daughter (U. S. resident) will apply for her citizenship and petition for her in the future. -She wants the same as citizens.
<p>SUNIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Undocumented (11 years) -Born in India 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -He expressed feelings that the government portrays undocumented people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -He struggles with his identity because he was born in India, but has lived in U. S for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -He wants to live & die in this country. -He wants to open his own restaurant.

-No children. -Hindu -Chef -Tamil	as terrorists. -He thinks that it helps that most people do not think of Indians as undocumented. <u>Counter-story:</u> -He arrived on a cruise ship employee visa & overstayed. -He is non-Mexican (Latino).	years and feels American. -He's afraid that he will not be able to adjust his status. -He cannot share his success with his family in India because neither can travel.	-Wants the same as U. S. citizens & hopes for pathways to citizenship.
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Reflection and Summary of Chapter Four

Upon entering this study, I was not prepared for the profound lived knowledge, political issues, and implications that would emerge, guide, and complicate the direction of this research. In this chapter, “papeles guardados” (silenced histories) (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001, p. 3) were shared and analyzed by individual experiences that connect to the overarching themes that are presented in the next chapter. As sole authors of their first-person call-to-action narratives, I acted as the compiler of their experiences by compiling their member-checked *testimonios* which developed from transcribed interviews that I conducted with each person. The *testimonio* compilation process was particularly revealing for me as I transcribed and member-checked the five participants interviews. I recall the tears, the fears, the laughs, faces of hope, and stories of successes despite the struggles the participants face(d) as (un)documented people in the country. I employed a critical race theoretical lens to explore how the participants’ *testimonios* engage and challenge dominant immigrant discourses that tend to construct racialized and criminalized images of these communities.

The participants presented in this chapter are adults between the ages of thirty-six and fifty-two who were born in Morocco, Colombia, India, El Salvador, and an island off the coast of Africa who speak various languages and have different spiritual beliefs.

They live in mixed-status homes, arrived to the country by air, sea, and land as well as live or have lived undocumented in the United States. Specifically, three of the participants (Sunil, Paris, and Fatima) live undocumented while the other two (Cesaría and Pedro) have lived between seven to fourteen years in the country without authorization, but have since adjusted their statuses and are now United States residents and citizens. Despite the fact that Cesaría and Pedro have adjusted their statuses and are no longer living undocumented in the country, the recollection of their lived memories in combination with the other three's current realities align as far as their shared experiences and understanding of how their *testimonios* are (have been) shaped by as well as counter dominant immigration narratives. In chapter three I discussed the theme development process that emerged from the participants' *testimonios* in detail. In chapter four, I presented their *testimonios* in their entirety. In the next chapter I will index examples of the three overarching themes that were revealed in all of the participants' *testimonios*. Finally, in chapter six I discuss the findings which are used to address the research questions of this dissertation.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF EMERGENT THEMES

In chapter four I presented the five participants' *testimonios* and discussed individual experiences that emerged from each of their counter-narratives as well as indexed how they connect to the overarching three themes that I examine within this chapter. Accordingly, this chapter is organized in three sections that are guided by the three overarching themes of (1) *misperceived identities*, (2) *silenced struggles*, and (3) *aspiring citizens*. First, I provide a brief overview of these three overarching themes, which emerged from the participant's transcribed *testimonios* as well as from our follow-up dialogues where they identified what they want readers to take away from their experiences living undocumented in the country. Next, I paid attention to tenets of *testimonio* such as accounts of injustices that are reflective of larger undocumented communities as well as expressed desires for immediate social and political change (Nance, 2006). By implementing a *critical race theoretical (CRT) analysis*, I examined participants' *testimonios* to explore how their lives are (have been) shaped by dominant racialized and criminalized border rhetoric surrounding undocumented migration as well as selective immigration practices and laws (Solóranzo & Yoss, 2001). I also discuss how racism intersects with other forms of subordination that the participants face. Finally, I summarize the chapter and introduce the findings that address the research questions of this dissertation, which are presented in chapter six.

Co-Constructed Themes

In chapter three I detailed how the participants and I co-constructed the three overarching themes. First, following each participant interview, I made a list of words,

ideas, and themes that we both agreed emerged from their *testimonios*. Second, I transcribed the interviews and read them over and over paying attention to recurring themes, words, and ideas to create a concept map to show connections. Next, I met with Pedro and Cesaría, the adjusted-status participants, for a second time and we discussed the ten major themes from our combined ideas that I compiled from stages one and two, which we all felt were representative of all of their experiences. Lastly, I abridged the ten categories into three overarching themes and color-coded each participant's *testimonios*, highlighting sentences and paragraphs that aligned with each corresponding colored theme.

Theme One: *Testimonios* of (Mis)perceived Identities

The first theme *(mis)perceived identities* describes how dominant border immigrant discourses shape the (un)documented participants' lives by constructing partial images and rhetoric about them which in turn often guides how uniformed United States citizens understand, treat, and talk about them. Their *testimonios* revealed two biased constructions that are commonly made about them as a result of these deficit discourses. Accordingly, this section will be divided into two subsections: (1) racialized identities and (2) criminalized identities. They all revealed how dominant border discourses surrounding undocumented migration commonly stigmatize and construct them as alleged criminals (border-crossers and/or terrorists) who are often portrayed to be from one country (Mexico) or belong to the same ethnic group (Latino) and who have a single identity (undocumented). Their comments indicate that these essentialized images and perceptions derive from politicized and racialized discourses, which hide their individualized beliefs, cultures, personal goals, and lived realities. Accordingly,

their *testimonios* counter these perceived and imposed identities that are often perpetuated in contemporary rhetoric.

Racialized Identities

By examining the participants' *testimonios* through a critical race theoretical (CRT) lens, institutionalized and socialized forms of race and racism that have been attached to their undocumented statuses by dominant power structures are exposed. All of the participants expressed perceptions that most United States citizens associate undocumented migrants with Latinos in general and people of Mexican descent more specifically. In fact due to the participants' physical appearances, surnames, accented English, and common constructions of Latinos (Mexicans) as the only (un)documented people in the media, African-born immigrants Cesaria and Fatima reveal that they have been erroneously identified as Latinas and Pedro born in El Salvador has been assumed to be of Mexican descent. For example, Cesaría, born on an island off the coast of Africa, expressed during her interview that people have assumed that she is Latina due to her accented English, fluency in a creolized Portuguese which some perceive to be Spanish, her skin complexion, and Portuguese surname *Cruz* <*pseudonym*> which is also a common Latino last name. Fatima, born in Morocco recalls a similar experience of someone (mis)perceiving her identity. She says:

They think that I am Latino. One time I tell a woman who was speaking to me in Spanish that I don't speak Spanish and she look at me like I was lying. My American customers, when they hear my accent, they think that I speak Spanish and try to practice with me. When I tell them that I am from Morocco they are surprised. In the store when we have Spanish-speaking customers, they call me

because I am a foreigner and I guess they think we can understand each other (laughs). I learn a couple of words and I try to help everyone.

The fact that some of Fatima's "American customers" are "surprised" by Fatima not being able "to speak Spanish" because "they think that" she is "Latina" and the fact that her employer "calls" her to assist the "Spanish-speaking customers" because she is "a foreigner and they think" that they "can understand each other" stems from racialized ideologies that construct Latinos (immigrants of color) as being racially, culturally, and linguistically homogenous which in turn groups anyone who fits this constructed profile to be (mis)perceived as Spanish-speaking as well. In solidarity with other critical scholars (Negrón-González, 2009; Chávez, 2008; Lakoff & Ferguson, 2006; Ngai, 2004, DeGenova, 2002), I argue that dominant (un)documented immigrant narratives target Latinos which causes the customer in the excerpt above to make assumptions about Fatima based on (mis)perceived Latino racial and linguistic markers. This biased contemporary messaging shapes beliefs about the participants which in turn essentializes their identities and supports the rationale behind why some "American customers" "when they hear" Fatima's "accent" "they think that" she "speaks Spanish and try to practice with her." This excerpt also indexes the internalization of these racialized constructs by some Latinos when Fatima explains how a Spanish-speaking customer assumed that she spoke Spanish based on the markers mentioned previously and when she told her that she did not speak that language "she looked at" her like she "was lying."

In contrast, Pedro, one of the two Latino participants who is actually a Spanish-speaker explains how some people in North Carolina automatically equate his *Latinidad* with being of Mexican descent. Pedro says:

In North Carolina, maybe people think that all *Hispanos* and undocumented people are Mexican. In California people are more informed. In North Carolina, a lot of Americans think that I am “Mexican.” People have asked me “what is Mexico like?” When I tell them that I am from El Salvador, they ask if it is close to Mexico.

In the excerpt above, Pedro indexes that “maybe” some “Americans” living in North Carolina (*mis*)perceive “all *Hispanos*” to be “undocumented and Mexican.” I argue that the “Americans” who Pedro perceives to “think” that he is “Mexican” and ask him “what is Mexico like?” are making assumptions about him based on dominant discourses which target and racialize the United States-Mexico border and people of Mexican descent. In fact, Ngai (2004) explains that after the United States adoption of the 1924 national-origin quota system “it rearticulated the U. S.-Mexico border as a cultural and racial boundary” (p. 67). Accordingly, many people in the United States are familiar with these racialized border images and in turn use Mexico as a landmark to imagine where other Spanish-speaking countries like Pedro’s native country of El Salvador is by asking if it “is close to Mexico?” Also, California by far has a larger immigrant population than North Carolina, which may guide Pedro’s perception that some people living in the first state to be “more informed” about the diversity within these communities.

The fact that some people assume that Cesaría and Fatima are Latinas based on perceived *foreign* characteristics and construct Pedro as Mexican because he is Latino

indexes that there is a lack of public knowledge about the diversity that exists within both Latino and other immigrant communities in general. For example, Fatima, a non-Latino participant, voices her concerns about how this biased immigrant rhetoric racializes (un)documented people in the United States by constructing Latinos (Mexicans) as the sole representatives and culprits of this phenomenon, disregarding diverse experiences like her own. She explains:

On the news when they talk about illegal immigrants, they always talk about Latinos. Latinos, Latinos, Latinos! It is not fair. Some people say that they do not want Mexicans here, because they watch the news about people jumping <crossing> the border. They do not understand. I am illegal too, but I am from Morocco. I speak Arabic not Spanish.

Fatima expresses her frustration with the lack of discussion and coverage “on the news” about obstacles that non-Latino undocumented immigrants face and she explains that, “it is not fair.” While she shows her solidarity with undocumented Latinos by stating that “I am illegal too,” she recognizes that many United States citizens “don’t understand” that (un)documented immigrant groups are from various countries like “Morocco” and speak diverse languages like “Arabic” not just “Spanish.” In fact during our interview, Fatima explained that due to the *(mis)perceived identities* commonly assigned to the entire undocumented community, she feels that non-Latino undocumented people like herself do not have anyone advocating for their human rights or voicing their concerns. While she as a non-Latino participant feels less represented, she also witnesses how Mexicans in particular are unfairly targeted in her comment “some people say that they do not want Mexicans here” because “they are jumping <crossing> the border.” This

excerpt clearly reflects who she witnesses in dominant discourses to be constructed as the only ethnic group entering the country without permission as well as the group that are not wanted in this country. In fact within her *testimonio*, Fatima expresses that undocumented Latinos receive more assistance and attention because politicians believe that Latino U. S. citizens will vote for them if they support issues related to the betterment of all Latino people in general.

In contrast, while Fatima feels excluded as a non-Latina, Pedro from El Salvador discusses the stereotypes he confronts that are commonly associated with being “Hispanic.” Pedro explains:

There are many stereotypes about *Hispanos* that are not true. *La gente generaliza* mucho (people generalize a lot), but they are ignorant. I think at first when they see *una cara hispana* (a Hispanic face), they may think that all *Hispanos son ilegales* (all Hispanics are illegal). I don’t like the word *illegal alien*. It makes me laugh because how do you compare a person to a Martian from out of space? We are all humans. Undocumented is the appropriate word because that is what it is we don’t have our documents.

Pedro’s statement above “I think at first when they see *una cara hispana* (*a Hispanic face*), they may think that all *Hispanos son ilegales* (*all Hispanics are illegal*)” indicates that he recognizes that people “generaliza mucho” about “Hispanos” and that they are “ignorant” because they are (mis)informed by biased dominant discourses. It also supports my usage of the parentheses around the word *(un)documented* throughout this study because racialized constructions and beliefs about undocumented people are commonly carried over to people of that same ethnic group despite their *legal*

immigration status. In fact, while Pedro is a United States resident now, he revealed to me during his interview that even now when he sub-contracts work, contractors still ask him to provide proof of his immigration status. He also shared that he never witnessed *American* workers being asked for this type of documentation, which makes him feel that he is unfairly profiled despite his permanent residency status. Thus, this demonstrates that U. S. Latino residents and citizens also are victims of these *(mis)perceived identities* assigned to their communities. While Pedro recognizes that some people make generalizations about Latinos and others are more informed, he recognizes the need for telling terminology that does not dehumanize (un)documented people. For example, the “illegal alien” terminology commonly used to describe (un)documented people as Pedro indexes strips this population of their humanity because as he rightfully explains “we are all humans.”

Paris from Colombia, South America also expressed that she believes that socio-economic conditions and/or perceptions about certain countries also guide who are *(mis)perceived* to be welcomed (approved) to enter the United States and who are not. She believes that some Latinos depending on their country of birth have more privilege in obtaining visas to come to the country with authorization. Paris explains:

I think that it is easier for Latinos from South America to get visas because they are a little better off financially and many are educated. The American people that I know have a good image of Colombia. Many Mexicans who come here are very poor and they have to sneak across the border. They cannot get visas and fly into the United States. The same goes for the people from Central America because they are people from humble countries. I think it is easier for people who

come from economically stable countries where most of the people are educated. I think it is easy for people from Europe and Canada to get permission to come here also. I don't think there should be special preference for people from certain countries. It should be the same for everyone.

While Paris' comment above accurately indexes that most visa approvals are determined by one's socio-economic status and that certain countries are more likely to be selected based on their country of origin; her depiction of "Mexicans" and "Central Americans" as being from "humble countries," who are "poor" and "less educated" than people from "South America" reflect (mis)perceptions that are often guided by essentialized dominant immigration discourses which tend to stigmatize certain countries near or surrounding the United States-Mexico border. Thus, I argue that she has internalized this bias rhetoric and in turn perpetuates these racialized beliefs that "they have to sneak across the border" and "they cannot get visas and fly into the United States." Paris also mentions that she believes that Europeans and Canadians are more likely to get approved for visas. I argue that her beliefs did not just develop out of a vacuum. She clearly perceives that there are hierarchical statuses among immigrants. She indexes that there are preference systems and biases based on race, socio-economic status, and geographical location in her last statement when she says that the process "should be the same for everyone." Paris' comments reflect what Ngai (2004) explains as the construction of a new form of immigrant racialization that occurred following the United States adoption of the 1924 national-origin quota, which "excepted" some who would now be constructed as socially white. She explains:

Europeans and Canadians tended to be disassociated with the real imagined category of illegal alien, which facilitated their national and racial assimilation as White American citizens. In contrast, Mexican emerged as iconic illegal aliens. Illegal status became constitutive of a racialized Mexican identity and of Mexican's exclusion from the national community and polity. (Ngai, 2004, p.58)

Consequently, due to these new racial constructs and *illegal* misnomers that are perpetuated in dominant immigrant discourses, uninformed United States citizens (un)consciously refer to what journalist Lippman (1922) in his book *Public Opinion* calls "pictures in our heads" to make assumptions about (certain) (un)documented immigrant groups. Lippman (1922) argues that public opinion is shaped by dominant discourses, which represent ideologies of a select group of people in power who use propaganda to persuade the masses. He rightfully exposes that most people form opinions off of the limited knowledge provided by these groups in power because most citizens usually do not have time or background knowledge to truly understand or question dominant narratives that are often positioned within narrow or oversimplified frameworks. For example, Sunil, one of the participants from India, also comments on the limited knowledge about the diversity of undocumented migrants in the United States due to selective media coverage. He says:

Most Americans do not know that there are undocumented Indians in the country. They know about Hispanics because it is on the news. I think they think that India is too far away for us to get here illegally.

Sunil's reasoning behind why "most Americans' know that there are "Hispanic" undocumented people is what he has witnessed being broadcasted "on the news." The

fact that he says that “I think they think that India is too far away” indicates that most rhetoric surrounding (un)documented migration is centered on the southwest border. The reality is that many ethnic groups from India live undocumented in the United States generally after overstaying their visas, but because the southwestern border is targeted within dominant immigrant discourses there is less coverage on non-Latino and peoples whose immigration statuses change by remaining in the country after their visa has expired. While not as common, there are small smugglers in India who also arrange for migrants to travel to Central America and then be carried across the United States-Mexico border for large amounts of money. Some may sell their farms and/or property while others work as a type of indentured servants in the United States until their debts are paid.

Although people born in India represent the fourth largest undocumented population in the United States (Passel & Cohn, 2014), certain immigrant groups from continental Asia like Japanese, Koreans as well as Indians who were persecuted by the United States immigration laws before are today often socially constructed as what scholars like Abraham (2000) calls “model minorities” (p. 9). She explains that this *model minority image* hides and “denies individual and diversity of groups within the immigrant community” and in turn causes everyone “to be treated as a monolithic entity” (p. 10), which I argue may exclude people of the Asian diaspora from being associated with biased constructions of undocumented communities. Instead, these perceived model minorities are often positioned within a privileged racialized category. Park (2013) explains that “added to this racialized discursive construction is the notion of social class and how classed identities become further exploited as well as silenced” (p. 5). In

Park's study on two East Asian women's educational and teaching experiences, she indexes that the *model minority* myth disregards the need to examine "discourses of privilege and intersection of privilege and marginalization" (p.22). In other words, essentializing rhetoric surrounding Asian communities fail to explore how class differences within these ethnic groups privilege some while marginalizing others.

Criminalized Identities

Fatima's as well as the other participants' *testimonios* reveal that the militarization of the United States-Mexico border as well as other historical, political, socio-economic, and racial factors unfairly stigmatize people entering through the Mexican border. They are often constructed as the poor, less educated, and working class migrants. In fact, all of my participants' *testimonios* reveal that they believe that images of border-crossers are more visible in contemporary immigration rhetoric as well as alarming narratives that emphasize the need to secure United States borders from terrorists who have also been aggregated into the (un)documented communities since the September 2011 terrorists attacks. Sunil from India explains:

The government is not helpful when they treat you like you are a terrorist. They group everyone in one category. I am a worker born in another country without a social security number and I do not have legal permission to work in the country, but I am not a killer or a threat to this country. I love this country. I just want a fair chance.

Sunil's defensive stance towards ideas that construct (un)documented people as "killers" and/or "terrorists" stems from *(mis)perceived identities* that are often constructed by certain groups who use strategic rhetoric and threatening propaganda to

persuade the masses to take a position based off of narrowly defined and decontextualized discourses. By juxtaposing terrorists alongside (un)documented migrant rhetoric and by integrating United States federal departments to now operate under the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) since 2003; ICE which is under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) governs and monitors both of these groups collectively which many argue support *perceived* threat narratives and essentialized identities to become widely accepted which is evidenced by racial and linguistic profiling by federal and state officials despite the pan-ethnic make-up of both groups. Following the FBI, ICE is the second largest law enforcement agency in the country. In fact, billion dollar budgets over the years have supported the militarization of the United States-Mexico border to secure it and to prevent (un)documented migrants, drugs, and terrorists from entering the country. Sunil counters this criminalizing rhetoric by clarifying who he really is which is “a worker born in another country without a social security number.”

Fatima also expresses how dominant discourses fuel erroneous beliefs that equate Islam with terrorism since the September 11, 2011 terrorist attack by *Islamic* extremist groups. She details her experience of how she was profiled due to her Arabic surname causing her prospective employer to be afraid that customers might not want a Muslim to help them. Fatima explains:

About two years ago, I tried to get an extra job. The lady looked at my name on the application and asked me “where does your name come from?” I said “from Morocco.” She ask me “what is my religion?” I tell her that I am Muslim. She tell me, “I’m sorry, but if some customers know that you are Muslim they may not

want you to help them.” I think after 9/11 people think that Muslims are terrorists.

I do not cover myself. If you look at me you will not know that I am Muslim.

The fact that the potential employer asked Fatima “where her name comes from?” indicates that she already has preconceived ideas about certain ethnic and/or religious groups. Fatima’s response that “I do not cover myself” also indexes that she is informed about the stereotypes that are associated with wearing a *hijab* and it being a Islamic marker in the United States. In Fatima’s *testimonio* in chapter four she recounts other experiences where she was afraid to reveal her Islamic faith out of fear that she would be discriminated against. These (mis)perceptions that are often perpetuated through dominant discourses are not just contemporary rhetoric, but they actually shape the lives of (un)documented people like Fatima.

Fatima’s Islamic faith and the fact that she is from Morocco causes a co-worker to perceive her differently from other (un)documented people (Latinos) who cross the border. She recounts:

She told me “I don’t want to be mean, but President Obama needs to stop letting illegal people in the country. They just want to take all of our stuff and we don’t know if they are terrorists or killers.” I told her that I am an immigrant too and I am not a criminal. I told her that immigrants just want to work and want their kids to have opportunities. She said “oh no Fatima you are different, you did not sneak across the border and you don’t have a lot of kids.” She said that the “President should not help people who break the law.”

Fatima’s experience above with a fellow employee indexes how deficit discourses can create essentialized discernment about this very complex phenomena, which in turn

often guides (mis)perceptions about who belongs and who does not. It is evident in this quote above that Fatima's co-worker has preconceived ideas about who undocumented people are and what they do and she reveals that Fatima does not fit into the "pictures in her head" (Lipmann, 1922) about undocumented people when she says "Fatima you are different, you did not sneak across the border and you don't have a lot of kids." By constructing her as "different;" Fatima, a Moroccan Arabic-speaking mother of one who overstayed her visa clearly counters her own (mis)perceived image of undocumented communities who "just want to take all of our stuff" and fuels threat narratives that cause her to say "we don't know if they are terrorists or killers."

The above example is not an isolated case. The essentialization of marginalized populations by dominant ones has historically informed United States discourses, practices, and laws which has resulted in the (mis)education of both 'inside' and 'outside' groups by offering partial epistemologies and biased ontologies that favor the majority. Consequently, if what is known about undocumented migration and how we know it is controlled by dominant groups in power who strategically couch conversations about immigration within restrictive border frames, citizens as well as marginalized groups internalize this (mis)information. For example, Pedro from El Salvador, who crossed this southwestern border to come to this country demonstrates that he too is uninformed about the amount of people who become undocumented by entering through this border. He says:

I think most undocumented people enter the country through *la frontera como yo* (the border like me). Out of 100%, I would say about 10% come with a visa and

don't go back. On the Spanish news they always talk about the dangers of crossing the border.

While Pedro's own experiences may have also guided by own his estimate, this study has argued that as a result of undocumented migration being couched within a border frame, only one entryway into the United States is emphasized, which targets some and in turn hides the reality that approximately 40% of the estimated 11.2 million undocumented people in the country arrived with authorization but overstayed their visa expiration dates and thus fell out of *legal* status. Pedro's last sentence also reveals that border rhetoric is both present in English and Spanish-speaking media in the United States when "they talk about the dangers of crossing the border."

The participants' *testimonios* reveal that the geographical location of their birth countries are a major factor on their mode of entry into the United States which may attribute to their lack of visibility in dominant discourses surrounding undocumented migration as well. For example, only one (Pedro) of the five participants entered the country through the United States-Mexico border due to his country's (El Salvador) close proximity to the United States, while the other four arrived by air and by sea with temporary visas since they arrived from other continents. Fatima, Cesaria, Paris, and Sunil all come from countries outside of continental North America where border crossing is not necessarily feasible. However, Fatima reveals that she feels that border-crossers are targeted more. She explains:

I think that the United States immigration laws are not fair. It is not easy for everybody because maybe they have problems with the law, big and small problems. Everybody's situation is different. I think it is very hard for Mexicans

because they are close to the United States and have to jump <cross> over the border. They do not have visas. I think it is harder for people who have to jump <crossed> over the border. For example, I know a Mexican woman who jumped across <crossed> the border and she marry an American. They apply for her papers, but they did not give her anything because she did not have a visa, a passport, nothing. They told her that she had to go back to her country and her husband would have to apply for her to come here.

While Fatima recognizes that “everybody’s situation is different” she clearly has specific criminalized (mis)perceptions about Mexicans like they have to “jump <cross> the border” and “do not us have visas.” While various factors are considered to adjust one’s immigration status, Fatima’s comment indicate that she believes that there is a preference system that favors people who arrived with documents (visas and passports), but who fell out of status over people who crossed the United States-Mexico border although they are both undocumented. Fatima supports her belief that this southwestern border and the people who cross it without proper documentation are unfairly targeted by sharing the story of her Mexican friend who was unable to adjust her status through marriage because she did not have any documents like “a visa” or “passport.”

According to the executive report from the *Immigration Policy Center* entitled *The Criminalization of Immigration in the United States*, Ewing, Martinez, & Rumbaut (2015) found immigrants “are less likely to be criminals, be behind bars, and engage in criminal behavior than the native-born” (p. 1-2). In fact they explain:

According to an original analysis of data from the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS), roughly 1.6 percent of immigrant males age 18-39 are incarcerated, compared to 3.3 percent of the native-born. Between 1990 and 2013, FBI data indicate that the violent crime rate declined 48 percent—which included falling rates of aggravated assault, robbery, rape, and murder. (Ewing, Martinez, & Rumbaut, 2015, p. 1-2)

Within this same article the authors index *National Public Radio's* (NPR) 2013 report that exposed how Congress since 2009 has mandated *Immigration and Customs Enforcement* (ICE) to maintain a daily quota of 34,000 immigrant detainees throughout detention facilities within the United States (2015, p. 3). This means that despite statistical data indicating that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than United States citizens, larger power structures (Congress) are (in)directly fostering *illegality* (Nevins, 2000; DeGenova, 2002; Andreas, 2010) frameworks and criminalizing undocumented people by requiring ICE to keep a large amount of this population in jail each night which I argue encourages selective policing practices that targets these communities.

Theme Two: Silenced Struggles

As a result of expressed concerns about having identities imposed upon them; the second theme *silenced struggles* emerged. All of the participants referenced various obstacles and frustrations that they have kept to themselves because of their undocumented statuses in the country. They expressed that they feel (have felt) like they have (had) to make various decisions as well as withstand and deal with trauma and abuse because of their immigration statuses as well. While on one hand they feel

that they deserve basic human rights, on the other hand they do (did) not feel that their struggles and/or abuses would be valued or taken seriously because they are (were) not considered or accepted as full members of the United States. Thus, being undocumented in the country make (made) them afraid to report or contact local police and/or other authorities when they are (were) victimized because they are (were) afraid of being deported. For example, Fatima expresses that she feels disregarded by dominant discourses and advocacy groups that seem to only focus on one of the ethnic (un)documented immigrant communities. Fatima says:

On the news they always talk about Latino immigrants. I say to myself what about me? I feel left out. They always just talk about Latinos. They talk about Mexico and jumping <crossing>the border. Latinos have a lot of people to help them because they want their votes. Yes, there are a lot of Latino immigrants here, but what about the rest of us. We are here too. I like Spanish people, but we don't have anybody.

While Fatima indexes how she believes that “Latinos” receive more attention in “the news” and “have a lot of people to help them because they want their votes,” she specifically references “Mexico and jumping<crossing> the border” which indicates that she is referring to a specific group of Latinos. She also makes assumptions based off partial discourses that some Latino solidarity exists and that all Latinos with voting power support laws that assist undocumented migrants. Fatima as well as the other participants’ *testimonios* reveal their various obstacles and frustrations with racialized, criminalized, and homogenized (mis)perceptions and constructions of them and call for more diverse representations to add to this incomplete story of (un)documented

migration. For example, Cesaria expands on Fatima's feelings of being underrepresented and indexes the politics that fuel dominant discourses. Cesaria says:

We rarely hear about Asian, European, Caribbean, or African undocumented or documented experiences. I think because these communities don't have as strong a presence like Latinos. The presence of Latinos is important in terms of numbers because that means more voters. Politicians have politicized the immigration debate in this country. They have turned it into a Mexican and American Immigration issue as if all immigrants are Mexican. It wasn't until I moved down South that I interacted with Mexican communities. I had friends from El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. I don't know when we got to the point that all of a sudden the Mexicans are our immigration enemies and our issues? Immigration, the way they paint it on television; it's all about the "Hispanic" people. They don't even have the dignity to even call them what they want to be called. So it's usually about the "Hispanics."

Cesaría shares the belief with Fatima that the current (un)documented "immigration debate" in the United States is "politicized" as well as I inject *Mexicanized* (*Hispanicized*). In fact, Cesaria's excerpt above reflects how she witnesses (un)documented immigration being portrayed in dominant discourse. For example, she says "immigration, the way they paint it on television, it's all about the "Hispanic" people." Next, she recognizes that one group in particular is singled out and is constructed as the culprits in her statement, "I don't know when we got to the point that all of a sudden the Mexicans are our immigration enemies and our issues?" Cesaria also indexes the need to hear from diverse (un)documented communities like "Asian,

European, Caribbean, or African experiences” and criticizes homogenizing terminology like the label “Hispanics” which was created by the United States census to describe different ethno-racial and linguistic members who were born in or are descendants of family members from Spanish-Speaker countries. The participants clearly recognize the need for diverse terminology and narratives that eradicate the stigmatization of (un)documented immigrant communities.

Limited (Mental) Health Care for Undocumented People

As a result of the participants’ multiple experiences of being mistreated, exploited, and abused, they face(d) many feeling of depression and hopelessness. Fatima even reveals her fears of becoming homeless if she is deported back to Morocco because she was an orphan and does not have a family in her birth country. While there are several national and local reports and studies that document abuse against (un)documented people as well as scholarship that documents the effects that this vulnerable status has on their (mental) health; (un)documented people have limited access to resources that help them cope. For example, in an article entitled *Undocumented Youth Struggle with Anxiety and Depression*, Josefina Alvarez, a professor on Latino mental health at the Adler School of Professional Psychology in Chicago, explains:

Feeling insecure and uncertain about your life and your future has serious mental health consequences and may lead to anxiety and depression...Feeling stigmatized and unwanted can also have a negative impact on self-esteem and may lead to depression and other negative behaviors. (cited in Bonifacio, K.A., 2013)

Although President Obama's administration has attempted to ensure healthcare for all United States residents by establishing the *Affordable Care Act*, undocumented people cannot qualify for private health insurance coverage or any federally funded public programs such as *Medicaid or Medicare* which prevents them from gaining access to medical and/or mental health assistance. Sunil expresses his own feelings of depression about not having a "legal status." He says:

I have been in the United States for eleven years. I have lived and worked in this country since 2001. I do not feel American and I do not feel Indian either. I don't know what I am anymore. I don't know what it all means. It makes me depressed and sad to feel like I don't have anything to live for sometimes because I don't have a legal status...Being undocumented makes everyone suffer. It's hard on my family in India and the people who love me here like Rosie. My family in India does not sleep. They always cry. They always worry if I'm in jail and if I have food. They feel like I am not talking to them enough. They haven't seen me in eleven years.

Sunil's statement about "not feeling Indian or American" indicates an internal identity struggle caused by what I refer to as his in-between-status. While he was born in India, he has not lived there for the last eleven years of his life and although he resides in the United States and aspires to be a citizen, he does not have the official documentation to self-identify as an *American*. He also reveals his feelings of hopelessness and melancholy when he says "it makes me depressed and sad to feel like I don't have anything to live for sometimes because I don't have a legal status." Sunil recognizes

and indexes that “being undocumented makes everyone suffer.” Both his U. S. citizen girlfriend and entire family in India are affected by his immigration status.

While Sunil’s family worries about his wellbeing in the United States, Fatima explains how she does not feel like she can speak freely because she does not have a home or a family in Morocco or in the United States to support her if she faces deportation. Her parents left her at a young age and her uncle who cared for her out of obligation as she explained during our interview, passed away months after she arrived in the country. She not only worries about what will happen to her son if she gets deported, but she faces being homeless because she does not have any family or a home in Morocco. She explains why she feels forced to struggle in silence below. She says:

I don’t think people treat me bad because I am from another country. They treat me bad because I don’t have my papers and they know that I cannot talk free.

People who do not have their papers get treated badly because they are scared and cannot speak up. If I talk, where will I go? I do not have family here who has their papers to help me. I do not have family in Morocco to go back to. I do not have family except my ten-year old son. I have to stay quiet now, but I know there is a God and that’s why I have hope.

Fatima who “does not have family except her ten year old son” uses her faith “in God” as a coping strategy for “being treated badly.” Due to her being “scared” and feeling like she “cannot speak freely,” reveals that she feels like she has to withstand abuse and “stay quiet.” According to the *Bureau of Immigration Appeals* (BIA), an undocumented parent of a U. S. born child who is underage has the right to take the child or sign over

paternity rights to an approved caretaker if he/she is faced with deportation. Realities like Fatima's complicate this option because she does not have anyone to care for her son if she is deported. According to the Applied Research Center's 2011 *Shattered Lives* report:

in the first six months of 2011, the federal government removed more than 46,000 mothers and fathers of U.S.-citizen children. They estimate that there were at least 5,100 children living in foster care whose parents have been either detained or deported...In the next five years, at least 15,000 *more* children will face these threats to reunification with their detained and deported mothers and fathers. (Wessler, 2013, p. 3-4).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, mixed-status families are affected by members who are undocumented because households can be separated by deportation. In some cases older children are faced with raising themselves and their younger siblings. Other times children are forced to live with family friends that they do not know very well. There are various struggles that non-citizens face. Pedro discusses other difficulties of being in the country without having access to any of the benefits like going home to visit his family or his country. He states:

Living in the United States without your papers is like living in *la oscuridad* (darkness). You work all of the time, come home and sleep, and you wake up and do the same thing every day. Yes, they let you work here, *pero no hay beneficios* (but there are no benefits) really. Number one; you don't get any benefits. Number two; you miss your family and your country. Number three; you

can't go back and visit your family for holidays like *la navidad* (Christmas). You are here, but you don't have papers.

By Pedro comparing "living without your papers" to "living in la oscuridad," the "darkness" symbolism can be interpreted as his feelings of melancholy and inability to experience the *light* because of the restrictions that come with being (un)documented. He also vividly recalls the effects of his real trauma from leaving El Salvador during a 12-year Civil War (1979-1992) and witnessing young boys like himself being recruited as soldiers. In *his testimonio* he also recounts the dangers of crossing three borders to arrive to the United States. During our second meeting, Pedro explained that passing through Guatemala and Mexico he was very scared and "had to walk like a mute" because he could be recognized by his Salvadorian accent and get arrested, robbed, and/or deported back to his country. Pedro says:

There were a lot of Salvadoreños immigrating to the United States when I did. I travelled by tierra (*land*). I paid like \$1,000 dollars to the *coyote*, which is very cheap now. I rode in a car from El Salvador to Guatemala and then took a bus that dropped me off in Mexico. I jumped on *la bestia* <an infamous train> like most people in Mexico following the *Coyote* <smuggler> who was leading our group. I hid in rivers from *la migra* and heard about people drowning... I did it all... ¿Cómo te explico? Es una experiencia que uno no se puede olvidar (*How can I explain it to you, it is an experience that one never is able to forget*)... Oh yeah, then, we took a car through the dessert and passed over la frontera (*the border*) hiding in a truck with paletas de comida encima de nosotros (*pallets of food on top of us*).

Pedro clearly recalls the mental, emotional and physical experiences (trauma) of travelling through three countries to come to the United States. He remembers vividly after 27 years of living in the United States being hungry and thirsty while walking for miles, hiding in rivers and witnessing people drown, people falling off of “la bestia” (the popular name used to refer to a train that many undocumented people embark to get through Mexico on their route to the U. S.), and coming to the United States and having to work immediately for long hours without having a chance to cope with the trauma. While Pedro remembers this traumatic journey, others have acquired mental disorders as a result. For example, I clearly remember following a university tuition-equity campaign and advocacy program that I moderated as part of my PAR social justice activity with D. A. C. A. recipient students, a young man born in Guatemala revealing that he had recently been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because of this same journey as a child.

All five participants' *testimonios* reflect various existing struggles as well as past occurrences that they have (had) to confront. Consequently, due to their undocumented statuses, in many cases they are (were) deterred and/or coerced into not reporting these violations to local authorities or seeking therapy for the trauma that they endure(d). Fatima shares below how she was abused sexually by an ex-boyfriend, but was afraid to call the police out of fear of being deported. She explains:

I don't trust anybody because I have been through a lot in my life. I was dating someone after my first 'marriage.' We broke up because he started to abuse me. He knew that I was illegal and he would come to my apartment and make me have sex with him or he would threaten to call immigration. I was scared to call

the police because I thought that they would deport me. It was horrible. One day I could not take it. I told him that I would not have sex with him anymore and I told him that he can call immigration. I didn't care anymore about getting deported. I felt like nothing. After that, he left me alone and he never called immigration. I have never told anybody that (crying). I have been through a lot of things.

Fatima's experience is not isolated. In fact, in a case study with 230 battered Latina immigrant women, investigators found that:

Immigrants' with stable permanent immigration status are more than twice as likely as women with temporary legal immigration status to call police for help in domestic violence cases (43.1% vs. 20.8%). This rate decreased to 18.8% if the battered immigrant was undocumented. (Ammar, Orloff, Dutton, & Aguilar-Hass, 2005, p.236)

Although this study represents Latina women, other undocumented women like Fatima face these real fears due to multiple factors such as fear of deportation, language barriers, fear for their lives, and their unfamiliarity with laws in the United States. Fatima also reveals examples of labor exploitation at her job as well that she does not report out of fear of losing her job. She explains:

The company that I work for knows that I do not have my papers and a few of my friends at work. The managers treat me rude sometimes because they know that I don't have my papers. Sometimes I feel like they work me like a slave, but there is nothing I can do. I am a seamstress and they make me work all day and take clothes home without extra pay. I have been working with this company for 13 years.

The excerpt above indexes a common practice that is exercised by companies that knowingly hire undocumented workers. Fatima explains that they “treat me rude sometimes because they know that I don’t have my papers” and “I feel like they work me like a slave, but there is nothing that I can do.” While Fatima clearly recognizes that her United States citizen co-workers are not required to fulfill additional expectations of working at home and that she is unfairly targeted because of her immigration status, she feels compelled to continue to comply with these inequitable practices if she wants to keep her job.

Sunil, a trained chef in Mumbai, also shares similar *silenced struggles*. For example, he reveals that despite his superior knowledge, skills, and position as a Head Chef, he receives lower wages and has been warned about requesting more money because he is undocumented. He states:

I run a business and I work hard cooking. I bust my ass! The restaurant owners and the workers depend on me. I have been mistreated by co-workers and management. They have threatened to call immigration on me if I ask for a salary or for fair wages. They only pay me for the hours that I work. I have seen many undocumented people be mistreated because of their legal status.

Sunil’s frustration with being underpaid and mistreated by his employer and co-workers “who depend on” him and “threaten to call immigration on him” are not individualized experiences. He confirms these common discriminatory practices that he has witnessed in his statement that “I have seen many undocumented people being mistreated.” In contrast, while Pedro also describes similar mistreatment by employers in construction who paid him and other undocumented workers less for their labor, he explains that

they use coercive strategies like complementing them for their hard work to trick them into continuing to work even after they do not pay them on time or at all. Pedro explains:

It's harder to find work because they ask for your social security a lot in L.A. Most people in North Carolina look at *Hispanos* as all the same. They think that we are all from Mexico and illegal. Most people don't treat you mean here because they think that we are good workers. They always tell us how good we are at our jobs *y luego empiezan a explotarnos* (and then start to exploit us). They pay us less. They don't pay us what they pay people with their documents. Sometimes they don't pay you at all and lie and tell you that the contractor didn't pay them either.

In our second interview, Pedro revealed that sometimes he had not been paid and under paid for his labor frequently. His recognition of the coercive strategies by his employers like "they always tell us how good we are at our jobs" in their attempts to conceal their discriminatory practices of not paying undocumented workers are revealed when he says they "*y luego empiezan a explotarnos (and then start to exploit us)* and they lie and tell you that the contractor didn't pay them either." His use of the pronoun "us" also indicates that he has witnessed this happen to other undocumented workers. Paris shares another experience below where she believes that she and another undocumented woman were fired once their statuses were revealed because they worked harder, for more time, and made the most money than their United States citizen co-workers. Paris states:

I started working at night cleaning offices. I did that for about three years also until the cleaning contract ended. It ended because they started checking and asking for the workers social security numbers and we did not have one. We

were hard workers and worked extra and I think they wanted to get rid of us because we earned the most.

Paris explained to me that she felt like the U. S. citizen employers and co-workers did not like that they earned so much money. Paris and her undocumented partner had been working for the company for three years and the employers had not asked them for their social security numbers until they began “earning the most.” The fact that Paris knew that she was a hard worker and was fired suddenly was something that she has to struggle with in silence because she does not have authorized documentation to work.

Pedro recounts below another obstacle that he faced as a result of his status. He explains how he qualified, applied for and paid a lawyer for an amnesty program for people from his country, but was scammed by an immigration lawyer and was unable to adjust his status as a result. He says:

I changed my mind several years later because in the nineties the government had N. A. C. A. R. A. for people who came from certain countries in Central America. I think if you could prove that you got here before 1989 or 1990 and you left your country because of the violence of *las guerras* (the civil wars) you could apply for political asylum. My oldest brother and I both applied for this asylum through this program because we both entered during the war and before the deadline... I paid my lawyer about \$2,000 and he that said he would fix my papers through this program. After waiting a couple of months and not being able to contact him, one day I saw him being arrested on the news for scamming *Hispanos* out of their money. I was so angry and devastated really. I didn't have

any money to apply again and he had most of my documents. I was depressed for a while, but I had to keep going.

The chance for Pedro to adjust his status through this “N. A. C. A. R. A.” amnesty was not only lost, but his savings was depleted and his documents were confiscated by authorities who arrested his lawyer preventing him to “have money to apply again.” He was afraid to report this incident to the police out of fear of being deported. Although his brother who contracted another lawyer was approved, Pedro “was depressed for a while” because his lawyer took advantage of him. Fatima shares a similar experience with Pedro. She too was taken advantage of by an immigration lawyer who was also arrested for scamming (un)documented immigrants out of money.

In Fatima’s *testimonio* she reveals that she was unaware that she did not arrive in the country on a fiancé visa as her staged ex-fiancé had made her believe due to her limited English proficiency at the time. Accordingly, she later discovered that she was brought over on a tourist visa that would expire after six months which was arranged by her uncle and the man who she thought would become her future husband. He made her believe that she was married and that he would take care of the paperwork, but did not keep his word causing her to fall out of her temporary *legal* status. She contracted a lawyer in hopes that she could petition to adjust her status due to the fact that she was brought to this country on false pretenses. She explains:

In 2001, I hire another lawyer. I had a court date and I got into a car accident and miss the appointment. She got me another court date because I had an excuse. The next court date, I show up but my lawyer forgot. I go to her office all week but her secretary said that she was out of town. Finally one day her assistant call

me and told me that there wasn't anything that they could do help me...I found out later that my lawyer did not show up for court because she was in jail and they took her license because she was taking people's money and telling them false information.

Fatima and Pedro both have experienced being deceived by people who have taken oaths and who are charged with fighting for and protecting people's civil rights. In fact, Fatima has a child with a police officer. Thus, their mistrust of authorities and reluctance in reporting these incidents to local police officials are better understood. Fatima also continues to deal with very traumatic experiences with various men who she explains in her *testimonio* that took advantage of her because they know that she was afraid to report crimes out of fear of being deported. In her *testimonio* she reveals multiple crimes committed against her that have made her afraid of men. She recalls another experience:

In December 2009, my friend called me and invited me to her house to pick up food for me and my son. I went to the parking lot of my apartment and put my son in his car seat. He was little. I turned around and a man put a gun to my head and pushed me back in the car and said "give me your purse." I gave it to him. Thank God, he left after he took my purse. After that, I was so scared. My son was scared too. Ever since then I am always scared. I don't want to go outside. I don't like for my son to go outside after the sun is down. People think I am crazy, but I am scared. I put a chain on my door at night. I just work and come home. I did not call the police because I do not have my papers. When I tell people this they tell me that I need to talk to someone to help me. I made a

promise to God that I will never let another man in my house. I did not know anything when I came to this country. Men took advantage of me. They lied to me. They broke my heart. Now, I think that men are bad. Especially, I think that men take advantage of people like me from another country and with no papers. Due to Fatima's proclaimed faith and constant references to God in her *testimonio*, her statement "I made a promise to God that I will never let another man in my house" indicates the severity and extent of her fear. Being afraid "to go outside after the sun is down" and being around men are real *silenced struggles* that she confronts daily. Fatima as well as other participants have expressed how they have (had) to cope with traumatic experiences on their own although she realizes that she needs therapy in her statement "when I tell people this they tell me that I need to talk to someone to help me."

While recent laws have been passed to protect undocumented women against violence, there have been real cases where women have reported abuse to local authorities and have been turned over to ICE because their immigration status has been checked. In 2013, President Barak Obama signed an expansion to the *Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA) to include and protect undocumented women, but not everyone is aware of this ruling. As a result of not being full-authorized citizens, many undocumented people living in this country take risks when reporting crimes and consequently are subject to injustices that violate their basic human rights out of fear.

Being undocumented in the United States not only puts one at risk of being victimized, but it also invokes many feelings that the participants have (had) to deal with

daily. For example Cesaría recalls below feelings of resentment towards her family as an (un)documented teenager. She explains:

My parents, my two little sisters and I were undocumented, but my dad's family in Rhode Island had their papers. My great aunts, my dad's siblings, and my cousins were all U.S. residents or citizens. I had resentment because I was undocumented. I was angry at my parents for bringing me to the U.S. and me not having my papers. I was resentful because my friends were moving off to college. If I had parents who had all of this money and who could pay for my school I could go because you did not need a social security number. You just needed someone to pay for your schooling. So, if I had a social security number that meant I could apply for scholarships and stuff like that and the state or someone else could have paid for my higher education. I'm seeing all of my friends going on and writing their college essays and I'm writing mine, but I know it is not going anywhere.

Cesaría, who was undocumented for seven years, recalls being “angry at her parents for bringing her to the U. S.” without her “papers” and expresses the realities of not having “a social security card” to apply for academic scholarships to go to college because her parents could not afford to send her. She was also “resentful” because her dad’s family “had their papers” and her friends were “moving off to college.” While many undocumented students like Cesaria are able to attend college, they cannot apply for federal financial aid or scholarships without a social security number and are often faced to pay out of state tuition to attend a university in the state in which they reside and graduated from High School. According to a National Immigration Law Center

(2014) report, seventeen out of fifty states have laws allowing 'certain' undocumented students to pay the same tuition as their classmates at public institutions of higher education (see nilc.org/basic-facts-instate.html). This means that in approximately thirty three states undocumented students have to pay up to three times more than their United States citizen peers if they want to attend college.

Sunil and Fatima also reveal feelings of resentment. They both expressed that some United States citizens do not appreciate the benefits of their citizenship. Sunil and Fatima fully understand the value of having a social security card as non-citizens. They express their feelings differently. For example, Sunil explains, "there are people who were born here who are lazy. It makes me angry when I see people here who don't take advantage of what this country has to offer." Fatima expresses similar feelings:

I go to work and I hear people complain about little things and I think in my heart they do not know how lucky they are to have a social security card and a driver's license. If I had these two things I would not ask for anything else.

Both Sunil and Fatima realize the significance of being United State citizens and within their *testimonios* they express their frustrations with witnessing some "Americans" abusing their rights or not valuing the benefits of their citizenship. For example Fatima explains how she drives in fear daily because she does not have a valid driver's license. She says:

I had a license, but now it is expired. Ever since I lost my license I worry that I will get stopped and my son will never see me again and I will never see him. Every morning I cry when I tell my son goodbye because I don't know if I will come back or not.

Driving without a license is a fear that Fatima as well as many undocumented people face. If they are stopped by the police for any minor traffic violation or are involved in a car accident whether they are at fault or not puts them at risk for being turned over to immigration officials (ICE). Thus, Fatima's fear "every morning" of not knowing if she will return home to her son every day after work because she drives without a license is not an exaggerated one, during this PAR study I have personally attended rallies and written letters to ICE petitioning that they release undocumented North Carolina drivers who were stopped for minor traffic violations and arrested because they discovered that they were driving without a license and did not having proper documentation to be in the country.

Cesaria, in retrospect, recalls how she too struggled silently and recognizes her need to help others like herself today whose voices are somewhat restrained by their immigration statuses. Although today she is a naturalized U. S. citizen, she lived undocumented for seven years in the country and recalls struggling to speak freely. She states:

I have always been able to speak. I have always had a voice. I didn't let me being undocumented stop me. Now, as a naturalized U.S. citizen I can speak freely. I have always been outspoken, but there was always a certain level of fear, but now I can just freely say what I want you know and now I feel like it is my duty to speak for those who may not be able to speak. So if an undocumented person came up to me and said "I need you to help me?" I mean if it is something that I am able to do professionally and personally, you better believe that I'm going to do it.

Cesaría explicitly explains that although she “always had a voice” and had “always been outspoken” that her confidence in speaking freely changed once she adjusted her immigration status and “now feels like it is her duty” to help others. Her fears of being exposed restrained her from being able to fully express herself when she was undocumented. By recognizing how her immigration status suppressed her freedom of speech, she now feels compelled to help others who are in the same position that she was for seven years. Fatima explained to me during our interview that as a higher educator today, she helps her D. A. C. A. recipient students as much as she can. D.A.C.A is the acronym for *Deferred Action for Child Arrivals*, a recent DHS program that was initiated in 2012. For approved applicants it provides temporary protective status (TPS) for undocumented individuals who arrived to the country as a minor and who meet certain criteria. D. A. C. A. recipients’ do not have a legal status and must renew this TPS every 2-3 years. Cesaría counsels these students and helps them plan for their career paths despite their temporary protective status.

It is also important to note that while Cesaria adjusted her status seventeen years ago (at the age of 20), she just recently (2013) revealed to people outside of her family that she had lived (un)documented in the country. In our second informal meeting, she explained to me that although she has been a naturalized U. S. citizen for some time, she still had been (un)consciously afraid to expose her lived experience in fear that ICE would come and rescind her status. Plus, she recalls her parents stressing as a teenager that she not discuss being undocumented with anyone. Accordingly, while Cesaría and the other participants’ struggles are (were) silenced by their

immigration statuses, they all recognized the need and expressed a desire to become authorized United States citizens.

Theme Three: Aspiring Citizens

The third theme *aspiring citizens* emerged out of the participants expressed desires and actions toward becoming full authorized and legitimized members of the United States. Within their *testimonios* they all vocalized an allegiance to the United States and referenced the shared humanity between United States born citizens and *aspiring citizens* like themselves as well as their family members. By discussing (un)documented communities as *aspiring citizens* it aligns with national advocacy groups who participated in a messaging poll that suggested this non-deficit term (Sharry, Lake, Shenker-Osorio, Rowe, 2012). For example, the participants all belong to mixed status households where U. S. residents and citizens as well as undocumented members make up their family units. Thus, they aspire for their family members living in the country to achieve the goal of being fully authorized *Americans*. Often, undocumented experiences are portrayed as isolated ones in dominant discourses, but the reality is that mixed-status households are common, thus all members are affected by these restrictive statuses, especially U. S. children born to undocumented adults who depend on them (Bruno, 2014).

They also expressed that they do (did) not want to be separated from their children and/or loved ones who were born in the country. For example, Pedro and Cesaria after living for years undocumented accomplished their goals of acquiring permanent residency. All participants shared that they are all invested in the United States. With the exception of Sunil, they all have children who are United States citizens

and residents as well as their jobs are here. While Pedro and Cesaría have adjusted their statuses, their goal as well as their families was (is) to obtain their citizenship. In Pedro's *testimonio* he reveals that he and his four siblings all entered by land and that three continue to live undocumented with their U.S. born children. He explains that in El Salvador getting approved for a U.S. visa is like "winning the lottery." He explains:

Certain people can't come over to the United States legally. U.S. visas are for rich people. In order to get a U.S. visa in our countries we have to have capital. We have to have money in the bank, land, and a house in our name. Then, you have to have about \$100 for the application. Remember, the average salary is about \$300 a month in El Salvador. If you don't have these things, te niegan (*they will deny you*). There is also an interview with the U.S. embassy. I did not apply for a visa because everything was in my parent's name. I didn't have any money in the bank because I worked on my father's land and lived with my parents. If I applied they would have denied me.

Pedro's explains that it is not easy for a Salvadorian who is not "rich," or does not meet the criteria of having certain "capital" to get approved for a visa to come to the United States. This excerpt above addresses the common question posed by United States citizens which is "why don't (un)documented people just apply to come here 'legally?'" He indicates that the visa application and approval process is not accessible to people who don't have a substantial amount of "money in the bank," "land and a house" in their name which usually deters many people from even applying because they already know that they will be "denied."

Accordingly, I posed the question to all participants about the process of getting a visa to come to the United States in their countries of birth to examine if they shared Pedro's opinion. Sunil agreed that it was a difficult process and it deterred him from applying and in turn felt that his visa to work on a cruise ship was his only opportunity to obtain temporary permission to disembark in the United States. Fatima believes that because her alleged fiancé was a U.S. citizen who petitioned for her that is why she was approved. She explains:

In Morocco, only people who have lots of money in the bank get visas. If you do not have money, they think you will go and stay. A lot of people want to come to the United States, but they cannot because they cannot get a visa.

In contrast to Fatima, Paris and Cesaria believe because they (their parents) had capital in their countries and because their families were of a certain socio-economic status that their process was easier to obtain a tourist visa. However, the maximum time usually allotted for this type of visa is six months at one time, but it served the purpose of allowing them to enter the country. I would like to clarify that there are various types of visas, which have been revealed in the *testimonios* that were awarded to four participants, which specified an amount of time that they could remain in the country. Cesaría and Paris arrived with a tourist visa that was valid for six-month increments. Fatima thought that she arrived on a fiancé visa which is issued to people born in other countries who have the intention on getting married to a U.S. citizen, but actually was issued a tourist visa as well. Sunil arrived on a C1-D visa for cruise ship employees only that only allowed him to disembark at specified United States ports for short periods of time. Sunil explains what he has witnessed about the visa process in India. He says:

I don't think that immigration processes or laws are fair at all. It's easier for people from Nepal and European countries to come here. It is very hard to get a visa to come here because of the country where I was born. The only reason that I got a visa was to work on a cruise ship. Maybe if you are a rich Indian and have connections you can come to this country easy. I think that if anyone comes here and works hard and does not commit any crimes that they should be allowed to stay here. This is a place for everyone to do well. There are so many good people who come here to do good things. I am one of them.

In the excerpt above Sunil believes that there are hierarchical and preference systems within the “immigration process” that is not “fair at all” in India because he says “it’s easier” for “a rich Indian” and/or people from “Nepal and European countries” who have more of an advantage in getting approved for United States visas. Sunil also indexes his opinion that *aspiring citizens* should display such as the desire to “work hard” and not “commit any crimes.” He points out that “there are so many good people who come here to do good things” like himself and that “they should be allowed to stay” because they are productive and contributing members. Fatima as well demonstrates her concern as an aspiring citizen by giving back to her community and discusses her desire to help others like herself in the future. She says:

Me and my son go with an American family to give food to homeless people. I cook food for the homeless one time a month. We go out under the bridges. I want to help people more, people like me who don’t have their papers. I want to tell people who are down and have no hope, “God, he is big.” “If I can make it, anybody can.” “I had no parents.” “I don’t have education.” “I was poor from

Morocco, but God showed me how to sew.” I can make any dress. I sew and make money. I have customers at work and outside. I don’t have abuse anymore. I have a nice apartment. I have a car. If I had my papers, I can do more.

Fatima despite her unfavorable circumstances like not “having parents,” or an “education,” being “poor,” and being a survivor of “abuse,” still wants to use her *testimonio* to help those “who are down and have no hope.” It is also apparent from reading her entire *testimonio* that her choice to feed the homeless derives from her own fear of homelessness if she is deported back to Morocco. While she has a “nice apartment” and “a car” because she knows how “to sew and make money,” she aspires to “do more,” but is restricted due to her undocumented immigration status.

The reasons that participants’ came to the United States and their explanations for wanting to remain in the country with authorization varies. However, they all expressed that they wanted to realize their dreams here. For example, Cesaria’s parent brought her and her sisters to the United States because her country did not have institutions of higher education during the time her family left. Cesaria explains:

My parents came to the United States similar to reasons that most immigrant families come. First, they came for their children. They had three daughters and they wanted us to get a good education and have the most opportunities possible. My country only gained its independence from Portugal in the late 1970’s so there weren’t any universities where we could study after high school. It was very pioneering and kind of unique for my dad, an African man, to say “I need to take my daughters, all three daughters, to the United States to give them

a shot at life by educating them.” He didn’t say “we need to marry you off.” He said “we need to educate them,” so my dad was very cutting edge for his time. Cesaria, as a child resented her parents for bringing their family to live undocumented in the United States, but as she matured, she realized as now a mother herself that her parents were not being selfish, but selfless like most parents who want to give their children “the most opportunities possible.” For example, in retrospect, she realizes that her father was very “cutting edge for his time” in his thinking when he uprooted his family from a newly independent country to take them to the “United States to give them a shot at life by educating” “all three daughters.” She says that he was very “pioneering” because he wanted to ensure that his “three daughters” received a higher education that was unavailable in their birth country at the time, so that they did not feel that marriage was their only option after high school. Cesaria’s dad was “pioneering” in his thinking because encouraging young girls to get married at an early is (was) a common practice in some African countries. In fact, the United Nations and the African Union charter for the past 25 years has recognized June 16th as the *Day of the African Child*, which celebrates laws passed to protect children, such as preventing young African girls from being coerced (forced) into childhood marriages.

While Cesaria’s family came to give their children a higher education, Paris came out of marital obligation. Initially she did not want to come, but eventually decided to stay because she and her daughter became enamored with the country. Fatima wanted to come to get her freedom from an overprotective uncle who did not let her outside of the house much. Pedro accomplished his dream of owning a construction company. Sunil arrived with the hopes of becoming a great chef. He explains:

I decided to come to the states in 2003 because I wanted to make money so I could help support my family in India. Plus, I had big dreams for myself. As I explained earlier, no one else in my family had any desire to come to the States. My decision was voluntary and my family supported me even though they did not want to come. I traveled alone to the United with a C1-D visa. This is a visa for cruise ship workers. I got here and was issued an I-94 form, which gave me temporary permission to be in the country. I walked off of the cruise ship one day and never thought of the danger really. I will never forget when I came to the U.S. It was like a dream! I felt lots of emotions. I was nervous. I was very excited and scared at the same time. I was afraid, but I knew in my heart that I could do it. I was so focused. I knew that I would become a great chef.

Sunil's statement "I will never forget when I came to the U. S. It was like a dream!" indexes his excitement at the opportunity to live and work in the country as well as the possibility of obtaining permanent residence to become the "great chef" that he is today.

While four participants' successfully obtained visas, I would like to insert that there is an application process along with certain criteria and an interview with a U. S. embassy official that applicants must pass in order to obtain visas. Most importantly, I would like to note that visas are only valid for a specified amount of time and only certain visas allow non-citizens an opportunity to work in this country. Accordingly while four participants used visas to enter the country with permission, their visas do not lead to a pathway to adjust their citizenship statuses. The reality is that to become a U.S. citizen is an intricate process and it is something that they all value. For example, Sunil

explains his hopes of adjusting his status and becoming a U.S. citizen, but he shares his fear that his application will be rejected and he will be deported. He says:

My girlfriend and I plan on getting married. We will try to adjust my status through marriage, but I am scared that I will never be able to return or get approved because lawyers in Boston told me that the visa that I entered the country with cannot be adjusted. They tell me that I have to go back to India and serve a 10-year penalty first and then I can apply to come here legally. I have lived and worked here for eleven years. I am a chef. I have a girlfriend and soon a wife here. My life is here.

The last sentence “my life is here” clearly reveals Sunil’s desire to become an authorized U. S. resident and may also index a denial of his Indian identity. Although he will marry an American citizen, he is reluctant to apply to change his status because he entered with a C1-D visa, which is very difficult to adjust. Due to the complexity of this specific visa and the length of time that he overstayed the expiration date, if he applies to adjust his status he will most likely have to voluntarily return to India and fulfill a mandatory ten-year bar (punishment) before his U. S. citizen wife can apply for him to return to the United States. Thus, Sunil’s situation indexes that marriage to a U. S. citizen does not guarantee approval to adjust an undocumented status.

Fatima, a mother to a U.S. born citizen debunks the myth that undocumented people want to take resources from its citizens. In contrast, she explains that she is embarrassed that she recently had to apply for Medicaid for her American son. She says:

I don't want anything for free. I don't go to the government for help. I want to show my son a good example. I want him to see his mom work hard. In the future he will have to work hard for his family too. I only needed Medicaid for my son because he has allergies and asthma. The treatment is too expensive. I did not want to do it. I was ashamed. The doctor tell me to go get insurance for him because he is American. So, that is the only thing that I ask from the government.

Fatima makes it clear that she does not “want anything for free” and indicates that her intentions have never been to apply for government assistance for housing or food because she believes in working hard. In the excerpt above she supports her philosophy by stating that “I don't go to the government for help. I want to show my son a good example” and feels compelled to give an explanation why she recently had to apply for Medicaid for her U. S. born son. The fact that she was “ashamed” and “did not want to do it” and only applied for it because the doctor advised “her to go get insurance for him because he is American” indicates her strong desire to be a role model, which will hopefully encourage her son to have a strong work ethic in the future as well.

Summary

The three major themes (*mis-perceived identities, silenced struggles, and aspiring citizens*) revealed from the participants' *testimonios* were analyzed using *critical race theory* situated within a qualitative *participatory action research* foundation which allowed me in solidarity with community members to expose and work towards changing racialized and criminalized dominant immigrant discourses that shape (have shaped) the participants lives. The first theme (*mis*)*perceived* identities reveals that

participants confront(ed) stereotypical perceptions that are commonly attached to their (un)documented statuses which tend to racialize them as Mexican (Latino), criminalize them as law-breakers and terrorists, as well as hide their shared humanity and diversity. The second theme *silenced struggles* reveals various obstacles that they face(d) due to their immigration statuses, but endure(d) quietly out of their fear of deportation. Participants expressed withstanding mental, physical, and sexual abuse as well as trauma, thoughts of hopelessness, and exploitation by employers and lawyers. Despite these silenced struggles, theme three reveals that they still are *aspiring citizens*. All participants have lived, worked, and contributed to the United States for a minimum of eleven years. Their *testimonios* reveal an allegiance to this country and express hope that a pathway to citizenship will emerge for themselves and other family members living in the country as well. In chapter six, these themes are used to address the main as well as the two auxiliary research of this critical qualitative PAR dissertation and to analyze how Participants' *testimonios* counter and have the potential to transform biased dominant discourses surrounding (un)documented migration. I also reflect on the purpose of this social justice study and discuss possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS, REFLECTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents new co-constructed knowledge and meanings that counter dominant border discourses surrounding undocumented migration (communities) in the United States. The findings of this participatory action research (PAR) dissertation positioned within a *critical race theoretical* (CRT) framework emerged from the *testimonios* of the five non-Mexican participants within this study, which expose the consequences of restricting the complex phenomenon of undocumented migration within a biased United States-Mexico border frame. Accordingly this chapter is divided into three sections. First, I address the research questions by using the findings that were revealed from the CRT analysis (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2001) of the three overarching themes that emerged from participants' *testimonios* in chapter five. Thus, the three overarching co-constructed themes of *misperceived identities, silenced struggles, and aspiring citizens* are used to expose how participants lives are (have been) shaped by dominant racialized and criminalized border discourses, how their *testimonios* challenge it, and how their counter-narratives (Delgado Bernal & Solóranzo, 2001) can be used to re-present this incomplete narrative. The participants and I to co-constructed the thematic analysis in alignment with the tenants of *CRT, PAR, and testimonio*. Second, I reflect on the goals of PAR (Herr & Anderson, 2005) and the collaborative activities that I participated in with community stakeholders to work towards social justice for undocumented communities in North Carolina. The participants' urgent pleas for change in how they are perceived, treated, and re-presented are indexed as well. Lastly, I discuss possibilities for future research and end with my final remarks.

Addressing the Research Questions and Implications

In this section I discuss the findings that address the research questions by using the three themes that participants' and I co-constructed from their *testimonios* along with follow-up dialogues where they emphasized what they wanted readers to know and change about how (un)documented migration (communities) are understood, perceived and treated. Each theme will be used to address the main and two auxiliary questions. Table 9 below summarizes and illustrates the findings that address the research questions of my study. It is followed by a detailed discussion.

Table 9

Research Question Findings Crosswalk

Research Question (RQ)	Findings that address the RQ
<p>Research Question (main)</p> <p>How are the (un)documented participants' lives (<i>testimonios</i>) shaped by dominant immigrant discourses that are positioned within a U.S.-Mexico border framework?</p>	<p>The non-Mexican participants' <i>testimonios</i> revealed that they all (had) experience(d) and/or witness(ed) biased assumptions and constructions being made about (un)documented communities in general and about them in particular within various public mediums based on restrictive dominant U.S.-Mexico border discourses which tend to racialize them as Latinos (Mexicans) and criminalize them as border-crossers and/or terrorists since September 2011. In analyzing (<i>mis</i>)perceived identities, the first major emergent theme from their <i>testimonios</i>, it uncovered that these biased constructions guide how participants are understood, talked about, constructed, and treated in their daily lives. Their <i>testimonios</i> reveal that diverse counter-narratives are often underrepresented and overshadowed by generalized immigrant discourses and thus they call for more equitable representations and understandings of (un)documented migration (communities).</p>

<p><u>Auxiliary Question A</u></p> <p>How do their <i>testimonios</i> engage and counter this narrowly defined dominant rhetoric?</p>	<p>The non-Mexican participants' <i>testimonios</i> oppose essentialized rhetoric that tends to construct a single (un)documented immigrant narrative that is commonly centered on the U.S.-Mexico border. Their diverse <i>testimonios</i> revealed multiple identities, less commonly discussed ways of falling out of status, and different experiences of living (un)documented in the country which challenge contemporary border rhetoric that tends to unfairly target people of Mexican descent by constructing them as what Mae Ngai (2004) calls the "iconic illegal alien." Analysis of the second theme, <i>silenced struggles</i>, revealed that they all face(d) various obstacles that are often overshadowed and marginalized by dominant <i>Mexicanized</i> discourses and in turn call for more diverse immigrant counter-narratives that include their experiences and concerns.</p>
<p><u>Auxiliary Question B</u></p> <p>How do participants' <i>testimonios</i> reveal alternate ways of re-presenting dominant (un)documented immigration discourses?</p>	<p>The non-Mexican participants' <i>testimonios</i> revealed diverse identities, experiences, and mixed-statuses which can be used to nuance and re-present the current essentialized dominant border discourses that tend to focus on one (un)documented story by offering multiple narratives that index the complexities and humanity within the (un)documented migration phenomenon. In analyzing the third theme, <i>aspiring citizens</i>, it was revealed that participants along with all of their family members in the U.S. aspire to be full-fledge authorized members of the United States and in turn call for new terminology and rhetoric that does not construct them from a deficit standpoint (illegal, undocumented), but that indexes their shared contributions, aspirations, and humanity with U. S. citizens.</p>

Research Question (main)

How are the (un)documented participants' lives (*testimonios*) shaped by dominant immigrant discourses that are positioned within a U.S.-Mexico border framework?

In alignment with the theoretical framework of the study, the discussion surrounding this question will be guided by the first overarching theme of (*mis*)perceived

identities which emerged from the analysis of the participants' *testimonios* presented last chapter through a *critical race theory* (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2001) lens. The five non-Mexican participants' expert lived knowledge revealed in their *testimonios* uncover telling information that can inform dominant immigrant discourses and scholarship concerned with inequities within (un)documented communities and surrounding essentialized contemporary border rhetoric. Three main findings were revealed from the analysis of the first theme of *(mis)perceived identities*. The following points will be used to address the main research question:

1. Dominant border discourses tend to create a single story of (un)documented migration in the United States which unfairly target Latinos (Mexicans) who enter the country without authorization through the southwest border which in turn tends to construct (racialize and criminalize) them as the sole representatives and culprits of this complex phenomenon.
2. (Mis)perceptions about (un)documented migration (communities) tend to stem from restrictive border frameworks that shape how immigrants are constructed, discussed, and treated in their everyday lives.
3. Non-Mexican *testimonios* of (un)documented lived realities tend to be underrepresented and disregarded by dominant border discourses.

(Un)documented Latinos (Mexicans) are Unfairly Targeted

All five participants revealed that they feel that Mexican (Latino) (un)documented communities are more visible in dominant immigrant discourses and that people crossing the United States-Mexico border are commonly constructed as the face of this phenomenon. In fact, all participants' expressed generalized perceptions about

(un)documented people of Mexican descent based on constructions that they have seen on the news. Accordingly, their *testimonios* support the argument behind the *Latino (Mexican) threat narrative* which anthropologist Chávez (2008) explains derives from many (mis)perceptions. He says:

This is a story with a number of interwoven plot lines, or narrative themes: the construction of “illegal aliens” as criminals, the Quebec model, the Mexican invasion and *Reconquista* (Re-conquest) of the United States, an unwillingness to learn English, and integrate into U.S. society, out-of-control fertility, and threats to national security. (Chávez, 2008, p.25)

By constructing Latinos (Mexicans) or anyone who is perceived to be, as people who threaten the linguistic, cultural, socio-economic, and racial fabric of the United States, it fuels “us” against “them” discourses, attitudes and (mis)understandings. In fact, the participants recognize and index how the news surrounding (un)documented migration unfairly target Latinos, specifically people of Mexican descent. For example, Sunil from India believes that “they know about Hispanics because it is on the news” because Pedro from El Salvador explains that “I think at first when they see una cara hispana (a Hispanic face), they may think that all Hispanos son ilegales (*all Hispanics are illegal*)” and that some “don’t want Mexicans here” like Fatima witnessed at work because according to Paris from Colombia, “many Mexicans who come here are very poor and they have to sneak across the border.” Cesaria draws the conclusion that the current immigration debate in the United States is controlled by politicians now who “have turned it into a Mexican and American immigration issue, as if all immigrants are Mexican.”

The criminalization, racialization, and targeting of Mexican (Latino) immigrants as well as the United States-Mexican border is not only revealed by participants, but it is also evidenced by the fact that in 2013 out of all apprehensions of unauthorized migrants by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), 70% occurred at the U. S.-Mexico border according to a Migration Policy Institute (MPI) report (Rosenblum and McCabe, 2014, p. 22). In contrast, I argue that people who overstay their visas or who arrive through other entry points (by plane, through the Canadian-United States border, or by sea) tend to be less commonly discussed and criminalized in dominant discourses. Cesaria reveals “I think the color of the skin helps.” For example, Paris says “I think it is easy for people from Europe and Canada to get permission to come here.” Sunil believes that “it's easier for people from Nepal and European countries to come here.” Cesaria explains that her friends who are immigration lawyers who have told her about perceived raced-based preference systems in ICE detention centers. Cesaria says “ you have the Canadians and people from other European countries that will be out within a couple of hours because they have the lawyers who walk in and get them out without a problem it seems.” While Fatima knows “that there are illegal people from everywhere in the United States,” the participants’ *testimonios* revealed that the single U. S.-Mexico border-crosser story is the dominant one.

All five participants’ *testimonios* revealed that dominant discourses surrounding (un)documented migration construct an essentialized narrative about this phenomenon and these communities, which in turn causes the uninformed public to make generalized assumptions about what countries they come from, how and why they enter the country, what they look and sound like, and how they behave. In chapter five I

indexed examples of various (mis)perceptions that the participants face. For example, Fatima and Cesaria are commonly perceived to be Latinas and Pedro from El Salvador is assumed to be Mexican. Sunil and Fatima expressed how they are constructed in the news as terrorists which caused Fatima's prospective employer not to hire her which has made her afraid to reveal her Islamic faith do to discriminatory practices. Sunil explained that because most people know about (un)documented "Hispanics," he can stay under the radar because U. S. citizens generally do not assume that there are undocumented people from India in the country.

Participants' *testimonios* align with Ngai's (2004) argument that immigration laws have created Mexicans as "the iconic illegal alien" (p.58). I add that this racialized and criminalized imposed identity has constructed (un)documented migration as a Mexican phenomenon in general which has consequently *Mexicanized* dominant discourses surrounding (un)documented immigrant narratives causing certain communities to be targeted (Latinos) and more recently since September 11, 2001 it has included Islamic groups while, "excepting" (Khoshravi, 2010) others (socially white or European immigrants).

(Mis)perceptions Shape Participants' Lives

Undocumented students commonly referred to as *Dreamers* or more recently as students who are recipients of *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* (D. A. C. A.), who were brought to the United States by their parents as young children are often indexed in this current narrative. I argue that D. A. C. A. recipient *testimonios* may invoke sympathy because they did not have a choice to come to this country and may be constructed as victims. On the other hand their parents who are informed adults are

often attacked, constructed as criminals, and excluded from temporary protective statuses like D. A. C. A. One of the main goals of this dissertation is to address the obstacles and needs of underrepresented groups such as undocumented adults. Cesaría, as a former (un)documented minor in the United States, offers a message to people who criticize parents for putting their children in a position that makes them (un)documented. She says:

I want to talk about undocumented children because most of my undocumented experience I was a child between 13 and 18 because the age for a legal adult in the U. S. is 18. I have heard all of that negative talk about parents bringing their kids here against their will and then they become undocumented and put them at risk of being deported and will never be able to change their statuses. People ask “why are you putting your children through this and why are you bringing your children to put them in these situations?” There is a lot of criticism of these parents. Let me tell you that it takes a whole lot of courage to leave what you have known all of your life to come to somewhere new because you trust and you believe in yourself and you know that you want to do this best thing for your child.

As an adult now, Cesaria understands the obstacles of having to leave everything “you have known all of your life” like your loved ones, friends, your culture, language, food, and material items to embark on a life with a new identity that comes with many restrictions, fears, and stigmas. For example, all of the participants are (have been) perceived to be threats to this country due to dominant biased rhetoric which often guides how people (mis)perceive and treat them.

By not presenting a comprehensive illustration of the issues surrounding the United States immigration system and the diversity of the people who are involved, contemporary rhetoric becomes narrowly focused and selective on what is discussed. These distorted narratives and images usually tend to be positioned in an imprudent manner where the audience takes a stance based off of discerning knowledge presented in the media.

This dissertation has argued against dominant border discourses by indexing how this biased framework unfairly targets and shapes the lives of people of Mexican descent and those who are (perceived to be) Latino, which in turn racializes and criminalizes those who cross the U.S-Mexico border without authorization while disregarding the experiences of the other 40% of undocumented visa over-stayers and overshadowing counter-narratives of less commonly examined communities like the participants in this study from five diverse countries. It explores instead a contextualized human rights framework that uses non-deficit terminology to re-present the current incomplete dominant undocumented border narrative with multiple accounts of lived experiences.

Underrepresented Counter-Narratives

The participants' *testimonios* reveal several under examined factors surrounding undocumented migration (communities) that are less commonly exposed in dominant discourses. First, four out of my five participants did not cross the United States-Mexico border to enter the country, but instead were given temporary permission by their country of origin and United States immigration authorities to travel to the country. This means that they arrived *legally* or with permission, but *fell out of status* after overstaying

their visa expiration dates. Three arrived in United States airports with tourist visas and one entered by sea through a port on a cruise ship employee visa. Accordingly, all four of them overstayed the permitted time on their visas to be in the country and as a result became undocumented. Their narratives counter the dominant border story of immigration. In fact, Bruno (2014), a specialist on immigration policy, explains below that there are various ways people become undocumented. She says that they can:

enter the United States in three main ways: (1) some are admitted to the United States on valid nonimmigrant (temporary) visas (e.g., as visitors or students) or on border-crossing cards and either remain in the country beyond their authorized period of stay or otherwise violate the terms of their admission; (2) some are admitted based on fraudulent documents (e.g., fake passports) that go undetected by U.S. officials; and (3) some enter the country illegally without inspection (e.g., by crossing over the Southwest or northern U.S. border). (Bruno, 2014, p.2)

As argued in this dissertation, alternative modes of entry into the country besides crossing the United States-Mexico border are commonly less discussed due to essentialized rhetoric that tends to focus only on one of the country's borders which in turn commonly constructs Mexican migrants as the only undocumented community who are entering the country without permission. Pedro explains that we need multiple counter-narratives that show the diverse experiences, obstacles, and successes. He says:

I think that it is important to hear *testimonios* from undocumented people from other countries than Mexico. First, yes we come from Mexico, but we come from

Central America and South America too. We are not all the same. We have different experiences and we are all important.

Pedro's recognizes that "yes we come from Mexico" but "we are all important" and by offering multiple diverse counter-narratives, the complex phenomenon of (un)documented migration can be uncovered and in turn eradicate the possibility of perpetuating essentialized rhetoric that stigmatizes and depicts one group of people as the representatives (culprits and or victims).

Since the *Morton Memo* was released in 2011 by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) which encourages immigration officials to practice deferred deportation for specific non-criminal undocumented migrants (youth who were brought over at an earlier age by their parents), many Latino students have publicly exposed themselves and share their stories to call for social change. However undocumented people from non-Spanish speaking countries have not been as noticeable. Accordingly the participants recognize the need for more *testimonios* that can possibly reach wider audiences and assist all who affected by their (un)documented immigration status.

Auxiliary Research Question A

How do their *testimonios* engage and counter this narrowly defined dominant rhetoric?

Two main points were revealed from the *critical race theory analysis* (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2001) of the second theme of *silenced struggles* that emerged from their *testimonios*. The following points will be used to address the main research question:

1. Participants' *testimonios* counter dominant *Mexicanized* border discourses by offering non-Mexican accounts that index the true diversity of these communities, their mixed adjustable immigration statuses, the different ways

of becoming undocumented, and by revealing narratives of law-abiding aspiring citizens.

2. Each participants' *testimonio* revealed diverse reasons for coming to this country as well as uncover(ed) different obstacles they face(d) living (un)documented in the country that challenge essentialized narratives that are (were) imposed upon them by deficit immigrant discourses.

Counter-Stories

All of the non-Mexican participants' *testimonios* oppose dominant border discourses that tend to racialize, criminalize, and essentialize their experiences. While their counter-narratives revealed that most people in the United States are familiar with images and rhetoric surrounding (un)documented migration as it relates to the United-States Mexico border, their *testimonios* expose the consequences of this narrowly defined narrative as well as expand upon it to include less commonly examined factors that are often overshadowed by these biased dominant discourses. Their diverse counter-narratives reveal that they all were born in five different countries (Morocco, Colombia, India, El Salvador, and an unnamed African Island) and all work in different industries (education, construction, cleaning, culinary arts, and seamstress).

They represent four different continents (North America, South America, Asia, and Africa) and speak four different languages (Tamil, a creolized Portuguese, Spanish, and Arabic) along with English. They practice different faiths (Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism) and arrived in the country through three different entryways (by sea, land, and airplanes). Two of the five participants who lived undocumented in the country have adjusted their statuses and are now United States residents/citizens. All but one

participant arrived with authorization, but fell out of status after overstaying their temporary visas. In addition, Pedro, the only participant who entered through the southwest border, expands on the commonly essentialized one-border crossing story (U. S.-Mexico) by offering his *testimonio* that extends across three borders (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico). Lastly they all live in mixed immigration status households. The participants' diverse identities and experiences (*testimonios*) expose the racialized and criminalized biases projected within dominant border discourses that shape their lives. They challenge the validity of this essentialized narrative that silence their diverse and real obstacles. Lastly, they call for the eradication of these *racist nativist* (Pérez-Huber, 2009b) discourses and social change within and outside of the academy.

Diverse Silenced Struggles

The second theme, *silenced struggles*, uncovered that all of the participants face(d) different obstacles that motivated them to come to the United States as well as encounter(ed) unjust treatment and discriminatory practices which their *testimonios* revealed are (were) often overshadowed by restrictive border rhetoric. For example, Pedro left his country during a 12-year civil war in his country where young boys were being recruited as soldiers. He travelled more than a month by land crossing three borders to get to this country. He was taken advantage of by employers who did not pay him and an immigration lawyer who stole his money and documents.

Sunil was trained in Mumbai as a Chef and obtained a job on a cruise ship in hopes of coming to the United States to become a famous chef. He left India because he said that his situation was bad. He disembarked the cruise ship and became undocumented. While he is currently a Head Chef in the United States he cannot earn

the salary he deserves because he is undocumented and he has not seen his family in over 10 years.

Paris left Colombia as a Dental hygienist with her then husband who had dreams of living in the United States. After a divorce she and her daughter became alone in the country. Although her daughter is an adult naturalized U. S. resident who can potentially petition for her if she becomes a citizen, they do not have the money to go through the process.

Cesaría left her native country as a teenager because her parents wanted their daughters to obtain a higher education that was not available in their country. She was resentful at her parents because she had to leave a nanny who was like an older sister and was mad that she was undocumented and was sad because they could not afford to send her to college because she could not apply for federal assistance or loans. As a result she married a citizen to adjust her status.

One of the most revealing *testimonio*'s for me was Fatima's. While discourses of *Islamaphobia* are commonly critically examined within dominant immigrant narratives, I have not encountered studies that show how this racialized identity intersects with an undocumented immigration status.

Islamaphobia and Orientalism

Fatima's *testimonio* reveals less commonly examined factors within (un)documented scholarship and dominant discourses. By analyzing her *testimonio* through a *critical race theory* (CRT) lens (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2001), racialized dominant discourses surrounding Muslims, (un)documented immigrants, and women of color born outside of the United States are exposed. For example, CRT informs us that

racism has historically and continues to be ingrained in our society and culture and in order to understand and challenge this complex phenomenon, it must be analyzed by examining how it intersects with other forms of subordination and how it plays out in the lived realities of People of Color. Fatima's testimonio reveals how race intersects with gender, immigration status, and religious beliefs. Thus, a CRT lens reveals how racialized and criminalized Islamic constructs intersect with other forms of oppression that Fatima faces such as the marginalizing reality of being undocumented in addition to orientalist (Said, 1978) constructions which *other* and exoticize (women of) the East. Said (1978) in his groundbreaking book entitled *Orientalism* uses this term to refer to the phenomenon of Western cultures distinguishing themselves as superior to Eastern ones, particularly the Arab world, by constructing the later as being extremely different, backwards, erotic (women) and needing to be saved by the West. In addressing the main research question of this study, I indexed Fatima's experience with being racially profiled by a potential employer because of her Arabic surname. Below she also recounts experiences of being chastised for dating (American) men instead of ones from her own race. Fatima recounts:

I was working and my boyfriend came to bring me lunch. He was American. After he left, a lady who was in the store where I work came to me and told me that "you foreign women are taking our men." She told me that I need to date my own race and leave their men alone. She does not know that American men treat us worst because we do not have power. I also have problems with my accent. One day, I was helping a customer and she told me that she needs somebody who can speak English clearly. I have a lot of stories.

By examining the excerpt above through a *critical race theory* (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2001) lens, it exposes how Fatima's racialized Muslim identity intersects with gender and her immigration status. It indexes the nuances of being undocumented, a Muslim, and a woman of Color from another country. Fatima's encounter demonstrates that race and racism are indeed common factors that guide (mis)perceptions about People of Color within and outside of the United States. The statement from the woman above vocalizes her beliefs about distinct dating rules for women from non-Western countries, which I argue is based on racialized (orientalist) ideologies. Fatima in response reveals that she feels that "American men" treat "foreign women worst" because they think that, "we do not have power." Fatima's feeling of powerlessness not only stems from being undocumented, but from her experiences of being discriminated against due to being an accented English speaker, a "foreign" woman, and a Muslim.

While Fatima continues to confront her fears that come with all of the factors indexed previously, she explains the extent of her fears when she recounts being afraid to expose her Islamic beliefs even when her health was in jeopardy. She recalls:

One time I went to the hospital and the nurse asked me my religion. I was scared to tell her. I thought they would do something bad to me, but she told me that they have to ask everyone these questions. I know that the T.V. shows a lot of Muslim terrorists. I am illegal and a Muslim. I feel more scared. I was already scared to go to the hospital because I do not have my papers, but I was very sick. I have many stories.

By Fatima's expressing that she "thought they would do something bad to me" because "I know that the T.V. shows a lot of Muslim terrorists" and by recognizing that her being

“illegal and Muslim,” her real fears of being (mis)perceived by racialized and criminalized constructs could have jeopardized her health.

Due to essentializing rhetoric that hides the participants diversity and humanity, they all have expressed that they feel (have felt) like they have (had) to make various decisions as well as withstand and deal with trauma and abuse out of fear of being discriminated against and/or deported. While on one hand they feel that they deserve basic human rights, on the other hand they do (did) not feel that their struggles and/or abuses would be valued or taken seriously because they are (were) not considered or accepted as full members of the United States. Thus, being undocumented in the country made them afraid to report or contact local police and/or other authorities when they were victimized because they were afraid that their immigration status would be exposed.

By Air, Land, Sea

The participants' *testimonios* revealed that there are multiple ways to become undocumented in the United States, which I argue is less commonly examined in dominant discourses and in scholarship due to politicized and racialized beliefs and rhetoric that unfairly targets people of Mexican descent. Only Pedro arrived by land crossing three borders to enter the country. Sunil arrived by sea as a cruise ship employee with a temporary work visa. Cesaria, Paris, and Fatima arrived by plane with tourist visas. Although current statistics between the Department of Homeland Security and the Pew Research Center indicate that between 40%-57% of the undocumented population are immigrants who arrived with authorization but overstayed their visas and consequently *fell out of status*, these stories are less commonly explored. Thus, the

participants' *testimonios* counter the dominant single United States-Mexico border-crossing story and present three different modes of entry and becoming undocumented.

Addressing Auxiliary Research Question B

How do the participants' *testimonios* reveal alternate ways of re-presenting dominant (un)documented immigrant discourses?

The participants' experiential knowledge and lived realities inform their concerns about three main points that were revealed from the analysis of the third major theme, *aspiring citizens*. The following points will be used to address this sub-research question:

1. Dominant immigrant discourses need to be positioned within a non-deficit framework that uses more telling terminology to index the shared humanity between both U. S. and *aspiring citizens* alike who are both living, contributing, and have an allegiance to this country.
2. By re-presenting dominant discourses within a human rights framework (Pérez-Huber, 2009) the immigrant narrative in turn re-frames both U.S. and *aspiring citizens* as communities that mutually deserve equitable lives.
3. Multiple lived experiences of being (un)documented are needed to re-present the diversity and complexity of the (un)documented migration phenomenon and communities that are affected.

The participants' *testimonios* reveal new understandings of the intricacies of undocumented migration such as the diverse modes of becoming undocumented. They uncover diverse cultures, experiences, and mixed-status households within undocumented communities. They nuance the generalized obstacles that come with an undocumented status. Lastly, their counter-narratives oppose racist nativist immigrant

discourses and re-present multiple *testimonios* that challenge essentialized dominant border discourses of undocumented migration (communities).

Aspirational Language

Many scholars and community activist recognize the need for more telling vocabulary to talk about the participants. Most agree that the official United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) term “illegal alien” is dehumanizing and do not use it. According to a 2013 Pew Research Center report:

The use of “illegal alien reached its low point in 2013, dropping to 5% of terms used. “Illegal immigrant” is still the phrase newspapers most often use to describe foreigners living in the United States without proper documentation. This year, we found the phrase “illegal immigrant” accounted for 49% of the terms examined. (Guskin, 2013, p. 1)

I participated in and supported a “drop-the-I-word-campaign” in North Carolina that requested local news media sources to stop using the word *illegal* in their newspapers and on particular television networks. Some agreed to use “undocumented” others did not. Lakoff & Ferguson (2006) suggest the term “economic refugees.” The director of my research site brought to my attention the word “aspiring citizens” at an *Immigrant Solidarity Committee* meeting. In fact, as mentioned in chapter one “over one hundred immigrant advocacy groups agreed that the term *aspiring citizens* establishes a sense of shared values and identity with persuadable Americans.” (Sharry, Lake, Shenker-Osorio, Rowe, 2012, p. 1)

All participants’ revealed that they did not like the word “illegal” except Sunil who expressed “I don’t care about the names they call me.” Cesaria and Pedro preferred the

word *undocumented* because it was more telling even though Fatima confessed that she was not familiar with this word. Paris does not like the words *illegal* or *undocumented*. Sunil self-identified himself as “a worker born in another country without a social security number” and Paris says “they should just call us who we are. We are people from other countries working and living in the United States.” Following each individual interview I shared the word *aspiring citizens* with the participants and they all agree that it represented their (past) goals. They all expressed they along with their families in the United States aspired to be citizens. They also appreciated the fact that this language described them as a citizen. Cesaria explained that aspiring citizen is progressive and represents their transitional statuses. She reminds me that immigration statuses are not static, but that they can change just like she and Pedro adjusted their statuses through marriage and Pedro’s brother through the N. A. C. A. R. A. political asylum. Thus, the participants advocate for re-presenting undocumented communities as “aspiring citizens.”

Mixed-Status Households

The *aspiring citizens testimonios* in this study revealed that they all live in in mixed-status families where some members may be undocumented, others may have their U. S. residency, and the rest may be United States (naturalized/and native born) citizens. This is an important factor because it impacts their realities as well. Cesaría indexes a more general misunderstanding about mixed-status families as well as discusses her own struggle with being undocumented while other family members were not in the following quotation. She explains:

I think that U.S. citizens were oblivious to this whole concept of having your papers or not. They were just like are you a citizen or not? It was a black and white understanding. They like totally missed steps about the different statuses like undocumented, TPS, and green card. Citizenship is a completely different thing. Up until this day I don't think most Americans understand. They usually just ask if you are a citizen...My parents, my two little sisters and I were undocumented, but my dad's family in Rhode Island had their papers. My great aunts, my dad's siblings, and my cousins were all U.S. residents or citizens. I had resentment because I was undocumented. I was angry at my parents for bringing me to the U.S. and me not having my papers. I was resentful because my friends were moving off to college.

The excerpts above demonstrate that there are various immigration statuses and that they are not static, but can change and that all members of mixed-status households are affected by having loved ones who are undocumented because it restricts their lives and can possibly separate and/or cause hardships on their families. For example, the temporary protective status or "TPS" as Cesaria refers to it is usually an in-between-status that is awarded to people who are awaiting a decision to see if their status adjustment petitions will be approved or denied. Cesaría who lived undocumented for seven years received TPS before she was approved for United States residency after adjusting her status through marriage and then later applied for citizenship years after meeting the requirements.

By reading diverse *testimonios* of undocumented people, it has been demonstrated that immigration status can be changed for various reasons. For

example, both Cesaria and Pedro who lived seven to fourteen years undocumented in the United States adjusted their undocumented statuses through their marriage to U. S. citizens. Pedro's older brother changed his status through N. A. C. A. R. A. a political asylum specific to certain countries, which protected him from the violence of the civil war in his country and the threat of being forced to become a soldier for one of the military groups. Cesaria's family adjusted their statuses through political asylum as well with one of the factors being medical hardship due to the fact that there were not any doctors in her birth country who could treat a disease that her sister suffered from as a child.

The participants are not representative of the entire undocumented community in the United States, but they all expressed how the lives of their loved ones would be impacted if they were deported. For example, Fatima explains the real dilemmas' of mixed-status families. She reveals:

Being in this country without papers is very hard, especially if you have kids. If I did not have my son I think I would not worry so much. If I get deported I would have to deal with it alone. If I get deported with my son, he would have to be an orphan. I am afraid to go back home because I don't have a home in Morocco. My home is here with my son...I have been through a lot in my life and when I had my son he changed my life. He gives me hope. He is my life. I am nothing without him. He was born here. He is a U. S. citizen. He does not know Morocco. He is an American kid. His father is an American police officer who took advantage of me. He could help me get my papers, but he won't. I think my son

hates his father in secret. My son Mohammed does not want to go to Morocco.

He tells me “mommy I am an American boy.

Fatima’s love for her United States born child is explicit when she says “he is my life. I am nothing without him.” Fatima’s aspiration to be a citizen is revealed when she says “my home is here with my son.” In solidarity with the *Fair Immigration Reform Movements Keeping Families Together Campaign*, the participants of this study and I call for change in laws that do not separate aspiring citizens from their United States citizen loved ones, but instead “keep (*U. S.*) *families together.*”

Human Rights Framework

In order to examine alternate ways of looking at these discourses and make them more comprehensive and inclusive, the present framing must be deconstructed. For example, Ferguson and Lakoff (2006) argue that by constructing immigration in particular frames, the debate is constrained to a narrow set of concerns that restrict progressive immigration programs. Lindsay Pérez-Huber (2009) builds off of their call for a reframing immigration and proposes a *humans rights frame* that stems from the late activist Malcolm X’s stance that civil rights cannot be obtained until human rights are realized. She explains:

A human rights frame would provide the opportunity for researchers, policymakers and immigrants themselves to work towards creating strategies and implementing policies that would benefit all of those that have a stake in the immigration debate. We must recognize that the immigration debate is not about borders or national security, but about human beings and the opportunity to live full and free lives. At the core of a human rights frame is the belief that all people

have the inherent right to be treated with dignity and respect, have their strengths recognized, and have their contributions to society be acknowledged (2009, p. 217).

Analogous to Pérez-Huber (2009), this study argues for more contextualized social justice collaborative studies between the researcher and multiple community-based stakeholders in an effort to work in solidarity to co-construct new knowledge and action goals that can be applied locally. A human rights framework values all of the stakeholders invested in combating issues surrounding (un)documented migration by acknowledging and implementing their multiple perspectives, diverse ways of learning, and knowing to work towards change. All of the participants expressed that they want United States citizens to understand their shared humanity. Pedro reveals:

We are all human beings and we all deserve equal rights. It doesn't matter if you come from Switzerland or anywhere else, we should be treated the same. I was undocumented and some of my family is still undocumented, yes, but we are the same as everybody else. Trabajamos (*we work*). Pagamos nuestros biles (*we pay our bills*). Creemos en Dios (*we believe in God*). I mean, we try to treat people nice and follow the laws. We make mistakes too just like everybody else in this world. Somos seres humanos (*we are human beings*).

We are Productive (Aspiring) Citizens

The participants' *testimonios* reveal success stories despite the obstacles they confront due to their immigration statuses. Pedro owns his own construction company and has a child in college. Sunil is a Head Chef at a popular restaurant. Fatima is a seamstress at a large company and volunteers to feed the homeless. She also pays taxes every year

as a responsible aspiring citizen. Paris and a friend have their own cleaning service.

Cesaría reveals the educational successes of her and her sisters. She says:

I think that my sisters and I are successful. I mean it depends on how you measure success, but I think that we are successful. The reason why I know is because my parents said “we need to come to the United States to give you a better education.” All three of us have advanced degrees; every single one of us. I have two advanced degrees. My youngest has a terminal degree in her field and so does my middle sister. So, I measure our educational success on my parent’s purpose for bringing us here; a better education and to be productive citizens. We are productive citizens. Not only do we have an education, but we are decent human beings.

Cearías' parent’s intention for bringing their three daughters to the United States was to give them an option other than marriage and motherhood after high school because their country did not have institutions of higher education at the time that they left.

Today, Cesaría is a higher educator and her two sisters have terminal degrees.

Re-Presenting (Un)documented Migration (Communities)

The participants’ *testimonios* reveal various ways to re-present dominant immigrant border discourses that tend to essentialize, racialize, criminalize, and dehumanize with partial narratives, deficit language and rhetoric, as well as biased constructions couched in racist nativism (Pérez-Huber, 2009a). First, in alignment with *CRT counter-narratives* (Delgado Bernal & Solóranzo 2001) their *testimonios* represent lived experiences of People (immigrants) of color who counter the “majoration story” (Solóranzo & Yosso, 2002 (and whose expert lived knowledge is used to guide this

social justice study. Thus, the participants' *testimonios* oppose dominant discourses that tend to marginalize their voices and disregard their experiences.

Second, by offering multiple stories of (un)documented migration, single depictions are re-placed by diverse cultures from all over the world, who speak various languages, confront diverse obstacles, and who became undocumented in different ways. Thus, it makes it difficult to frame this complex phenomenon within a restrictive framework. Next, the participants' *testimonios* revealed that they prefer more aspirational and humanistic language to describe their communities. For example, in solidarity with community immigrant advocates and critical race scholars, they wish to be re-presented as "aspiring citizens" positioned within a *humans right frame* (Pérez-Huber, 2009b). They ask to remove the attention off of the United States-Mexico border and re-position it on the shared humanity that exists between aspiring and permanent U.S. citizens who both work, contribute, and share and allegiance to this country.

Reflections on the Purpose of this Study (PAR Process)

In solidarity with cultural anthropologist Leo Chávez (2006), I realize that "critiquing discourse is not enough" (p. 15). Thus, I chose a *participatory action research* (PAR) approach which allowed me the opportunity to work with participants and community stakeholders from my own state, fight for local social justice alongside (un)documented immigrant advocates, as well as contribute to bodies of *critical race theory* (CRT) scholarship that expose and work towards the eradication of racism. My PAR study provided me with the opportunity to actively and collaboratively participate in a community-based partnership with underrepresented (marginalized) members to create 'new knowledge' that was applied towards local change. This meant that I had to

approach this study by defining non-hierarchical roles; recognizing initially that those who will share their *testimonios* with me as my collaborators. I clearly informed them that I viewed them as experts and sole authors of their own *testimonios* and that their voices and experiences would be at the center of my research. While I had questions guiding the formulation of their *testimonios*, I encouraged them before the recorded interviews and during the member checking process to add to and disregard questions that were not relevant or that did not accurately reflect their lived experiences.

While I am the sole writer of this dissertation, the knowledge from this study has been co-constructed and my engagement with and contribution towards changing issues affecting undocumented communities has been a shared and collective process. This would help me analyze my first research question. Thus, in keeping with Herr and Andersons' (2005) *Goals of Action and Validity Criteria* model for implementing a PAR methodology in a dissertation, I link their five validity criteria to commonly agreed-upon PAR goals to reflect upon my dissertation outcomes.

The first goal of PAR is “the generation of new knowledge” which I crosscheck with their *dialogic and process validity criteria* (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 55). Throughout this dissertation process I constantly dialogued and consulted the three critical scholars who make up my dissertation committee, members of my research site who advocate for immigrant rights, as well as the five participants to ensure the appropriateness, validity and trustworthiness of the research design. I also made several adjustments to adhere to ethical considerations. I used the minutes from each *Immigrant Solidarity Committee* (ISC) meeting that were sent via e-mail by the director of ISC as well as my personal journal notes of my research to help shape my study as

well. Thus, this study reveals co-constructed new meanings of undocumented migration (communities) and reveals alternate ways of re-presenting discourses surrounding this phenomenon and advocates for aspirational language to talk about people who are affected by it. It re-frames the single story into multiple stories.

The second goal of PAR is “the achievement of action-oriented outcomes” which I crosscheck with *outcome validity* (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 55). This study met the goal of presenting less commonly presented experiences of diverse (un)documented communities. It counters dominant *racist nativist* (Pérez-Huber, 2009a) discourses surrounding (un)documented migration that are often couched in border frameworks by presenting counter-narratives to expose how this deficit rhetoric shapes real lives. It also allowed me to actively contribute to social change in my local community by working alongside community-advocates, which I detailed in chapter three.

The third goal of PAR is “the education of both researcher and participants” which I crosscheck with *catalytic validity* (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 55). I gained a tremendous amount of knowledge by working and learning alongside ISC committee members (research site) who represent a variety of local stakeholders that have been advocating and serving as trench workers within the community for decades. I felt empowered as researcher-advocate following our ISC bi-monthly committee meeting to plan community events, discuss national proposed legislature, and get updates on our team field projects. We met at various locations to conduct community forums about issues surrounding the undocumented communities.

We would also gather sporadically to respond to emergent needs like arrest or court hearings for people who were *traveling while undocumented* or to respond publicly

to (anti)immigrant legislature experiences to reflect on my research questions as well as to ponder on how certain issues and discourses were shaping the participants of this study. Based on participants' comments and my observations were empowered as the experts of this research and through sharing their lived realities. They also learned about unfamiliar terminology like *undocumented*, *aspiring citizens* as well as proposed pieces of legislature surrounding the current immigration debate (reform) like *deferred action for parental accountability (D. A. P. A.)*. They also learned about statistical information about where people come from who are undocumented and the different ways of becoming undocumented.

The fourth goal of PAR calls for "results that are relevant to the local setting" which I crosscheck with *democratic validity* (Herr & Anderson, p. 55). I worked collectively with members of my research site (Immigrant Solidarity Committee -ISC) to co-host and organize four public forums in North Carolina to raise community awareness about undocumented concerns and encourage social equity which were part of the action-oriented goals that they expressed they wanted me to lead during my PAR research. Two forums were in collaboration with other local organizations to hear from the community about how we can make North Carolina a more welcoming place for immigrants. The other two forums were held at a local university to educate students *about Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (D.A.C.A.)* and to invite them to participate in a North Carolina tuition-equity campaign for undocumented students and the other two community forums were conducted at local worship centers; one at a Spanish-speaking ministry and the other was held at an English-Speaking ministry.

The fifth goal of PAR is “a sound and appropriate research methodology” which I cross-check with process validity (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 55). By implementing a critical race methodology, I collected and analyzed participants’ counter-stories, which were presented in the form of *testimonio* in this study. *Testimonios* is an indigenous oral history method that allows participants to bear witness of painful shared truths with the hopes of changing injustices within their communities. Aguilar-Váldez (2013) explains that by “using *testimonio* as a methodological tool, the larger social structures of power that oppress marginalized peoples are uncovered and damaging stereotypes are countered with real human stories of strengths of those traditionally marginalized” (2013, p. 85). Historically, *testimonios* of subaltern populations have been used to offer intimate lenses that detail lived truths, which tend to disrupt the dominant and often essentialized narratives that are constructed by structures of power.

I argue that approaching this study as *participatory action research* (PAR) within a *critical race theoretical* (CRT) and analytical framework; a conscious mediation was achieved. Both PAR and CRT emphasize the importance of collective knowledge from everyone involved: researcher-advocate (academic-observed knowledge), participants (lived knowledge), and *Immigrant Solidarity Committee* (communal knowledge). We all recognized how race and socio-economic privilege shapes experiences and create biased representations, so in solidarity we strived to deconstruct hegemonic hierarchies where one source of knowledge is commonly honored over the other. Thus, this dissertation chronicles our journey to encourage social agency and change in North Carolina by working collectively to address issues facing our (un)documented community members.

Pathways to Citizenship for All

The participants' *testimonios* reveal that they along with their families aspire for a pathway which leads to citizenship for law-abiding (un)documented communities. There was a comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill also known as *S. 744 (Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act)* that was proposed to congress by eight United States senators known as the *Gang of Eight* in April of 2013 to address and modify all aspects of the immigration process. It was passed on June 23, 2013 by the Senate, but was never passed by the House of Representatives due to both sides inability to reconcile their differences in regards to certain aspects of the Bill. While President Barak Obama has been criticized for conducting the most deportations under his administration (more than 2 million deportations in total); on November 20, 2014 he fulfilled his prior promise to work towards reforming the 11.2 million people living undocumented in the country by implementing the following controversial five executive actions on issues surrounding undocumented immigration. First he expanded the eligibility of applicants to include any who arrived before the age of 16 and has consistently lived in the U. S. since 2010. He has also extended the temporary work authorization from two to three years for *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* (D.A.C.A.) individuals.

Second, he is allowing parents who are able to pass background checks of U. S. born citizens to apply for *Deferred Action for Parental Accountability* (D.A.P.A) and Lawful Permanent Residents who have lived in the United States since 2010. Third, he has expanded the use of provisional waivers to included immediate family members of lawful residents and/or United States. citizens. Fourth, he has pledged to improve both

immigrant and nonimmigrant visa programs to help the economy grow. Lastly, He is prioritizing citizenship education and allowing residents the option to use credit cards to pay for naturalization costs. According to a December 2014 Pew Research Center survey, the numbers of supporters (46%) of the Presidents' actions are closely rivaled by those who disapprove (50%) of his decisions which will possibly allow about 4 million of the 11.2 undocumented population to work and continue to live in the United States. This means that if these executive orders proceed, about 44% of undocumented immigrants from Mexico will benefit as well as about 24% of others from other parts of the world (Pew Research Center, 2015, p.1).

Although the President has taken executive action to temporarily protect approved D. A. C. A. recipients and proposes to extend a similar protection for parents (which is commonly referred to as D. A. P. A) who meet center criteria, more than half of the 11.2 million people living undocumented in the country will be left unprotected. Thus, more comprehensive and inclusive strategies and laws are needed to address the entire community, not just selective members.

Future Research

Following the co-constructed analysis of the emergent themes that were revealed from the participants' *testimonios*, I realized that there were three topics that were uncovered which have potential for interesting future studies. First, in reflecting on Fatima's *testimonio*, it would be fascinating to explore how racialized Islamic and undocumented identities nuance *illegality* frameworks which Nicolas De Genova (2004) explains are juridical and "*spatialized* socio-political conditions" (2004, p. 161). I have

not personally come across studies that explore how Islam intersects with undocumented immigration statuses in the United States.

Second, following an ISC meeting that was concerned with how we could assist unaccompanied minors arriving in North Carolina, one of the members suggested presenting this situation to the community as a homelessness issue. In fact, after bearing witness to Fatima's fear of homelessness if she was deported back to Morocco where she does not have family, it made me ponder upon ways that (un)documented migration can be presented in a more humanistic manner.

Lastly, I have observed that most local immigrant advocacy groups tend to advocate for specific ethno-linguistic groups, and I think that it would be interesting to do more collaborative PAR research that creates larger diverse networks that work in solidarity to examine and address the various obstacles and goals of multiple undocumented communities.

Concluding Thoughts

Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

-Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The five diverse *testimonios* presented within this qualitative PAR dissertation have exposed the consequences of biased dominant immigrant discourses (stories) on real lives. Fatima, Pedro, Paris, Cesaria, and Sunil's expert knowledge and lived experiences of being (un)documented in the United States guided this study. This dissertation has chronicled our collaborative efforts to co-construct new knowledge and

meanings to apply in our local North Carolina community as well as larger academic bodies of scholarship that work towards social change for *aspiring citizens*. The participants' *testimonios* counter and re-frame the dominant (un)documented immigrant narrative by re-positioning it within a *human rights framework* (Pérez-Huber, 2009a) which in turn *re-presents* multiple nuanced lived stories of *aspiring citizens* whose counter-narratives “empower” and “humanize.”

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Forms

INFORMED CONSENT FORM- (English Version)

Project Title: (Re)framing the Immigrant Narrative: Exploring *Testimonios* that Counter the Essentialized Image of (Un)documented People in the Discourses of Contemporary U.S. Rhetoric

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You are invited to take part in this study that will be used within my doctoral dissertation. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to join, or you may withdraw from the study, for any reason, without penalty at any time. There is no monetary or legal benefit to you for being in this research study. As a participant in this study, I will protect your identity by doing the following: 1) keep all of your information on my personal computer that is password protected; 2) by giving you the option of using a pseudonym (fake name) and to not give me any information where I can contact you after I collect your data. However, there are potential risks. As an undocumented person living in the United States, you could be arrested and/or deported from the United States if state or federal officials find out about your legal status within the country. If you choose not to be in the study or leave the study before it is done, it will not affect your relationship with me, the researcher, or Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. If you decide that you do not want to participate at any time, you simply will tell me and I will destroy all notes and erase any recordings that you have provided. Details about this study are discussed in this consent form. This information is given to you so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not you want to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. If you have any questions about this study at any time, you should ask the researchers named in this consent form. Their contact information is below.

This research is being done by Leslie Gutierrez under the direction of Dr. Sharon K. Deckert.

Leslie Gutierrez
Doctoral Student
(omitted for publication)

Dr. Sharon K. Deckert
Dissertation Director and Assistant Professor of English
Leonard Hall, Room 111 Indiana, P. A. 15705

What is this study about? Why are you asking me to participate?

The purpose of this study is to learn more about non-Mexican undocumented peoples' experiences in the United States. Specifically, there are two goals for this study: (1) to examine how the common use of a U.S./Mexico border frame by dominant discourses (e.g. the media, scholarly research, etc.) tend to construct undocumented people in the United States as having one identity (e.g. they are all from Mexico and they have all crossed the U.S./Mexico border to enter the country) shapes undocumented peoples' lives and; (2) to include less commonly heard testimonials of undocumented communities (e.g. non-Mexicans, non-border crossers) in the dominant narrative to show the diversity and complexity of being undocumented in the United States. This study will examine these testimonials to explore how these dominant discourses affect real lives and to explore how they can be used to re-present the multiple realities of these communities. I am interested in understanding how immigration practices have and continue to shape your life and others lives. I would also like to examine how your experiences may reveal alternative ways at re-presenting dominant immigrant discourses. You are asked to participate because you are an adult non-Mexican undocumented person living in the United States or you have previously lived undocumented in the country, but are in the process of obtaining or have acquired residency in the country. This research is being conducted by this researcher, a doctoral student in the Department of English at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. **This research is not connected in any way to state or federal United States immigration or police officials or systems.** The information obtained from the interviews will be used for my dissertation and may be published in scholarly journals or presented at conferences.

What will you ask me if I do agree to participate in this study?

If you choose to participate, I will ask you information about how you arrived in the United States and questions regarding your experiences living undocumented in the country. More specifically, I will ask you to give me your testimonial as an undocumented individual living in the country. You will have the option to write or allow me to record what you want people to know about your experiences as an undocumented person; give your thoughts about the current immigration practices (provide examples) and how they affect your life, speak to stereotypical images about undocumented people, and how you feel they(you) are represented. After you give your testimonial, I will let you listen to it or read it. At this time you can ask me to delete, add, or clarify any information recorded. After you approve, I will use your testimonial in my dissertation study to explore how dominant discourses and immigration practices shape

undocumented peoples' lives and explore how your testimonials might re-present these discourses.

If you choose to participate, all information and answers discussed will be confidential. You will **not be required to use** your real name and I ask that you do not provide me with your address, telephone number, e-mail address, or the names of companies where you have or previously worked to ensure that I do not have any information to contact you and so that no one else can identify you. Instead, you have the option of using a pseudonym (a fake name) that you will use to refer to yourself throughout the interview. After this interview, we will not be in contact again to protect your identity. No one, aside from me (the researcher), will know that you participated in this study. Instead I will use the pseudonym (fake name) that you chose when I write up the study and publish your personal narrative so that no one can identify you.

What are the risks and benefits for participating in this study?

As an undocumented person living in the United States, you could be arrested and/or deported from the United States if state or federal officials find out about your legal status in the country. As a participant in this study, I will protect your identity by keeping all of your information on a computer that is password protected and by asking you not to give any information where I can contact you after this interview. As I said above, I will not have any information to identify or contact you. You will not receive any rewards or compensation for participating in this study. For example, this interview will not help you obtain temporary protection status (TPS), lead to residency, or offer you legal aid. This research is simply done for my dissertation research so I can gain insight about how the media, immigration laws and practices shape non-Mexican undocumented adults living in the United States.

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone/ 724-357-7730).

By signing or giving a recorded oral consent, you are agreeing to take part in this research study. Please understand that your responses are completely confidential and that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. I will give you an unsigned copy of this consent form to keep if you want.

Statement of Consent

If you agree to participate in this study and give a recorded oral consent, sign your pseudonym (fake name) below by putting an "X" in the box below and read aloud the following statement while I record it:

"The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, risks and benefits have been explained to me. I have been allowed to ask questions, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been told whom to contact if I have additional questions. I have read this consent form and agree to be in this study, with the understanding that I may withdraw at any time. I have been told that I will be given a signed copy of this consent form."

Your (participant) Signature _____ Date: _____

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone/ 724-357-7730).

CONSENTIMIENTO DE SER PARTICIPANTE HUMANO- (Spanish Version)

Título de Proyecto: (Re)formando la narrativa inmigrante: Explorando testimonios que van en contra del esencialismo de la gente indocumentada en discursos de retórica contemporánea estadounidense

¿Qué debe saber el participante sobre los estudios de investigación?

El propósito de los estudios de investigación es obtener información nueva. Es posible que la nueva información pueda ayudar a otras personas en el futuro. Por eso, le invito a participar en un estudio doctoral. Su participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria. Es usted libre de tomar la decisión de no participar o retirarse de este estudio en cualquier momento sin castigo u sanción. No hay beneficios monetarios ni legales siendo participante en este estudio de investigación. Como participante en este estudio, tomaré las siguientes precauciones para proteger su identidad: 1) guardaré toda su información en mi computadora personal que requiere una contraseña que solo yo conozco; 2) Tienes la opción de utilizar un pseudónimo (un nombre falso) durante el estudio y pido que no me reveles ninguna información personal para que yo no pueda ponerte en contacto contigo en el futuro. Aunque tomo estas precauciones siempre hay riesgos al participar en cualquier estudio. Como persona indocumentada viviendo en los Estados Unidos, puedes ser arrestado u deportado del país si un oficial del estado u federal se entera de su estatus legal en el país. Si decidiera no participar en este estudio o retirarse antes de que se termine, no afectaría su relación con la investigadora ni con la universidad de Indiana University de Pennsylvania. Si decidieras que ya no quieres participar, simplemente hay que avisarme y destruir toda tu información incluyendo grabaciones que contiene su información personal. Se presentan los detalles del estudio dentro de este formulario de consentimiento informado. Le doy esta información para que pueda decidir si quiere participar o no en el estudio. Es importante que comprenda esta información para que pueda tomar una decisión informada (estudiada). Usted recibirá una copia de este formulario de consentimiento informado. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre este estudio en cualquier momento, debería de ponerse en contacto con las investigadoras siguientes:

Investigadora Principal
Leslie Gutierrez
Doctoral Student
(omitted for publication)

Asesora Académica
Dr. Sharon K. Deckert
Dissertation Director and Assistant Professor of English
Leonard Hall, Room 110 Indiana, PA 15705

¿De qué se trata este estudio? ¿Por qué me invita a participar?

El propósito del estudio es aprender sobre las experiencias de las comunidades indocumentadas que no sean de nacionalidad mexicana porque muchas veces las experiencias de personas indocumentadas de otras nacionalidades no son discutidas o representadas mucho en los discursos dominantes. Le invito a participar en este estudio porque usted vive indocumentado(a) en los Estados Unidos o ha vivido anteriormente indocumentado(a) en el país y no es de nacionalidad mexicana. Me interesa aprender sobre tus experiencias viviendo indocumentado(a) en el país y quisiera grabar su testimonio para publicarlo en mi tesis doctoral para demostrar la diversidad verdadera dentro de las comunidades indocumentadas.

Específicamente, hay dos metas para este estudio: (1). examinar el uso común de un marco teórico donde los discursos dominantes (e.g. los medios de comunicación y investigaciones académicas) se enfocan en la frontera de los Estados Unidos y México y como resultado tiende a construir a la gente indocumentada dentro de los Estados Unidos como un grupo de personas con una sola identidad (e.g. todos son de México y todos han cruzado la frontera para entrar en el país) y como se forman las vidas de estas comunidades y para; 2) incluir unos testimonios menos presentados de comunidades indocumentadas (e.g. las personas que no sean de nacionalidad mexicana y personas indocumentadas que no han entrado al país cruzando la frontera) en la narrativa dominante para mostrar la diversidad y complejidad de ser persona indocumentada en los Estados Unidos. Este estudio examinará estos testimonios para explorar cómo estos discursos dominantes afectan las vidas verdaderas y para explorar cómo se pueden ser usados para re-presentar las realidades múltiples de estas comunidades. Me interesa entender cómo las prácticas forman tu vida y las vidas de los demás. También me gustaría examinar cómo tus experiencias puedan revelar maneras alternativas que puedan cambiar la imagen limitada que a veces se construyen los discursos dominantes de la gente indocumentada. Me interesan las prácticas del sistema de inmigración en los Estados Unidos y cómo afectan y forman las vidas de las comunidades indocumentadas. Me interesa investigar si las experiencias de personas indocumentadas de países que no sea México puedan revelar otras maneras de representar los discursos dominantes limitados. Esa investigación no está conectada de ninguna manera con el sistema estatal de la policía ni con el sistema federal de la inmigración de los Estados Unidos. La información y los testimonios de los participantes serán publicados en mi tesis doctoral y también puedo usarlos en conferencias o en publicaciones escolares bajo los seudónimos (nombres falsos) que los participantes escojan.

¿Si yo decidiera participar, ¿Qué tendría que hacer?

Si usted decidiera participar en este estudio, le preguntaría como entró en el país y sobre sus experiencias viviendo indocumentado(a) en los Estados Unidos. Específicamente, quisiera que compartes su testimonio. Tiene dos opciones en cuanto a la manera que quieres compartir su testimonio. Puede escribir su propio testimonio contando sus experiencias viviendo indocumentado (a) en el país o me puede dar permiso para grabarlo y presentarlo exactamente como usted lo ha contando en su grabación. En su testimonio quisiera que hables sobre los temas siguientes: sus pensamientos sobre las prácticas del sistema de inmigración estadounidense y como le han afectado su vida; hablar sobre las imágenes parciales que se ven en los discursos dominantes de la gente indocumentada y como te representan. Después de compartir su testimonio, usted puede escucharlo, revisarlo, hacer cambios, o pedir que lo borre y no lo incluya en mi estudio. Si me dé permiso para usar su testimonio, lo voy a incluir en mi tesis doctoral para explorar como puedan cambiar como los discursos parciales actualmente que representan la gente indocumentada y como las prácticas inmigratorias afectan sus vidas.

Si decidiera participar en este estudio, le pediría que escogiera un seudónimo (nombre falso) y solo usaremos este nombre durante el estudio y publicaré su testimonio bajo este nombre también para no exponer su identidad verdadera. También pido que no me dé su número de teléfono, su dirección, correo electrónico, ni menciones los nombres de las compañías donde has trabajado o dónde trabajas actualmente. Si es indocumentado(a) actualmente no vamos a ponernos en contacto después de hoy para proteger su identidad. Nadie más que yo sabrá de su participación en este estudio

¿Cuáles son los riesgos y beneficios de participar?

Los riesgos de esta investigación son mínimas debido a las precauciones que estoy tomando para no revelar su identidad verdadera. Como expliqué antes, no tengo ninguna información para ponerme en contacto consigo ni para dar a ningún oficial si me la piden. Usted no recibirá dinero ni regalos por participar. Por ejemplo, ser participante **no** le ayudará conseguir un estatus de protección temporal, ni le ayudará ser residente permanente en el futuro, ni conseguir asistencia legal. Su participación simplemente me ayudará entender mejor cómo los discursos dominantes sobre la gente indocumentada y las prácticas del sistema inmigratoria afectan las vidas de la gente indocumentada.

Declaración de Consentimiento

Si quiere participar en el estudio, firma su seúdonimo abajo y leer el siguiente párrafo mientras lo grabo:

"Se me ha explicado el propósito de este estudio, los procedimientos a seguir y los riesgos y beneficios. Se me ha permitido hacer preguntas y estas se han respondido a mi entera satisfacción. Se me ha indicado a quién contactar en caso de tener más dudas. He leído este documento de consentimiento y estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio, y comprendo que puedo retirarme en cualquier momento. Se me ha dicho que recibiré una copia firmada de este documento de consentimiento."

Firma de participante: _____ Fecha: _____

Este proyecto has sido aprobado por Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone 724-357-7730)

Appendix B

Framework for Participant Interview Questions

Dissertation Title: (Re) framing the Immigrant Narrative: Exploring *Testimonios* that Counter the Essentialized Image of (Un) documented People in the Discourses of Contemporary U.S. Rhetoric

Principal Investigator: Leslie Gutierrez

I. Participant Background Information

Participant Demographics

1. Pseudonym (Choose)
2. Male/Female
3. Age
4. Birthplace (Country)
5. Level of education & country of location
6. Occupation: Type of work, hours worked per week

Family Demographics

6. Birthplace of Guardian #1 (if known)
7. Birthplace of Guardian #2 (if known)
8. Guardian #1 Occupation (if known)
9. Guardian #2 Occupation (if known)
10. Guardians level of education
11. Number of Family members (in order)
12. Levels' of education.
13. Family members' occupations.
14. Family members' citizenship status in U.S.

II. ***Experiences Undocumented in the United States:***

1. When did you arrive in the U.S.? At what age?
2. Why did you decide to come? Was it voluntarily or involuntarily? Did anyone in your family support or object your decision? Why?
3. How did you arrive to the U.S.? (entry/mode of transportation)
 - a. Did you travel alone?
 - b. Did you have legal documents that allowed you to come to the United States? c. Did you have family members in the U.S. with authorized legal status at the time?
4. Do you remember what the trip was like? What were your thoughts before, during, and after the trip?
5. Where did you live once you arrived to the U.S.? Who did you live with?
6. Did you plan on staying in the U.S. for the rest of your life or did you have a specified time frame?
7. Did you have hopes of finding a way to become a U.S. resident or citizen once you arrived?

8. Did you plan on bringing over any family members or loved ones after a period of time?
9. Describe what it means to be an (un)documented person in the U.S.?
 - a. What does it mean to you?
 - b. What does it mean to your family/community?
 - c. How do you perceive (think) that most U.S. citizens feel about undocumented people in the U.S.?
10. How do you think your life would be different if you had stayed in your birth country?
11. Tell me about the resources you use to help you navigate through the country without papers?
12. What type of jobs have you had since you have been in the U.S.? (Do not tell me any of the company names)
13. While living in the U.S., have you ever witnessed someone else being treated differently because of their racial/ethnic background?
 - a. Class?
 - b. Gender?
 - c. Citizenship status?
 Have you ever been treated differently because of their racial/ethnic background?
 - a. Class?
 - b. Gender?
 - c. Citizenship status?
14. Do you feel scared of being exposed and/or deported out of the country?
15. Do you tend to hang around and trust people from your own country more than U.S. citizens?

III. Perspective on Immigration Laws and Practices in the United States

1. Do you think that immigration laws and practices in the U.S. are fair?
2. Do you think it is easier for people from certain countries to come to this country?
3. Do you think that it is difficult to get a United States visa?
4. Have you or any of your immediate family members applied for a visa in your country to work or visit the United States and get turned down?
 - a. If yes, why did you get denied?
 - b. If no, why did you not apply for a visa?
5. Tell me about your positive and negative experiences with immigration officials and the local police.
6. Are you familiar with the *Morton Memo* (prosecutorial discretion) that was released by ICE in December 2010? (if yes, ask questions 7-9)
7. Do you think that prosecutorial discretion is helping undocumented people who have not committed crimes from getting deported?
8. Do you know anyone who has been deported since the *Morton Memo* was released in December 2010?
9. If you could make suggestions to the current proposed immigration reform bill, what would you include?

IV. Community Agency and Support

1. Have you ever participated in a rally or deportation hearing for undocumented persons in your community?
 - a. If yes, when? Approximately, how many?
 - b. If no, why not?
2. Do you think that there is a lot of support for immigrants in North Carolina?

3. How do you feel about (un)documented people coming out of the shadows and exposing their status in the country?

V. Perspectives on how (un)documented people are viewed in dominant discourses?

1. Where do you think that most (un)documented immigrants in the country are from (country)? Why?
2. How do you think that most (un)documented people get into the country?
3. Do you think there are (un)documented people in the United States from all over the world (Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia, Canada, etc.)?
4. Do you think that most United States citizens view (un)documented immigrants positively or negatively?
5. What kind of stereotypes have you heard about (un)documented immigrants?
6. Do you think that immigrants with their papers are treated better than those without?
7. How do labels such as like “illegal aliens,” “undocumented immigrants,” “border – crossers,” “anchor-babies, and wet-backs” used to describe people in the U.S. without their papers” make you feel?
8. Do you think that most U.S. citizens see all (un)documented people as the same (e.g. they are from the same country, they have the same reasons for remaining in the country without papers, they all speak the same language)?

VI. Perspectives/Suggestions on how dominant discourses and U.S. immigration laws and practices could be changed or re-framed to portray (un)documented people.

1. How do you feel the media (news & newspapers), government officials (politicians) tend to talk about or portray (un)documented immigrants in public spaces (within dominant discourses)?
2. Do you think that it needs to be changed? If yes (ask)-If you could change the narrative of (un)documented immigrants in public spaces, what would you add and/or change?
3. Do you want to hear people’s *testimonios* of being undocumented in the country?
4. Do you think that diverse *testimonios* of (un)documented people from different countries should be heard and researched? Why?
5. If you could change anything about how undocumented people are portrayed and treated in the U.S., what would you change and/or want people to say or do differently?

Appendix C

Member Checking Notes

Pedro's testimonio

- He chose the pseudonym because Pedro is a common Latino name.
- Born in El Salvador to a middle-class family of eight (2 parents, 4 brothers and 2 sisters).
- Crossed 3 countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico) by land to reach the United States.
- Father owned a coffee farm and his mother was a housewife.
- All siblings finished high school and 3 of the 6 children have advanced degrees.
- He came over at the age of 19 in 1987 (46 years old at the time of the interview)
- Initially, he never planned on living in the United States. He only wanted to work 3-4 years and save a lot of money to build a house and a business in El Salvador.
- Speaks Spanish and English.
- Lived in L.A.(5 years) and N.C. (22 years)
- Lived 14 years undocumented in the country and 13 years as a U.S. resident.

- **Family's status (Mixed): 3 undocumented siblings, 2 with papers (including him), and 2-American born children.**
- Mother and 1 sister live in El Salvador. His father died in El Salvador in 2003. Pedro and four of his siblings live in the United States (5 people). 2 people are U.S. residents: He obtained his U.S. residency through marriage. His brother obtained his residency through political asylum (N.A.C.A.R.A).
- Four (including him) crossed the U.S./Mexico border by land and one arrived on an airplane with a temporary tourist visa (6 months), but never returned. Four continue to live undocumented in the country.

- **In L.A (5 years):**
- There were more Latinos and it was harder to find work without a social security number.
- Tried to apply for N.A.C.A.R.A. (a special political asylum in the late eighties/early nineties for people entering the U.S. from certain countries in Central America who had fled years of civil war violence and being forced into becoming soldiers.
- Lawyer never filed his application for N.A.C.A.R.A. and was arrested for scamming many Central American immigrants for money.
- His older brother obtained his U.S. residency through N.A.C.A.R.A.
- He married a *Chicana* and had one child.
- He worked at McDonalds (day) and in a factory (night).

- **In N.C (22 years):**
- He moved to North Carolina because of job opportunities and established relationships.
- He divorced his first wife (U.S. Citizen) and married his second wife and received his citizenship in 2001(amnesty). They had one child and divorced ten years later.

- His younger brother and sister (by land) as well as his older half-brother (by plane) came over after him.
- He works as a dish washer, at a car wash and in construction. He now has his own small construction company.
- **Undocumented life (1987-2001= 14 years)**
- Very hard crossing to the U.S. He will never forget (lots of suffering).
- He felt like he was living in darkness.
- Lived in fear of being deported and driving without a license. He had a fake social security and a license at one time.
- He was paid less (exploited) and sometimes not at all for his labor.
- Last 10 years it has been harder for undocumented people because of new restrictions (no licenses, danger around the borders, machines to check your social security number)
- Does not like the word "illegal alien" because it makes him feel like he is not human and that he is a criminal. He likes "undocumented" because that is an accurate description of people living without their documents.
- Thinks most undocumented people entered the U.S. by crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.
- He believes that many Americans assume that he is Mexican and have called him Mexican.
- Believes that many people view undocumented people as criminals, but they just want to work.
- He has never participated in rallies for undocumented peoples' rights, but his American daughter has.
- No negative experiences with immigration or police officers.

U.S. resident (since 2001, 13+ years)

- Was most excited about getting his residency to go back to El Salvador after 14 years. He has been able to return to his country 10 times.
- Pedro started his own construction business.
- Initially, Pedro took his new status (U.S. status) for granted. The last two years he has appreciated his residency a lot because companies are stricter now about whom they hire. The job-market is very competitive now and fewer jobs are available. Pedro's undocumented family members are suffering because it is hard for them to find work and they are driving in fear because they do not have licenses. He has to help them a lot.
- In retrospect, he does not know if it was worth coming to the United States undocumented because he says that maybe he would not have suffered as much.
- The last five years have been difficult for him because it is hard for him to find jobs and he is barely able to pay his bills. If he stayed in El Salvador, he thinks now that he and his siblings could have worked on his father's coffee farm and lived a better quality of life.

What he wants people to know about undocumented people:

- They suffer a lot to get here and continue to suffer while they live here.
- They want to work and give their families the best just like Americans.
- They just want to be able to work. They do not want anything for free.
- Most of them are very humble people.
- They did not come here to take from the United States. They are here because this country has the best opportunities and are escaping poverty, unemployment, and gang violence (especially in Central America).
- Most undocumented people are not criminals. They cross the border or overstay their visas because they cannot get a visa to come to this country. Visas are only for rich or lucky families.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Was the information recorded accurately from your *testimonio*?
2. What would you add to your story that was not covered in my notes?
3. What are the most important points that you want readers to know and understand?

Paris' testimonio

- She chose the pseudonym because she wants to go to Paris one day.
- Born in Colombia to a middle class family.
- 10 family household: 2 parents, 7 daughters, and 1 son
- Father (coffee & banana farm) Mother (stay-at-home-mother)
- Completed high school and 1 year of technical college (dental hygiene)
- Worked as a dental hygienist for 2 years in Colombia.
- Married and had one daughter in Colombia and stopped working.
- It is hard to find work in Colombia even if you have a college degree.
- She is the youngest of the family and cared for her parents so she did not want to come to the U.S.
- Her family did not want her to leave.
- She left Colombia in August and her dad died in December (4 months later).
- She said it was easy in that time to get a visa, plus her husband had a government job which may have made it easier. They interviewed and were awarded a U.S. visa good for 5 years (able to travel up to 6 months at a time). You could renew it by mail after 5 years. She returned to Colombia before the second visa expired for one month and then returned. She had two visas = good for ten years. Her attempt to renew it for the third time failed because she was required to present herself for an interview in Colombia and she was working in the U.S. and could not afford to go and miss work.

Undocumented (since 1999, 15+ years)

- Her ex-husband went to the U.S. first (N.C.) on a tourist visa and she stayed in Colombia with their daughter for one year.
- He begged her to bring their daughter so that she could learn English.
- She arrived by plane with her 8 year old daughter on a tourist visa and overstayed.
- She did not want to come to the U.S. because she heard that you have to work all of the time and you cannot enjoy life. She came with the intention of returning, but her ex-husband had other plans.

- Her husband and daughter wanted to come to stay. They lived with her brother-in-law and their family.
- She returned after one year to Colombia with her daughter due to marriage problems.
- She returned back to try and reconcile her marriage for almost 3 years, but ended up separating from her husband.
- She stayed in N.C. and her husband moved to N.Y. and then eventually returned to Colombia.
- 52 year old single woman at the time of the interview.
- Living in N.C. for 15 years (arrived in 1999)
- She took free English classes at night at a local community college, but had to stop to work.
- She worked in a factory (7am-4pm standing up all day) for 3 years. Her legs hurt very badly.
- After separation from her husband she started cleaning offices (3 years) with two undocumented friends. They lost the contract one day after they asked for her social security number and they didn't have one. She believes that they lost the cleaning contract because they worked the hardest and earned the most money and other Americans got jealous.
- Only two (including herself) of the 8 siblings live in the U.S. and they are both undocumented because they overstayed their visas. They do not have a good relationship.
- Her daughter was in a car accident (received money from a settlement) to help pay her bills during her unemployment.
- She never really worried about living undocumented in the country because she only went to work and drove carefully, but one day she was stopped by a police officer and was scared to death. She was driving without a license and her car insurance lapsed, so she had to remove her license plate and park her car. The officer was nice because he did not have the car impounded and dropped her off at her apartment and did not ask her for her license.

Mixed family status

- Paris is undocumented and her daughter is not.
- Daughter (arrived at 8 years old) and was 23 years old at the time. She married a Colombian-American and obtained her U.S. residency. They are separated now and she lives with her mother. She lost her job due to irresponsibility. Her daughter feels more American and does not want to visit Colombia.
- She feels more confident about living undocumented in the country because her daughter is a U.S. resident and believes that she will not be deported because she has someone who can petition for her.
- Her daughter has not petitioned for her because she has to become a U.S. citizen first, but Paris says she is "spoiled, lazy, and does not have a job due to her irresponsibility to pay for the process." Plus, she is depressed about being separated and does not have any motivation.

What she wants people to know about undocumented people

- People come to the U.S. because there is a lack of jobs in their countries.
- Most come out of desperation for a better future for their children and the ability to send money back to their families who are unemployed.

- Paris never thinks of herself as “illegal” or “undocumented.” She does not like either of those words. She prefers to be described as a “person from another country working/living in the U.S.”
- She never thinks about getting deported because it will torment her.
- Believes undocumented people are unfairly treated. Example: There are many Americans who drive without a license (expired/revoked). They are not treated like criminals. Undocumented people get deported for these same small crimes. She wants people to know that they would get a license if they could.
- She also says that undocumented people who are able to adjust their statuses usually change and begin to look down on us.
- She is sharing her story because she wants people to understand that undocumented people (we) want the best for our families just like Americans.
- “We do not want anything for free.” “We want to work.”
- She thinks her story is different because she did not want to come to the U.S. She came for her family. She came here legally with a visa.
- She wants people to understand undocumented people so they can help them (us) to be able to get permission to work/live legally in the country.
- She wants people to know that Latinos are not all Mexican.
- She believes there it is easier for certain people (countries) to get U.S. Visas
- Within the Latino community, she thinks that it is easier for people from South America to get approved for U.S. visas because they are more educated and better off financially. She thinks that it is easy from people from Europe and Canada to get visas also.
- The Americans she knows have good images of Colombia, but not of Mexico.
- She believes that many undocumented people who come illegally from Mexico and Central America are more “humble” and “poor” and because of this they cannot get visas. They have to sneak across the border and they get a bad reputation.
- She thinks that there should not be any preference for any country. It should be fair. She says that people from Central America can get TPS (temporary protective status) because of the gang violence and Colombian people cannot.

Discourses/Images/Laws of Undocumented People in the U.S.

- She does not watch the news a lot because she works and thinks that they only show bad things happening. She watches most of the news on Spanish stations. Most of the images she sees of undocumented people in the U.S. deal with the dangers of crossing the border and tries to discourage people from crossing.
- She thinks that most Americans think that most undocumented people are Mexican. She knows that many people come with a visa also and usually overstay the date.
- She thinks most images of undocumented people are of Mexicans and now recently of children from Central America.
- She does not know about undocumented people from other countries that do not speak Spanish.
- She thinks that most undocumented people in the U.S. are from Mexico because that’s what they show on the news. They show people getting arrested for sneaking across the border.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Was the information recorded accurately from your *testimonio*?
2. What would you add to your story that was not covered in my notes?
3. What are the most important points that you want readers to know and understand?

Fatima's testimonio

I. Background

- Fatima did not want to use a pseudonym because she said it was her story and did not want to hide. She is 50 years old now, but arrived in the N.C. at the age of 37.
- She was born in Morocco. Her first language is Arabic, but she learned Berber, French from family members (in Morocco) and English (in U.S.).
- She is Muslim, but chooses not to cover herself in the U.S.
- Her parents left her as a child (orphan) and she was raised by an uncle out of obligation.
- She has a fifth grade education.
- Her uncle did not want her to be outside of the house once the sun set, so she stayed in the house most of the time. She felt like she was in prison. Her uncle was over protective.
- She started taking sewing lessons after 5th grade, but had to be inside before the sunset.
- She came to the U.S. on an engagement visa (she thought) in 2000. She was scheduled to marry a Moroccan-American in the United States.
- She had a bad experience with immigration officials in N.Y. She did not speak English and could not understand that her finger print was needed and they grabbed her arm real hard and pressed it down on the pad so hard that it hurt her for weeks after. Her finger was jammed.
- She was excited to come to the U.S. It was her dream. She wanted her freedom which she didn't have because of her over protective uncle.
- She had a ceremony like she was getting married, but realized later that it was not legal.
- She (thought) she was happily married for months and did not think about her visa anymore. She assumed that her husband would work out the paperwork.
- She worked doing alterations because she learned how to sew in Morocco.
- She found out that her marriage was not a legal one and that her visa (tourist) and had expired.
- She confronted her 'husband' and he told her to go back to Morocco. He did not have any remorse.
- She felt betrayed by her 'husband' and scared because she was now undocumented.

Undocumented life (14+ years) 2000-present

- She became depressed and did not eat after she realized her marriage was not legal and that she was in the country without authorization. Her 'husband' kicked her out and she did not want to go back to Morocco because she felt like she didn't have her freedom.
- She moved in with her Moroccan friend.
- She was asked for her social security number at work and told her boss that she did not have one. He did not fire her, but advised her to get a lawyer and maybe he could help her because she was deceived.
- She hired a lawyer in 2001, but missed the court date due to a car accident. The next court date, the lawyer forgot to show up and the case was dismissed.
- The lawyer told her that she had to marry an American citizen and to keep working because no one would come to look for her.
- She found out later that the lawyer missed the court date because she was in jail for taking immigrants money and was disbarred.
- She dated an American who became very physically abusive towards her. She broke up with him, but he would come and make her have sex with him because he threatened to call immigration on her if she refused. One day she stood up for herself because she

could not take it anymore and told him to call immigration because she was not going to have sex with him anymore and her never came around anymore.

- She did not trust men until an American police officer took interest in her and they developed a relationship and they had a son together in 2004.
- She wanted to get married, but he didn't. After she got pregnant he would only come and see her sometimes. He promised her for years that he would marry her, but he never did. She finally filed for child support in 2014 (her son is 10 years old now) and he told her that he would never come and see his son again because she did that.

Mixed Family Status

-Fatima is undocumented, but her son (10 years old) is an American citizen. His dad is American and her son was born in the U.S.

- Her son gave her a reason to want to live because she felt like she didn't have anyone or anything to live for. Her uncle only raised her out of obligation and is now dead.
- She has a Moroccan friend (lives with her rent free and takes care of her son while she is at work) who is in the process of adjusting her undocumented status through marriage.

What she wants people to know about living an undocumented life

- She has suffered a lot of abuse (physical, sexual, verbal, and mental) because she has been afraid to report crimes out of fear of living undocumented in the country and being deported. She lives in fear and thinks she needs counseling.
- She is scared to drive every day because she does not have a license. She has to drive 40 minutes to work every day because she moved to a neighborhood (far from her job) where her son can go to a good school. She is also scared because she drives other undocumented people to work. She is scared to take the bus because she is afraid of being outside walking after dark and if her son gets sick she has to pick him up.
- In 2009, she was robbed at gunpoint in the parking lot of her apartment and was scared to call the police because she is undocumented. She has had an anxiety ever since this incident and feels like she needs to get help because she lives in fear.
- She has been working as a seamstress for a national bridal company for 13 years in N.C. and they know that she does not have her papers and pay her less than everyone else.
- She was hurt on the job and dislocated her shoulder, but the company did not report the accident until another American employee stood up for her and went and told one of the managers.
- She is forced to take home extra work after she gets off without extra pay if she wants to keep her job.
- She pays taxes every year so if one day she is able to change her status, she can show that she is responsible. Her dream is to become a U.S. citizen, and send her son to college, and have her own sewing business.
- She wants to volunteer and teach girls without parents like herself how to sew so they can feel empowered and loved.
- She volunteers to feed the homeless.

Discourses/Images/Laws of Undocumented People in the U.S.

- She feels that the media only talks about Latino immigrants and feels left out. She does not feel that there is help for non-Latino immigrants like herself.
- She never hears about "illegal" people other than Spanish-speaking people.
- She feels they talk about mostly Mexicans because they are the largest group and they want the Mexican-American and Latino votes.

- May people think that she is Latina and speaks Spanish because of her physical appearance and because she speaks with an accent.
- She is called at her job to help the Spanish-speaking customers who do not speak English because her American employer thinks that she can help them because she is an immigrant. She said many people think that all immigrants are the same.
- She is scared to tell people that she is Muslim because images of Muslims after 911 show them as terrorists. She was turned down for a part-time job after she told the employers that she was Muslim. She also that at the hospital they would do something bad to her after she told them that she was Muslim because many images of Muslims on television are terrorists.
- She thinks many Americans believe that undocumented immigrants want to take their jobs, their benefits, and their men because they think that foreign women are exotic.
- Her truth is that she has been abused at the workplace and in relationships because she is an undocumented immigrant. She wants people to know that only American-born children can get social services.
- She uses the word 'illegal' because that is what they say on T.V. and that is the word they use in immigration. She is not familiar with the word 'undocumented.'
- She learned about race/racism/discrimination in the U.S. In Morocco all colored people and ethnicities go to the same Mosque. In the U.S. she learned the churches are segregated by race.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Was the information recorded accurately from your *testimonio*?
2. What would you add to your story that was not covered in my notes?
3. What are the most important points that you want readers to know and understand?

Cesaría's Testimonio

I. Background

- She chose the pseudonym because it is the name of her favorite singer.
- She was born on a former Portuguese island (colony) off of the coast of West Africa (does not want to name the country). They did not get their Independence from Portugal until the late 1970's.
- Her father was a fisherman and worked on Dutch cruise ships and her mother was a nurse and a hair dresser. Her parents (especially her dad) were gone a lot because they had to work and she was raised by a nanny who she calls her older sister.
- Speaks a creolized Portuguese, Spanish, and English.
- She came over to the U.S. at the age of 13 with her mom, dad, and two younger sisters on tourist visas and never returned.
- Her parents brought them over because they wanted their daughters to obtain a higher education. They did not have universities at the time in her country.
- She has lived in Rhode Island, Atlanta, and Charlotte.
- She is married now and has 3 children.

II. Undocumented (7 years)

- She lived undocumented in the U.S. for 7 years. Many people assume that she is a Latina from the Caribbean (Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Dominican) because of her physical appearance, accent, and ability to speak other languages (Portuguese, Spanish).
- She was very careful about her actions because she did not want to get discovered or mess up an opportunity for her to adjust her status in the future.

- In Rhode Island her 5-person family lived in a one bedroom apartment. She was not used to being with her parents because they were always working (felt like she was being raised by strangers).
- She did not talk about her status with her friends or friends of the family.
- Her parents trained her on how to answer if someone asked about her status or asked for her social security number.
- She mentioned that she knew people from her own community who would call “*la migra*” to get undocumented people from their country deported because they were mad at them. If someone knew your status, they could use it against you. She did not reveal her status.
- They did not have new clothes, but she was one of the only people out of her friends from her country who had a computer.
- She attended a middle school that had an international program where the teachers spoke Spanish and Portuguese which made her feel safe. She eventually moved to the mainstream side of the school. Her English teacher took an interest in her and thought that she was smart and helped her apply to a prestigious private Quaker high school (no one knew she was undocumented) in Rhode Island. She could not go on field trip to Canada and filled out college applications in class, but never sent them off because her family could not afford it. She could not apply for scholarships or financial aid either.
- Remembers some racial jokes about black immigrants (*macaco-monkey*) and tensions between immigrants from the former Soviet Union (eastern Europeans) in her middle and high school.
- Father worked in construction and in a factory in Rhode Island
- She began to have feelings of resentment towards her parents for bringing her to a country where she could not fully enjoy her life because she didn’t have a social security card. All of her dad’s family had their papers and most of her friends.
- She thinks that maybe she wouldn’t have had so much resentment and frustration if she went to a public high school, but because she was at a rich private school as an “undocumented African chick it was frustrating explaining why I couldn’t do certain things.”
- She knew people from various countries who were undocumented (e.g. Latinos, Africans, and eastern Europeans).
- She just talked to one of her colleagues within the last two years about being undocumented for 7 years in the U.S. because at her school there are undocumented students and she encouraged her to tell her story. She was scared at first because it was always something that she was told not to talk about. She was also scared that someone would come and take away her citizenship.
- She thinks that telling her story is important because by others telling their story the movement to advocate for undocumented people is so huge now. The documentary *Detained* encouraged her to tell her story as well.
- She has always been outspoken, but now as a U.S. citizen she feels that she can speak more freely and help other people try to get their documents or interpret/translate for them.

III. **U.S. Resident/Citizen (17 years)**

- She adjusted her status by marrying a U.S. citizen friend at the age of 19 and got her papers at 20. After she received her social security card she applied for college. She divorced her husband later. She married because after 18 her parents could not apply for her to adjust her status. She applied and obtained her citizenship almost 4 years later.

- Her parents and two younger sisters found a lawyer who helped them apply for asylum. Her sister had a medical situation that doctors could not treat properly back in her country along with a hardship case they eventually received their green card.
- She participated in a program called *City Year* where she participated in an internship in Rhode Island that gave students a stipend towards college upon completion. She asked the people to hold her checks until her social security card came because she did not have permission to work yet.
- She has a terminal degree and is an educator.
- She married a man from her country and has 3 children.

Discourses/Images/Laws concerning Undocumented People in the U.S.

- She believes that many Americans do not understand the different types of statuses that immigrants can have. She thinks they just know about being a citizen or *illegal*. They don't know about a tourist visa, TPS, asylum, green card, etc.
- She believes that the immigration debate and issues with undocumented people has been politicized and politicians focus on Latinos because they are the largest group and they want their votes. By doing this, nobody really knows about undocumented people from other countries. She also explains that the Canadian border crossings are less publicized.
- When she was undocumented in the 80's & 90's her undocumented friends did not talk about their statuses. Today people are more open.
- Her immigration lawyer friends have told her that Latinos and sub-Saharan Africans (blacks) face more racism in the immigration detention process. She said they observed that the undocumented Europeans & Canadians (white looking immigrants) would get out of these detention centers quickly.
- She believes that the relationship that the U.S. has with certain countries and how they are portrayed in the media determines how that community of people will be treated.
- She blames "first world country" treaties and the need for laborers are causing people to migrate and they need to take responsibility as well for the large amount of people moving.
- She thinks that the undocumented youth (D.A.C.A. recipients) are very outspoken and confident. She is proud of them and admires their courage because she did not have it.

What she wants people to know about being undocumented

- There are many reasons why people come to this country without papers and they come from all over the world, not just Spanish-speaking (Mexican) countries.
- All of my undocumented friends have been productive residents and most have not put themselves in any trouble. They have exceeded the expectations that most people have set for them.
- She wants people to stop blaming (judging) parents for bringing their children over at a young age. She wants them to know that it takes a lot of courage to leave a place, language, and culture that you know so that their children can have better opportunities.
- Although her father had a limited education (4th grade), he knew that it was detrimental for his 3 girl-children to have an education. As a parent now, I would sacrifice anything for the betterment of my kids. All three of them today have advanced degrees.
- She raises the point that when people hear *testimonios* from other marginalized groups (e.g. veterans, homosexuals, disabled communities, etc.) they sympathize and have a face to put with the controversial issue. She wants people to stop putting only a Mexican/Latino face with (un)documented migrants, but replace it with a human one from all over the world.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Was the information recorded accurately from your *testimonio*?
2. What would you add to your story that was not covered in my notes?
3. What are the most important points that you want readers to know and understand?

Sunil's *testimonio*

I. Background

- Born in Southern India in 1978. He is the oldest of three children.
- He was 36 years old at the time of the interview (2014).
- He speaks Tamil and English. Some of his family members speak a little English.
- He finished high school and dropped out of college (studying chemistry) to pursue a culinary career in Mumbai. In Mumbai, he learned how to cook and learned different languages living in this tourist city. He got a job as a cook on a cruise ship in Mumbai.
- His dad is a farmer; he grows chilies, rice, peanuts, lentils, and sugarcane. He also raises cows, chickens, and goats. His mother tends to the farm and takes care of home life.
- His dad has a bachelor's degree and his mother has a second grade education.
- He is the only one in his family who wanted to come to the United States. He does not have family in the U.S.

II. Undocumented life (since 2003, 11+ years)

- He entered the U.S. on a cruise ship work C1-D visa in 2003 (25) and was issued a I-94 form giving him temporary permission to be in the country.
- He arrived in Memphis, than travelled to New Orleans. From there he moved to Boston where he had a friend from his country. He recently moved to North Carolina (less than one year).
- He has mixed feelings about his nationality: "I do not feel American and I do not feel Indian either. I don't know what I am anymore. I don't know what it all means."
- He knows friends of his friends who have been deported because they were committing crimes and he knows people who have married U.S. citizens and adjusted their statuses.
- He has gone to lawyers and they tell him that he cannot adjust his status because he came on a C1-D visa and this is the only visa that cannot be adjusted. He is frustrated and confused.
- He does not like talking about being undocumented. It makes him sad and angry.
- "Being undocumented makes everyone suffer. It is hard on my family in India and on the people who love me in the United States like my girlfriend. My family in India always cry and worry if I am in jail or wonder if I have food."
- He told his pregnant girlfriend that he was undocumented recently and she was very scared because she thought that someone would come for him and take him out of the country. They plan on getting married, but lawyers tell him that it is doubtful that he will be able to adjust his status because of the visa that he arrived on cannot be adjusted.
- Lawyers recommend that he returns to India to serve the 10 year penalty for being in the country without permission and then apply to return legally
- He plans on dying in the U.S. whether he is able to adjust his status or not.

III. What he wants people to know living Undocumented in the U. S.

- It is very frustrating when people who work hard get treated unfairly and underpaid because they do not have a social security number. It makes him angry that some

Americans are lazy and do not want to work, but prefer to take from social services. He wishes that he had their social security number so he could work hard and accomplish his dreams.

- Some of his past employers have threatened to call immigration officials on him when he demanded a salary increase.
- He feels useless at times and has a lot of anxiety about being undocumented (fear of deportation).
- He mainly hangs out with people from his country because he feels like he can trust them.
- Undocumented people come here for a reason. They are coming from difficult situations. "The people here should try to live in our countries just for a week. They wouldn't last."

Discourses/Images/laws concerning Undocumented People

- "The government is not helpful when they treat you like a terrorist." They group everyone in one category. I am a worker born in another country without a social security number and I do not have legal permission to work in the country, but I am not a killer or threat to this country. I love this country. I just want a fair chance."
- He doesn't think that the immigration process or laws are fair. "It is easier for people from Nepal and European countries to come here. It is very hard to get a visa to come here because of the country where I was born."
- He thinks that some Americans may think that undocumented people are taking things away from them, but he said that he is just a "good honest worker."
- He has hope because the U.S. is a "country of immigrants" that things will change for undocumented people one day.
- He thinks that many people do not think that there are Indians without their documents in the country because India is far away. He thinks that because he does not fit the profile of an undocumented person that it keeps him under the radar. Many Indians who are undocumented do not talk about this topic much.

Follow-up Questions:

1. Was the information recorded accurately from your *testimonio*?
2. What would you add to your story that was not covered in my notes?
3. What are the most important points that you want readers to know and understand?