American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter

Valerie McMillan
Please pin her box to your screen if you require an interpreter

Supporting Undocumented Students’ High School Experiences and Access to Higher Education

Patrick Greene and Rodney McNeill
Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education
East Carolina University
Undocumented?

- Foreign-born people who do not possess a valid visa or other immigration documentation

- No human being is illegal!

Maria’s Story
Mirella’s Story

Background

- Greene County Schools
- Our work as principals
Context of the Problem

- **10-12 million** undocumented immigrants live in the U.S.
  - **100,000** graduate from high school each year
  - States vary in support of access to higher education

Context of the Problem

- **Plyler vs. Doe (1982)**
  - Undocumented students **have a right to K-12 education**
  - **No guarantee** to higher education
Context of the Problem

- DREAM Act (2001)
  - Attempted to secure a path to citizenship and education - has not passed
- DACA (2012)
  - Provides some temporary protections
  - Suspended for new applicants

Impact for Students Today

- Undocumented students in NC
  - No access to federal aid
  - No access to in-state resident tuition (22 states do)
  - Impacts high school graduation rates
  - Social and emotional impacts
Rodney’s Study

- Rodney’s study seeks to **evaluate the lived experiences of undocumented students** to provide a more inclusive experience and advocacy.

- Interviewed 7 undocumented students that have now all graduated from early college.

### Rodney’s Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Reason for Leaving</th>
<th>Age of Arrival</th>
<th>Immigration Path</th>
<th>Number of States Lived In</th>
<th>Native Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malena</td>
<td>2 females</td>
<td>El Salvador, Mexico</td>
<td>To find work, better life, financial stability</td>
<td>13 years old</td>
<td>Born in U.S.</td>
<td>One state</td>
<td>Spanish (native)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras</td>
<td>To find work, better life</td>
<td>Teen and a half years old</td>
<td>Birth in the U.S.</td>
<td>One state</td>
<td>Spanish (native)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micah</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Financial stability</td>
<td>1 year old</td>
<td>Born in the U.S.</td>
<td>One state</td>
<td>Spanish (native)</td>
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<td>Joaquin</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Better life</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Born in the U.S.</td>
<td>One state</td>
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Rodney’s Study

- **Self-Affirmation Theory** is the belief that people are motivated to maintain high levels of **self-integrity** (Steele, 1988).

- People **overcome** perceived **attacks** on **self-identity** by **affirming** other aspects of self that are of **equal importance** (Steele, 1988).

Rodney’s Study

- How has being an undocumented student impacted your life?

- What can schools and staff do to impact the dreams of attaining a college education and gainful employment?
Patrick’s Study

Social Capital Theory

- The theory of social capital describes the network of people that an individual has and how that network can provide the individual with resources through their connections (Ruth, 2018).
- Individuals can “patchwork” information and resources from various members of the group (Enriquez, 2011).

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Patrick’s study examined how access to social capital impacts a student’s ability to go to college.
Findings

- Students are extremely resilient
- Live in constant fear for themselves and family members
- Limited opportunities - “I have to pay three times the tuition to attend ECU as my brother”
- Acculturative Stress

Findings

- Safety and Security - “Make us feel protected”
- Access to information relevant to their situation
- Share successes
- “Don’t single us out”
- Representation matters
- Viewed based on content of character, not immigration status
Findings

- **Connect** school, family and community supports
- **Educate** students and families on laws and how support matters
- **Educate** teachers and counselors on their role
- **Build** a school environment that outwardly shows support
- **Coach** students on rigorous courses and self-determination

How You Can Help

- **Support** In-State tuition legislation for NC (HB-319)
- **Support community advocates** and schools that work with undocumented students and families
- **Learn about** current legislation and **social biases** that impact undocumented students
How You Can Help

- **Support campus policies** and initiatives that help undocumented students feel involved
- **Partner with organizations** that support undocumented students and can help guide our efforts
- **Develop local initiatives** to support undocumented students

Supportive Organizations

- North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals - [https://www.thencshp.org/](https://www.thencshp.org/)
- LatinxEd - [https://latinxed.org/about-us/](https://latinxed.org/about-us/)
- ImmSchools - [https://www.immschools.org/](https://www.immschools.org/)