

THE INVISIBILITY OF UNDOCUBLACK STUDENTS WITHIN THE  
UNDOCUMENTED COMMUNITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

The experiences of undocumented students have gained much attention over the last decade and researchers have shed light on the barriers these students face in regard to postsecondary educational access and success. However, the conversations about undocumented students in higher education are often focused on Latinx experiences thereby excluding non-Latinx undocumented students, such as Black undocumented (undocuBlack) students. Although undocuBlack students face similar challenges to other undocumented students, their experiences are different as a result of intersecting domains of oppression and deserve a place in the ongoing discourse. Therefore, this qualitative research study focuses on undocuBlack students and their experiences in higher education, exploring the issue through the intersectionality lens. I employed qualitative strategies to study this topic and utilized an interpretative phenomenology approach to gain perspective, insights, and make meaning of the experiences of undocuBlack students on college campuses. The results of my analysis suggests that the collegiate experiences of undocuBlack students are unique because of the intersection of their race and immigration status. Participants experienced invisibility within the undocumented and Black communities. They also faced challenges experiencing a sense of belonging because some participants did not feel comfortable in Black spaces, while others completely disengaged out of fear of not belonging. Furthermore, participants with DACAmented status had more resources available to them allowing them to more fully engage on campus. Ultimately, each participant's own lived and personal experiences related to their race and undocumented status demonstrate the diverse, conflicting, and invisible nature of the undocuBlack experiences. My findings contribute to the literature

on undocuBlack on the diversity of the undocumented student experience and offers invaluable information to higher education professionals, the undocumented community, and activists on how to properly support undocuBlack students.

**Keywords:** Undocumented, UndocuBlack, DACA, Intersectionality

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, there are over 40 million immigrants living in the United States (Budiman, 2020). Of that 40 million, over 10.5 million are undocumented, meaning they live in the United States without legal authorization and documentation. Undocumented immigrants account for 3.2 % of the U.S. population (Budiman, 2020).

Black immigrants are a subgroup of the broader immigrant population in the United States. In 1980, there were 816,000 Black immigrants living in the U.S., compared to recent numbers which show that there were over 4.2 million Black immigrants living in the U.S. in 2018 (Anderson & Lopez, 2018). According to Palmer (2017), Black immigrants comprise 7.2% of the foreign-born population. Furthermore, according to Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI), Jamaica and Haiti encompass a large number of Black immigrants who are present in the U.S., accounting for 18% of the Black immigrant population.

Additionally, according to Lipscombe et al. (2016), immigrants who derive from Africa make up about 39% of the Black immigrant population in the U.S. With the rise of the Black immigrant population, there has also been a rise of Black undocumented people in the U.S. According to Anderson and Lopez (2018), as of 2015, over 619,000 undocumented Black immigrants lived in the U.S. The Black undocumented population is very diverse and are from major countries, including Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Sudan, Sierra Leone and others (Meitzenheimer, 2020).

Black undocumented immigrants are significantly underrepresented in the immigration discourse. According to Benjamin (2018), Black immigrants are not a part of the larger narrative because they are vulnerable and marginalized within the undocumented community because of their blackness. Palmer (2017) adds that with invisibility comes reduced advocacy for and protection of Black immigrants in the broader immigration conversation. As a result of invisibility, Black immigrants are more likely to become victims of the criminal justice system. According to Lipscombe et al. (2016), in 2015, nearly one in every Black immigrant who was arrested faced deportation proceedings. Anderson and Lopez (2018) adds that Black immigrants are twice as likely to be detained as opposed to the immigrant population as whole. Meitzenheimer (2020) adds that Black undocumented immigrants are disproportionately represented in arrests and deportations, not only because of their immigration status, but because of the criminalization of Black bodies in the U.S. Therefore, Black undocumented immigrants are both hyper-criminalized and erased within immigrant rights discourses.

Another result of invisibility and criminalization of Black undocumented people is that they are rarely the beneficiaries of advocacy, resulting in limited understanding of their experiences. In 2016, five Black undocumented immigrants organized a three day event in Miami, Florida to discuss the positioning of undocumented Black experiences within the #BlackLivesMatter and the immigrant rights movements (Arrizón-Palomera, 2020). The event was labeled the Black Convening and became the starting point for discussions around intersections of being Black and undocumented in the U.S. This event led to the start of the undocuBlack movement and the UndocuBlack network, which aims

to provide a supportive space to advocate for and uplift the undocuBlack community (UndocuBlack Network, 2020).

Additionally, with the start of the undocuBlack movement, other organizations have begun working to highlight the undocuBlack community and the injustices they face. According to Osumare (2019), those organizations include the UndocuBlack Network, BAJI (Black Alliance for Just Immigration), and ACT (African Communities Together). The UndocuBlack Network fights for racial justice for Black undocumented people. The goal of BAJI is to oppose the disproportionate rates at which Black undocumented people are criminalized. The goal of ACT is to support African immigrants within the immigration system. Together, these organizations are working to counteract invisibilized narratives within the undocumented community.

Within the context of higher education, undocuBlack experiences are also invisibilized. There is little to no focus on the experiences of undocuBlack students. The literature on undocumented students broadly addresses common experiences for undocumented students pursuing higher education. According to a report conducted by the UndocuScholars Project, there is an estimated 200,000 to 225,000 undocumented immigrants enrolled in higher education. This accounts for 2% of all higher education students (Teranishi et al., 2015). The number of undocumented students in higher education is low compared to their U.S. citizen counterparts because of multiple obstacles undocumented students face, such as their inability to access federal financial aid, inability to access in-state tuition rates in certain states, and inadmissibility to certain institutions in several states. Because of these barriers, over the last decade, researchers have paid greater attention to this group. Many studies have focused on issues with in-

state tuition policies undocumented students (Dougherty et al., 2010; Flores 2010; Vargas 2011). Additionally, researchers have shed light on access to higher education for undocumented students (Gonzales 2009; Perez 2010a, 2010b; Perez & Rodriguez 2011; The National Forum on Public Education for Good, 2012). Some researchers (e.g., Contreras, 2009; Pérez, 2011) have focused on undocumented students' inability to access federal aid and the difficulty that lends itself for these students. Scholars, such as Perez (2011), have also investigated the level of anxiety that undocumented students have because of their status. This level of anxiety often affects their experiences with higher education. Additionally, limited access to information about college choice has also been a focal point in the experiences of undocumented students (Contreras, 2009; Nienhuser et al., 2016; Rincón, 2008). As well, some researchers have focused on physical spaces as safe spaces on higher education campuses for undocumented students (Cisneros & Reyna Rivarola, 2020; Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020; Cisneros et al., 2021). Therefore, researchers have paid closer attention to this group in order to generate the understandings necessary to provide undocumented students with the resources and support they need to access higher education and persist to degree completion.

Although researchers have studied the experiences of undocumented students broadly, they have mostly focused on those who identify as Latinx. This is because Latinx population comprises over three quarters of the 10.5 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States (Salinas et al., 2015). There is also research on the experiences of Asian undocumented/DACAmented students and the impact race has on their experiences (Bangalon et al., 2012; Buenavista & Chen, 2013; Chan, 2010; Dao, 2017). However, the literature on undocuBlack students within higher

education is sparse and there are gaps in the literature on the diversity of the undocumented community as it relates to higher education. Researchers such as Davis et al. (2013) have illuminated Black immigrants' and Black U.S. citizen students' higher education access and choice. Others (e.g., Benjamin, 2018; Meitzenheimer, 2020; Palmer, 2017; Salinas et al., 2015) have focused on the invisibility of the Black undocumented community. Therefore, understanding the experiences of undocuBlack students in higher education is critical for future equitable access for them to matriculate and persist in higher education. This study brings needed attention to race and immigration status to understand the ways those identities affect undocuBlack students' higher education experiences.

#### Purpose of the Study

According to Salinas et al. (2015), the undocumented student population is very diverse, but undocumented immigration is often framed in the political discourse as a Latinx issue. Furthermore, whenever immigration is being covered in broadcast media, it is often associated with Latinx experiences ("Building Solidarity & Strengthening Ties Between the Immigrant Rights and Black Lives Matter Movements," 2020). Further, undocumented people are often racialized as Latinx, so the undocumented representation excludes blackness (Meitzenheimer, 2020). Therefore, the undocuBlack perspective is often not included because little is known about this group. Consequently, there is a paucity of literature on Black undocumented students and their experiences.

Because undocuBlack students and their experiences are under-researched and under-explored, the purpose of this study is to understand their unique experiences within higher education. According to Hernandez (2012) and Massey (2007), understanding the

experiences of Black immigrants within higher education is important to understand the larger context of Black students within higher education. Furthermore, according to Palmer (2017), Black immigrants and undocuBlack immigrants are part of the larger narrative and including them will create a fuller, contextualized, better-informed picture of immigration. Moreover, understanding the experiences of undocuBlack immigrants can inform higher education professionals about the different challenges this group faces in order to better meet the needs of a racially diverse population. This study proposes to address one main research question:

#### *Research Question*

1. How do salient identities (Black and undocumented) affect the way undocuBlack students experience higher education?

This question is influenced by intersectionality in that I seek to understand the intersection of race and immigrant status. It aims to understand if the intersections of identities for undocuBlack students function on their own. With this question, I hope to provide insight for the undocumented and higher education community on the intersection of race and immigration status.

#### *Theoretical Framework*

This study seeks to provide understanding of how different identities (Black and undocumented) affect higher education access and success through the use of the intersectionality conceptual lens. Intersectionality stemmed from Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a response to White women being at the center of the feminist movement; it was a framework to engage women of color. Essentially, the intersectionality framework argued that there are qualitative differences among intersectional positions, which means

that inequities are not a direct result of a single factor but are a result of multiple factors. Scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw is famously credited with coining the term intersectionality, which is often used to disrupt and challenge inequities. The original concept of intersectionality addressed how Black women's life opportunities are constrained through interlocking systems of patriarchy and racism (Crenshaw, 1991). However, while Crenshaw coined the term, other scholars have contributed to the central ideas of intersectionality (Collins, 1990). Scholars like Nash, Collins, and Crenshaw are all credited with pushing the theory forward.

The intersectionality approach lends itself to my study on guiding the inquiry around identities. It was a suitable framework for the understanding of diversity among undocumented students because it recognizes that individuals can hold multiple identities simultaneously and that those identities shape the way they experience the world, including higher education (Collins, 2015; Davis, 2008). Therefore, this lens is beneficial for this study, as Black undocumented immigrants are often not grounded in the immigration conversation but are important for the discourse and the changes moving forward. Also, this framework provides a framework to contend with the intersection of race (Black) and immigration status (undocumented). Additionally, the intersectionality lens acted as a tool to position undocuBlack students with their overlapping identities in higher education and theorize the complexities of their intersecting identities.

This intersectionality framework honors the dynamic nature of nuanced experiences (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Collins, 2015). Specifically, it demonstrates that the exclusion of undocuBlack students from the literature is problematic because it displaces a group that is already marginalized. Throughout the current study, it is noted that the

narratives and experiences of undocuBlack students in higher education have been non-existent within the literature. Therefore, an intersectionality framework provided an opportunity to understand the participants' higher education experiences as it relates to being Black and undocumented.

Nonetheless, the intersectionality lens influenced the interview questions, methodology, implications for practice, and the discussion about liminality and master status. As noted by Smith et al. (2009), it is important for researchers to have a guided phenomenological inquiry to guide the development of questions and other stages of the interpretive process. As a result, the questions, the analysis, and the themes were all rooted in understanding undocuBlack students' experiences in higher education. The theoretical framework helped me to facilitate questions about participants' belonging in Black spaces and the role race played in affecting participants' belonging in undocumented spaces. Additionally, the framework influenced the selection of an interpretative phenomenological approach as a qualitative guide for this study because that method centers the researcher's experiences. Furthermore, the framework provided space to challenge practitioners and scholars who only highlight or focus on undocuLatinx students and their experiences. Therefore, the recommendations for practice, theory, and further research were all grounded in honoring multiple complex identities and calling on stakeholders to explore the experiences of undocuBlack students and their access and success in higher education.

Using intersectionality as a theoretical lens helped to identify the limitations of focusing on race and immigrant status; it points to the exclusion of sexuality, gender, and other complex identities. I address those limitations in Chapter 6. Ultimately, employing

intersectionality as my framework places undocuBlack experiences at the center of the literature, provides insight into the experiences of undocuBlack students in higher education, and reveals the inequities that they face within higher education and the undocumented community.

### Significance of the Study

This study provides higher education institutions and professionals with a deeper understanding of the diversity of the undocumented community and the importance of the visibility of undocuBlack students pursuing higher education. The issue of invisibility among undocuBlack students in higher education is significant for multiple reasons. As mentioned earlier, without visibility, undocuBlack people become targets of the deportation system and are rarely the beneficiaries of advocacy. Additionally, access to higher education for undocumented students cannot be achieved unless those implementing policies understand the full context of the community. According to Salinas et al. (2015), most scholars and educators are unaware that non-Latinx undocumented immigrants make up 23 percent of the undocumented population, yet a more comprehensive understanding of their needs and experiences is needed.

Furthermore, Meitzenheimer (2020) adds that the undocuBlack population is invisible because the narratives of immigration are focused on the Latinx population, which then makes Black undocumented people invisible within the undocumented community. Benjamin (2018) adds that the images of the undocumented population is never Black, so they experience invisibilization within the undocumented community. Further, the narratives of undocumented students should include those who are Black. According to Raff (2017), Black undocumented immigrants represent 20% of

deportations even though they only make up 7% of the undocumented population. Furthermore, the higher rates of deportation among Black undocumented immigrants speak to the vulnerability among that group. Therefore, if Black undocumented people are included in the narrative, then the needs of the undocumented community as a whole would be better understood, especially for those pursuing higher education.

On a broader level, this research is significant for the advancement of the field of higher education because faculty and staff will gain more knowledge about how to serve this community and attain a deeper meaning and understanding of the diversity within the undocumented student community. Finally, this research is significant for other undocumented students who do not often see themselves represented as the population of undocumented students are discussed. According to Cisneros et al., (2019), the connection between citizenship and educational attainment challenges higher education institutions to respond to the experiences of undocumented immigrant experiences and how different factors might affect persistence. This study seeks to fill the invisibility gap in two ways. First, this study aims to add to the literature by expanding the narrative about the diversity of the undocumented student experience, focusing specifically on undocuBlack students. Secondly, this study aims to increase awareness of the diverse group of undocumented students who exist in higher education.

### *Definition of Terms*

As noted, the primary purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of undocuBlack students' collegiate experiences by looking at how their race and immigration status affect those experiences. In order to provide clarity on some of the conceptual terms that will be used throughout the study, definitions of terms are

presented below. This study aims to make meaning of these terms as they relate to undocumented status and race. Therefore, the way in which the definitions are presented below are representative of the way they are used in the current study. A short discussion of each term will be provided to demonstrate my understanding and interpretation of the terms.

### **Black Immigrant**

According to BAJI (2016), Black Immigrants are defined as any person who was born outside the United States, Puerto Rico or other U.S. territories and whose country of origin is located in Africa or the Caribbean. This definition will be adopted in the current study.

### **Unauthorized Immigrants**

According to the United States Department of Homeland Security (2013), unauthorized immigrants are defined as those who are foreign-born and do not have legal documentation to be present in the U.S. This definition will be adopted for the current study.

### **Undocumented Students**

“An undocumented student is a foreign national who: (1) entered the United States without inspection or with fraudulent documents; (2) entered legally as a nonimmigrant but then violated the terms of his or her status and remained in the United States without authorization; (3) has Deferred Action Childhood Arrival (“DACA”) status or has previously had DACA; or (4) is otherwise currently in the process of legalizing” (Educators for Fair Consideration, 2021, p.1). Additionally, college board (2019) adds, undocumented immigrants’ students are “children born abroad who are not

U.S. citizens or legal residents — who graduate from U.S. high schools each year” (College Board, 2019). For the purposes of this study, the definition from the Educators for Fair Consideration will be adopted.

### **DACA Recipients**

According to BAJI (2016), DACA is a U.S. immigration policy that allows certain undocumented immigrants who entered the country before their 16th birthday and before June 2007 to receive a renewable two-year work permit and exemption from deportation. Currently, over 800,000 undocumented immigrants have DACA status (Abrego, 2018). Those who have DACA status are often referred to as DACAmended or DACA recipients. Additionally, the DACA executive order has specific requirements that are expanded on in the literature review. This definition will be employed in the current study.

### **DREAMERS**

The term DREAMERS originally derived from the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) as a way to describe those who qualified and campaigned for the bill (Perez-Huber, 2015). If the bill was successful, it would have granted over 2.2 million undocumented people who came to America as minors a pathway to citizenship (Terriquez, 2015). However, while the term was originally derived from the bill as a way to describe those who qualify, many argue that the term is divisive and has created a narrative of “good immigrant vs. bad immigrant” (Fernandes, 2019; Sirriyeh, 2020). For the current study, DREAMER will be employed to describe anyone who qualifies for the DREAM Act.

## **UndocuBlack**

The term UndocuBlack was coined by the UndocuBlack network. It refers to any undocumented Black people in the United States. As mentioned earlier, in 2016, five Black undocumented immigrants organized a three day event in Miami, Florida to discuss the positioning of undocumented Black experiences within the #BlackLivesMatter and the immigrant rights movements (Arrizón-Palomera, 2020). The event was labeled the Black Convening and became the starting point for discussions around intersections of being Black and undocumented in the U.S. This event led to the start of the undocuBlack movement and the UndocuBlack network, which aims to provide a supportive space to advocate for and uplift the undocuBlack community (UndocuBlack Network, 2020). As one of the primary purposes of the current study is to explore the ways in which college students construct their undocumented status and race within the context of higher education, this definition is adopted to highlight the contextualized construction of the undocuBlack population.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In order to situate the current study within the extant literature, it is important to address the structural, legal, and financial barriers that all undocumented students face in accessing and succeeding in higher education. Therefore, in this review, I expand on the introduction, frame the history of undocumented students, describe barriers to their access and success in higher education, and detail intersectionality as a theoretical lens for the current study. As mentioned in chapter one, many studies have explored the experiences of Latinx undocumented students within higher education. However, there is little research about the undocuBlack student experience in higher education. Therefore, in this literature review, I also consider the scholarship on Black immigrant students and Black natives' experience in higher education. The information derived from this body of literature informs the design of the current study and its approach to uncover the higher education experiences of undocuBlack students.

It is important to note that while the experiences of Black natives and Black immigrant students' may be similar to undocuBlack students because of their shared racial identity, undocuBlack students have multilayered experiences given their diverse ethnicities, languages, cultures, and intersecting identities. According to Kim (2014), while Black immigrant students have similar experiences to native born Black students, they have differences as it relates to immigration status. This is not to suggest that Black native and Black immigrant students have the same experiences, but their experiences with race inform the current study. Additionally, Benson (2006) adds that Black immigrants who have resided in the U.S. for a longer period of time tend to identify with

Black Americans as opposed to Black immigrants who arrive in the United States for college. Moreover, according to Mwangi and Fries-Britt (2014), Black immigrants experience racism and discrimination in ways that differ from Black Americans. Furthermore, Kim (2014) and Massey et al. (2007) note that while there is growing literature on Black immigrants, there are limited studies on the educational experiences of Black immigrant students, and their experiences are often combined with that of native-born Black students.

In summation, in this review, I expose the barriers that all undocumented students face in accessing and persisting in higher education. Next, I report on the literature about the experiences of Black native and Black immigrant students in higher education. Following, I provide an overview of the literature on the undocuBlack student experience. Lastly, I provide an overview of intersectionality and its relevance for the study at hand.

### Framing Undocumented Students in Higher Education

Undocumented students' access to K-12 and postsecondary education in the U.S. is shaped by many policies and laws. In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe* that undocumented students should receive access to free K-12 public education. According to Salinas (2006), the *Plyer v. Doe* decision emphasized the fact that undocumented students were brought to the country illegally, not by their own actions, but by the actions of their parents or others. Salsbury (2003) added that in the *Plyer* case, it was emphasized that the denial of basic education to undocumented students contradicts the basic human right to education. *Plyer v. Doe* made it possible for

undocumented students to attend K-12 public schools in the United States, but the ruling did not extend to higher education.

In 1985, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Leticia A. v. Board of Regents* that undocumented students who were attending public four-year universities could access in-state tuition and were eligible for state aid. The ruling allowed undocumented students to pay the same rates for tuition as their U.S. citizen counterparts. However, the case was overturned in 1990 through the *Regents of the University of California v. Superior Court*, which ruled that undocumented students should pay out-of-state tuition at all public institutions. According to the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL; 2019), Arizona, Georgia, and Indiana have passed legislation that prohibits undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition rates. This means that undocumented students must pay out-of-state tuition rates in those states if they wish to attend any public higher education institution. Additionally, Alabama and South Carolina prohibit undocumented students from accessing public higher education (NCSL, 2019). In those two states, undocumented students do not have access to in-state tuition rates, nor can they attend public institutions; they are completely banned from enrolling in any public higher education institution.

It is important to note that not all states have adopted such policies; some states make in-state tuition rates accessible to undocumented students if they meet residency requirements of the respective state. According to the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL; 2019), those states are: Connecticut, Oregon, Washington, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, California, Florida, Texas, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Utah, and Kansas. Most recently, Virginia Attorney

General Mark R. Herring made it possible for undocumented students who have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status to access in-state tuition rates.

Additionally, some states allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates through Board of Regents decisions. Those states are Rhode Island, Oklahoma, and Hawaii (NCSL, 2019).

Some states went a step further to grant undocumented students access to state financial aid. According to NCSL (2019), at least six states allow undocumented students to receive state financial aid: California, New Mexico, Texas, Minnesota, New York, and Washington. This also means that undocumented students can apply for scholarships or institutional aid to assist with paying for their college education in those states. These states provide undocumented students with access to financial aid in addition to in-state tuition rates. Providing access to aid can lead to higher enrollment in a given state and can break barriers of access for undocumented students.

While certain states have extended financial aid and in-state tuition rates to undocumented students, many federal policies restrict this aid thereby limiting access and affordability for undocumented students. These include policies related to immigration status and those that limit support structures and bar undocumented students from studying abroad or participating in work study programs. These policies affect higher education choice. For instance, the establishment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) made it impossible for undocumented immigrants to receive federal public benefits, including financial aid for postsecondary education. Without access to federal aid, undocumented students are limited in the available sources of aid thereby inhibiting their access to higher education, in part

because of the rising tuition price of higher education. Also, the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRA) Section 505 established that undocumented immigrants are not eligible for postsecondary in-state tuition in the United States. Because of numerous legal rulings, undocumented students often face difficulties accessing higher education.

Another noteworthy policy that affects undocumented students' access to higher education is the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. According to the National Immigration Law Center (2011), the DREAM Act provides undocumented people who came to the U.S. at 15-years old or younger with the opportunity to qualify for conditional permanent resident status once they graduate from a U.S. high school, gain acceptance to a college or university, or successfully passing the General Educational Development test. But if an undocumented person committed a crime or poses a security risk, they do not qualify for the DREAM Act (National Immigration Law Center, 2011). Therefore, the federal DREAM Act grants many undocumented immigrants access to federal and state financial aid. However, the proposed bill failed multiple times.

In 2012, former President Barack Obama issued an executive order: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Under DACA, undocumented youth are granted temporary relief from deportation and a two-year renewable work permit if they meet certain criteria. To qualify for DACA, an individual:

1. "Was under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
2. Came to the United States before turning 16;
3. Has continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007;

4. Was physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making a request for DACA;
5. Is currently in school, has graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, has obtained a GED, or is an honorably discharged veteran; and
6. Has not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, three or more other misdemeanors, or does not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety” (Migration Policy Institute, 2013, pp. 1-2).

The policy granted undocumented youth temporary relief from deportation and two-year renewable work permits (Perez, 2014). According to Lopez and Krogstad (2017), as of 2019, there were 652,880 undocumented immigrants enrolled in the DACA program, and over 90 percent of the recipients were born in Mexico or Central or South America, 2 percent from Asia, 1 percent from the Caribbean, and less than 1 percent from Europe and Africa. Further, Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI) estimates that 12,000 DACA recipients are Black and the top three countries are Jamaica, Haiti, and Nigeria.

After the DACA policy was enacted, according to the Migration Policy Institute (2019), over 99,000 undocumented youth applied for DACA for educational purposes and 247,000 completed high school and were enrolled in a postsecondary institution at the time they applied. Ultimately, the establishment of DACA created a pathway for undocumented immigrants to access higher education. DACA has had noteworthy impact on undocumented students’ access to higher education. According to a report conducted by the Institute for Immigration, Globalization, and Education at the University of

California—Los Angeles (UCLA) (2016), over 85% of DACA recipients reported that DACA has had a positive impact on their education.

Additionally, according to Hsin and Ortega (2017), by providing access to employment and relief from deportation, DACA increased the returns on schooling and may provide undocumented students with incentives to pursue higher education. Gonzales (2011) have suggested that DACA influenced undocumented students to invest in themselves because they were not in constant fear as a result of their undocumented status. According to Gonzales et al. (2016), after undocumented youth acquired DACA status, it provided them with work authorization, which led them to pursue additional education. According to Gonzales (2016), after the establishment of DACA, 60% of undocumented youth were able to access jobs. DACA provided improved access to financial security through employment, which made access to financial aid possible for undocumented students. Furthermore, according to Gonzales et al. (2014), since receiving DACA, many individuals have obtained new jobs and internships. With access to jobs and internships, more doors opened to undocumented students allowing them to better finance their education. According to Patler et al. (2015), over 66% of previously unemployed DACA recipients successfully obtained employment upon passing of the executive order. This is attributable to increased access to the resources needed to provide for themselves, an opportunity they did not have before DACA was introduced. As noted by Hsin and Ortega (2017), the work authorization provided by DACA increased returns on higher education persistence, which incentivized undocumented immigrants to focus on coursework and complete their degrees.

Access to employment led to greater access to higher education for many undocumented immigrants. Therefore, DACA eased some of the financial burden for undocumented youth pursuing postsecondary education. Additionally, according to Patler et. al. (2015), DACA recipients reported slightly fewer difficulties paying for higher education compared to their counterparts who did not qualify for DACA. Moreover, over 78% of DACA recipients reported that DACA made it easier for them to pay for higher education (Patler et al., 2015). Therefore, DACA has provided undocumented youth with more opportunities to finance higher education, which in turn, provides them with greater access to higher education and the benefits associated with bachelor degree attainment.

However, many recognized that DACA was just a band aid on a larger social issue that also excluded a lot of people. DACA was merely a two-year stint, which was evident after former president, Donald Trump rescinded the program in 2017. After the rescinding of the program, many DACA recipients were back in limbo. In *Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California*, the U.S. The Supreme Court ruled that the government did not rescind the program in an admissible manner. As of February 2021, president Joe Biden has reinstated the program to its original capacity.

While the aforementioned barriers affect access to higher education, there are undocumented students who do enroll in higher education institutions. However, after enrolling, many still face significant impediments to success. According to Gonzales et al., (2013), undocumented students face many mental challenges that may affect success in college such as guilt, depression, anger, anxiety, and uncertainty. Over one third of the undocumented student population faces anxiety, which is higher than the typical number

reported for higher education students in general (Teranishi & Suárez-Orozco, 2015). Additionally, some undocumented students struggle to sustain psychological well-being, and this challenge can impede their academic persistence and social engagement (Terriquez, 2015). Furthermore, undocumented students may experience individual feelings of shame and despair, particularly when they are targets of discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiments. The support of peers is very helpful and meaningful for undocumented students and can contribute positively to persistence rates (Gonzales, 2016; Huber & Malagon, 2007). According to Cortes (2008), undocumented students battle feelings of trepidation, marginalization, and uncertainty about their futures which may lead to negative higher education experiences. Even more, undocumented students who do persist in higher education often face high levels of socioemotional distress and various financial challenges (Perez et al., 2006).

Additionally, undocumented students express difficulty interacting with and trusting faculty members and administrators when they need help (Contreras, 2009; Perez et al., 2009). It is important to provide undocumented students with access to faculty and staff who can effectively support them as allies (Chen & Rhoads, 2016). The research suggests that students who have positive relationships with faculty and staff have greater levels of motivation (Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, 2013). Additionally, according to Gonzales (2016), faculty and staff can play a meaningful role in undocumented students' lives by providing them with ways to embrace their own narratives. Therefore, it is crucial that higher education institutions provide students access to faculty and staff who are informed about immigration and the issues facing the undocumented students they serve.

Another area that arose in the literature is that undocumented students are in need of physical safe spaces on higher education campuses. Physical spaces are important for the success of undocumented college students because those spaces serve as safe spaces for those students. Prior research indicates that higher education institutions should provide a safe campus climate that is welcoming, supportive and provides undocumented students with the resources to be able to navigate the college space. According to a report conducted by the UndocuScholars Project, Undocumented Student Resource Centers (USRC) are defined as “physical structures on campus designated as centers that provide a space for undocumented students and students of mixed status families to obtain institutionalized support” (Cisneros et al., 2019, p.98). USRCs provide undocumented students with a place to go on campus where they can receive academic, emotional and legal support.

In summation, once undocumented students transition to higher education, they face multiple barriers to success such as the inability to access federal financial aid, and in some states, access to in-state tuition rates, not to mention the psychological stresses associated with being undocumented (Dougherty et al., 2010; Pérez & Cortés, 2010). Undocumented students also face psychological implications such as frustration and “feeling out of place” while they are on higher education campuses. Additionally, these students have noted that they feel a lack of support from faculty, staff, and higher educational professionals on campuses (Gonzales, 2011; Pérez & Cortés, 2011). These structural, legal, and financial barriers are not exclusive to Latinx undocumented students; they are faced by all undocumented students. However, while the experiences of Latinx undocumented students are in some ways similar to all undocumented students,

there are differences related to race, visibility, and other intersecting identities between Latinx undocumented students and non-Latinx undocumented students. Therefore, in the following section, I focus on the experiences of non-Latinx undocumented students.

### Brief History of Black Immigrants

According to Palmer (2017), “The term ‘Black immigrant’ refers to any member of the African Diaspora in the Western Hemisphere, including Afro-Latinx, Afro-Caribbean, and continental African peoples” (p. 100). According to Anderson (2015), the U.S. has always had a booming Black immigrant population. Nonetheless, the Black immigrant population began to grow in number when U.S. immigration policy changed in the 1960s because the nation was becoming more open to immigrants from all over the world (Anderson, 2015). Since the 1980s, the Black immigrant population has tripled to 3.8 million Black immigrants living in the United States (Anderson, 2015). There is also a Black undocumented immigrant population and according to research conducted by the Black Alliance for Just Immigration, there were over 575,000 Black undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. in 2013.

### Black Immigrants’ Collegiate Experiences

According to Mwangi and English (2017), while Black immigrants and native Blacks share similar experiences, they have distinct experiences. Furthermore, Mwangi and English (2017) note that over 12% of Black students in higher education are immigrants or first-generation immigrants.

Griffin and McIntosh (2015) conducted a qualitative study to examine how racial and ethnic identity shaped Black immigrant students’ engagement on college campuses. The purpose of Griffin and McIntosh’s study was to understand how students decided on

participating in campus activities. Utilizing the Multiple Dimensions of Identity Framework, they sought to understand if individuals with multiple identities sought to engage in campus activities to feel more connected to the community. This study is relevant to my study because Black undocumented students also balance multiple identities. Furthermore, campus involvement is a substantial indicator of student experiences on campus. Therefore, Griffin and McIntosh's (2015) study can provide insight into the experiences of Black undocumented students in higher education and whether engagement influences their experience on those campuses.

The participants included in Griffin and McIntosh's (2015) study were 23 Black immigrant students from the Caribbean or of African descent. After conducting interviews, Griffin and McIntosh (2015) found three major themes: the power of similarity and shared identity, racial identity mattered, and multiple identities matter. Black immigrant students sought peer interactions and membership to organizations where they could connect with other students like themselves. This finding points to the importance of peer support and the impact that it has on positive campus experiences. Additionally, Griffin and McIntosh's findings align with others who suggest that identity plays a role in how Black students engage on campus (Guiffrida, 2003; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Museus, 2008). Griffin and McIntosh agreed that "Much like the literature on U.S. born Black students, participants described feeling a greater sense of comfort when around those who looked like them and shared their background" (p. 255). These findings are salient because Black undocumented students navigate multiple identities. Additionally, Griffin and McIntosh provide deeper understanding of Black immigrants and Black native students' experiences.

Kim (2014) conducted a qualitative study to understand the challenges that Black immigrant students face as they navigate the campuses of Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). This study aimed to provide insight on how bicultural socialization affects Black immigrant student experiences. Utilizing the socialization framework, the research questions posed in Kim (2014) were: (1) what barriers do Black immigrant students encounter while they socialize into academic and interpersonal higher education institutions? (2) what sources of support help them cope with these barriers?

After conducting interviews with 12 Black immigrant students, four themes emerged: students often had to cope with linguistic minority status, becoming biculturally socialized, connecting with advisors and counselors as cultural mediators, and maintaining relationships with family, and peers (Kim, 2014). While all four themes are important, I will focus on the becoming of bicultural socialization and connecting with advisors and peers as these themes arise in other literature as well as affecting student experience. As for becoming biculturally socialized, students in the study expressed struggles with connecting with Black native students while also trying to connect with other immigrant students. This is pertinent because Black undocumented students likely also experience similar challenges to undocumented students as they navigate their blackness and their legal status.

Another important finding from this study was that the participants coped with challenges by connecting with advisors and counselors who understood their experiences. This finding is corroborated by the many studies that suggest coping mechanisms and support systems are important in positive higher education experiences (Bourke, 2010; Ogbu, 2004; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). Ultimately, Kim (2014) adds to the literature by

providing information about the importance of peers, faculty, and administrators in the lives of Black immigrant students as they navigate their higher education experiences. This is important because an area for growth within the undocuBlack literature is how the role of faculty and staff shape the experiences of undocuBlack students. Therefore, this finding can advance an understanding of how to frame questions about the role stakeholders such as faculty members play in shaping undocuBlack students' higher education experiences. However, a key limitation of this study is that Black international students nor Black native students are included in the sample. This is important because Black natives and Black immigrants have varied experiences and those differences should be addressed in the research so that students can have the right support on campuses.

Within the literature on Black immigrants, Black natives, and Black international students are often grouped together; most of the studies focus on these student groups as one demographic. There are even studies in which Black international students are also categorized with Black natives and Black immigrants who have resided in the U.S. for some time. Researchers such as Kent (2007) have noted that Black international students have cultural and language differences from native born Black Americans, yet they are associated with the research on Black immigrant students. However, the studies that do exist are relevant to review because of scarcity of literature about Black undocumented students and their collegiate experiences.

Constantine et al. (2005) conducted a qualitative study to understand the experiences of 12 Black international students on college campuses in the U.S. All participants in the study identified as Black and were from Nigeria, Kenya, or Ghana.

The authors examined the cultural adjustments to the campus climate. According to Mori (2000), international students who attend higher education institutions in the U.S. often face culture shock, alienation, discrimination, and language barriers; these observations are consistent with the literature on the experiences of Black immigrants on college campuses. Nonetheless, it is imperative to understand that there may be major differences between the experiences of Black undocumented students and Black international students. However, since the literature on Black immigrant students in higher education is limited, the work of Constantine et al., (2005) is instructive for understanding the importance of Black undocumented student experiences.

The major findings of Constantine et al. (2005) were: pre- and post-sojourn perceptions, responses to discrimination, family, and friendship networks; strategies for coping; and openness to counseling. One of the prevalent findings throughout the literature on Black immigrants and undocumented students is that students experienced discrimination and had to determine ways to cope. Constantine et al stated, “Moreover, exposure to racial discrimination may increase these students’ risk for developing or exacerbating mental health problems or concerns during the cultural adjustment process” (p. 63). This finding is a key understanding when attempting to understand experiences of Black undocumented students because of the role race and legal status play in discrimination on campuses. Another important finding is that the students who had strong family and friend networks had a better experience in higher education. Constantine et al shared, “The Kenyan, Nigerian, and Ghanaian international college students in our investigation typically reported having good family and peer networks” (p. 63). This is an important finding because it demonstrates that connections are

important for a positive higher education experience for Black natives and Black immigrants.

Finally, Constantine et al.'s (2005) study is pertinent because one of the major takeaways is that the African students in this study needed close connections and social support networks to help them cope with adjusting to campus climate. This finding aligns with previous literature that suggests coping mechanisms are one of the ways that Black natives and Black immigrant students have positive experiences in higher education (Copeland, 2000; Lewis, 2000; Utsey et al., 2000). These studies help to understand why Black undocumented students might need coping channels to also adjust to campus climate. While Constantine's study was not directly about undocumented students, it was about Black international students who might experience similar experiences as Black undocumented students. Furthermore, the Constantine et al., (2005) study provides understanding of the multilayered experiences of Black students, whether documented or not.

Fries-Britt et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative study to examine the experiences of 15 foreign-born students of color majoring in Physics. While this study is specific to students studying Physics and students of color, it is still crucial to note for this review because the experience centers on students who are immigrants to the U.S. and the majority of students in the sample were from African and Caribbean countries. However, it is also imperative to note that the foreign-born students who were sampled for this study were raised abroad and not in the U.S. so they may have different educational experiences from Black undocumented students who were raised in the U.S.

The findings revealed by Fries-Britt et al. (2014) were: students had to adjust to cultural norms, educational norms, and social adjustments. While all three themes speak to the experiences of students of color, educational and social adjustments that the students in the study had to make are most salient. The reason for this is that the findings in most of the studies around Black natives or Black immigrants on campus does not focus on cultural norms because Black natives and some Black immigrants students have grown up in the U.S. and have similar cultural norms. As it relates to social adjustments, students in the Fries-Britt et al. (2014) study often faced emotional adjustments such as navigating homesickness and isolation from support systems. This is a critical finding because most higher education students would face these pressures on a new campus because of the change in environment. As it relates to education adjustments, the main focus for the students in this study was access to resources. This finding is revealing because most undocumented students in the U.S. attend under-resourced high schools. Therefore, there is a gap to be explored about whether the choice of secondary schooling might also affect the collegiate experiences of undocuBlack students. As a result of oppression, and other social adjustments that happen on college campuses, foreign born students are adversely affected. This could also be true for Black undocumented students as they navigate being Black and undocumented on a higher education campus.

Fries-Britt et al. (2014) suggest that self-efficacy was useful in helping students cope with racial discrimination. Again, this finding aligns with previous studies about the coping mechanisms that students employed to navigate their college experience. Additionally, according to Zhang and Goodson (2011), self-efficacy is a beneficial tool for students of color. Another suggestion was that foreign born students needed bicultural

networks in order to cope with feelings of adjustment to the higher education environment. Furthermore, according to Lin and Yi (1997), multicultural and bicultural networks are critical for success in new college environments for foreign born students. Ultimately, the findings from this study demonstrates the diverse challenges that foreign-born students of color face in higher education. Therefore, this study serves as a reminder that researchers and higher education professional should pay greater attention to the educational and social adjustments that might affect Black undocumented students and their collegiate experiences, and whether secondary schooling might also influence those experiences.

Mwangi (2016) conducted a qualitative study to examine the factors that might affect Black international students' sense of belonging on Historically Black College and University campuses. According to Tovar et al. (2009), understanding a sense of belonging is important because a sense of belonging can affect academic success, retention, and student satisfaction. According to Hurtado and Carter (1997), sense of belonging is defined as an individual's sense of identification or positioning within the context of the higher education community. Therefore, Mwangi (2016) employed the sense of belonging framework developed by Hurtado and Carter (1997). The research questions posed in this study were: "How do Black international HBCU students describe their sense of belonging on campus? What factors impact Black international HBCU students' perceptions of sense of belonging?" (p. 3).

The findings from Mwangi (2016) study revealed two themes: Black international students had preconceived notions about Black natives before entering higher education, and the second theme was that students' own perceptions of themselves and whether they

fit the campus culture also played a role in sense of belonging. While both findings are important, I only focus on the findings related to students' perceptions. This is because Black undocumented students grow up in the U.S. and while they might have their own perceptions of how others perceive them because of their undocumented status, I think it is more important to understand how these Black international students were positively or negatively affected by perceptions of themselves.

For instance, it was revealed that Black international students held perceptions of self-identity regarding race and ethnicity and those perceptions affected if they felt like a fit at the institution. They also found that sense of belonging affected student engagement on campus. Mwangi (2016) stated "Over time these students often felt a greater sense of belonging as a result of positive campus experiences, but still appeared to see themselves on the periphery of mainstream campus culture" (p. 1028,). These findings are consistent with other studies that suggest that another major part of the collegiate experiences of Black natives and Black immigrant students is a sense of belonging.

Mwangi's (2016) study is relevant for understanding the experiences of Black undocumented students because sense of belonging can dictate how those students experience higher education. According to Hurtado and Carter (1997) and Tinto (1993), sense of belonging considers both cognitive and affective factors that can contribute to a student's sense of belonging on a campus, whether academic or social factors. Other studies have supported the idea of a sense of belonging as it relates to academic, psychological, and persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Strayhorn, 2012). Additionally, for students of color, a sense of belonging is even more important and other scholars have found that hostile racial campus climate, and lack of support structures can

negatively affect sense of belonging (Maramba & Valezques, 2011; Santos et al., 2007). Therefore, sense of belonging is an important key concept to explore when trying to understand Black undocumented students and their experiences.

### Black Native Students' Post-Secondary Experiences

The permeation of racism has limited access to higher education for Black people. According to Lewis (2004), Black students did not have access to higher education until after the 1830s, which has had major effects on how they experience higher education. Furthermore, in 1856, The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Scott v. Sanford* that African Americans were not permitted civil rights because they were slaves (Aguirre & Martinez, 2003). Once Black students could access higher education, most attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Therefore, the research about their experiences first focuses on that area. Researchers such as Gurin (1970), Gurin and Epps (1966), and Hartnett (1970) have paid considerable attention to the Black student experience mostly on HBCU campuses.

Black students started enrolling at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), around 1968. The Black student population on higher education campuses doubled during the 1960s. According to Willie and Cunnigen (1981), the most persistent themes about Black student experiences are that they face socioeconomic challenges, they do not have access to pre-college preparation, and that they must be politically and socially active in college in order to have positive experiences. The research on Black students' experiences on higher education campuses has demonstrated that Black students at PWIs face hostility and non-welcoming spaces on campus (Chang et al., 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992, 1994; Sutton & Terrell, 1997). Additionally, other studies

have shown that Black students routinely and consistently balance stereotypes, discrimination, and internalized identity development issues and have to develop coping methods, especially while physically located on campus (Constantine et al., 2002; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001). There have also been studies conducted at HBCUs on the experiences of Black students. These studies have identified consistent evidence that Black students at HBCUs often feel more of a sense of community even if they face other challenges (Means & Jaeger, 2013; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008).

Anglin and Wade (2007) conducted a quantitative study with over 141 Black participants from PWIs to understand the effects of racial socialization and racial identity on Black students and their adjustment to higher education. Employing the racial socialization theoretical framework, the researchers argued that Black students are socialized at home and develop strategies to counter negative socialization while on higher education campuses. The findings from Anglin and Wade's study revealed that racial socialization positively contributes to academic adjustment (Anglin & Wade, 2007). They also found that an internalized-multicultural identity positively contributed to overall higher education adjustment as well. Finally, they found that if Black students already have a negative sense of self, they might experience challenges adjusting to a higher education environment.

The findings of Anglin and Wade's (2007) study are relevant because they provide context for understanding the experiences of Black undocumented students from the angle of identity and race. Furthermore, my study focuses on race and whether undocuBlack students internalize race or how race contributes to their adjustment on higher education campuses. Additionally, Anglin and Wade's study points to the

techniques that Black natives use to survive and navigate racism on higher education campuses such as finding a support system for academic support, psychological well-being, and identity development, which are all techniques to improve their collegiate experience. Those findings influence my current study because they influenced how I understood if undocuBlack students use the same techniques to cope on higher education campuses. Furthermore, Anglin and Wade's study addresses how students navigate racism, which was instrumental in understanding undocuBlack students experiences with racism and marginalization within varying communities, Black and undocumented. The Anglin and Wade (2007) study is important because it lends insight into the experiences of Black native students. This is valuable because even though Black undocumented students are different, they face similar challenges as it relates to their race, not necessarily their undocumented status, and also marginalized identities.

Bourke (2010) conducted a qualitative study to explore the experiences of 40 Black students in physical and non-physical cultural spaces at a PWI. The cultural spaces analyzed include: athletic spaces, campus traditions, campus climate, education, and privilege. Given the focus of the current study, I discuss findings related to campus traditions, campus climate, and education. Through their analysis, the authors found that Black students felt isolated and that prevalent campus traditions were based in whiteness. Additionally, students reported that campus climate was not particularly welcoming to Black students. According to Bourke, (2010), the campus climate was primarily shaped by what White students wanted. Furthermore, Black students felt they often had to play the role of the educator to their peers and faculty members. The role of educator refers to explaining culture, racism, and biases. This is an important finding because if students are

expected to educate their student counterparts on what might or might not be offensive, then, they end up having isolated experiences.

Ultimately, Bourke's 2010 study revealed that the experiences of Black natives are challenging, and they often face significant barriers that limit their sense of belonging on campus. These findings highlight and corroborate the extensive literature around the challenging experiences for Black students on college campuses (Anglin & Wade., 2007; Constantine et al., 2005; Sanchez, 2013). Bourke's study is relevant because issues of playing the educator role reflect the higher education experiences of undocuBlack college students. As Black native students often play the role of educator to faculty, staff, and peers, undocuBlack students also have similar experiences. Therefore, Bourke's study informed the development of my questions around educators and undocu-competence for my study. The history and policies that affect undocumented students are unique to that community, therefore undocuBlack students also experience issues of the burden of educating peers, faculty, and staff. Finally, Bourke's (2010) study demonstrates the gap in the literature around competence and how that affects experience for students with marginalizing statuses. Bourke's (2010) study provides room for my current study to explore how faculty and staff might or might not contribute to negative or positive experiences of undocuBlack students.

Hunter and Harvey (2019) employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to investigate the sense of belonging of 17 Black college students within their racial group on their college campus. According to Hunter and Harvey (2019), there are many studies that explore Black students' sense of belonging as it relates to academic institutions. For example, a sense of belonging to universities has been examined in relation to Black

college students' intentions to persist in higher education (Hausmann et al., 2007) and psychological adjustment (Gummadam et al., 2015). Furthermore, according to Tajfel and Turner (1979), sense of belonging is the connection to a group that provides a sense of community and other forms of support for those within that group. Furthermore, those studies found that a sense of belonging were linked to persistence, isolation, and psychological well-being.

Hunter and Harvey's (2019) findings revealed that sense of belonging was related to acculturative loss, connection with and responsibility toward others, and authenticating Blackness. As it relates to authenticating Blackness, students struggled with whether they were "Black enough." This finding is important and relevant because undocuBlack students also face similar challenges within Black spaces on campuses. This finding informed the development of interview questions about whether intersecting identities function separately in physical safe spaces for Black students. Furthermore, regarding acculturative loss, Black students in the study felt they needed to shed themselves of their Black identity to thrive on campus. Additionally, regarding connection with and responsibility toward others, Black students felt that to belong they needed to have relationships with other Black students on campus.

All three findings are pertinent to my current study because the development of sense of belonging related interview questions helped to reveal that undocuBlack students feel a lack of sense of belonging in undocumented student spaces. Additionally, this finding provide insight into the understanding of the experiences of undocuBlack students and whether they feel a sense of belonging similar to Black students or members of the undocumented community. Furthermore, the findings of Hunter and Harvey's

(2019) study also reveal that if Black native students have strong ties to their racial identities, they have more positive experiences on higher education campuses. This finding is corroborated by Williams (2000) and Yap et al. (2011) who propose that understanding racial identity is crucial for psychological well-being among Black college students. This finding is also relevant because understanding racial identity is crucial for understanding how undocumented Black students see themselves belonging.

Few studies have addressed the challenges Black men enrolled at HBCUs face (e.g., Means & Jaeger, 2013; Palmer & Strayhorn, 2008). Furthermore, even fewer studies have addressed the experiences of Black male college students with other competing identities. Means and Jaeger (2013) conducted a qualitative study to explore the collegiate experiences of four Black gay male students at a HBCU. The research of Means and Jaeger is pertinent because it uses queer theory to explore the intersections of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Black undocumented students hold multiple identities, and as a result, Means and Jaeger's findings were instrumental in understanding the intersections of identities and how they affect higher education experiences. The findings of Means and Jaeger's study revealed four themes: students had to find a "home" on campus, they experienced successes and challenges as they navigate making connections, students had to find support in LGBT centers, and coming out of the closet (Means & Jaeger, 2013).

Given the focus of the current study, the successes and challenges that Black gay male students face is of importance. In general, the participants in Means and Jaeger's study expressed mostly positive experiences as they relate to building connections to adjust to the campus climate. However, they also reported negative experiences when

trying to make connections on campus. Some of the negative experiences derived from being called homophobic slurs and not feeling connected to others. As for LGBTQ organizations on campus, some of the participants found the spaces as a safe haven for them, while others felt they just did not know they existed. This finding is also pertinent for understanding the Black undocumented student experience because while some higher education institutions have support groups on campus for undocumented students, not all institutions do. While the finding about LGBTQ support centers for the gay students in this study does not directly relate to undocumented students, it informed the current study because the additional layer of being gay plays a role in how students experienced higher education. Being Black and undocumented also have similar implications. Other research also sheds light on the intersectionality among undocumented students, particularly with a focus on gender, sexuality, and immigration status (Cisneros, 2017; Cisneros & Bracho, 2019; Cisneros & Gutierrez, 2018).

Another key finding in Means and Jaeger (2013) is that the participants in the study revealed that the process of coming out to friends, peers, and family members also affected their collegiate experiences. This relates to Black undocumented students because often these students live in the shadows. However, if they were to have coming out moments with supportive friends, staff, and faculty, that might positively affect their experiences on higher education campuses. Ultimately, Means and Jaeger's (2013) study provides a lens to view the intersectionality of identities for Black undocumented students. Means and Jaeger recommend that "Campus communities should also have more conversations about intersectionality and about how one's social location (i.e., Black, gay, and male) can shape experiences for students, staff, and faculty" (p. 9).

Although this was a qualitative study and generalizations cannot be made for groups, it does provide context about the experiences of students with multiple identities.

### **Framing the Undocumented Student Experience from a Non-Latinx Perspective**

According to Huber and Malagon (2007), undocumented students are not homogenous and some non-Latinx students face additional barriers in their educational pursuits. Therefore, other groups of undocumented higher education students must be identified and recognized, and researchers must work to understand and contribute to mitigating the additional barriers they face. According to Chan (2010), the invisibility that the non-Latinx undocumented population face is like a “double-edged sword” because being invisible can allow for them to live in the shadows while also not be profiled for being undocumented. Yet, for undocuBlack students, being Black does not necessarily prevent them from being targeted by law-enforcement. Also, invisibility lends itself to being left out of the discourse, which then results in minimal support for those who are undocumented, but not Latinx.

Utilizing the Black Feminist Theoretical approach, Meitzenheimer’s (2020) study aimed to understand the experiences of undocuBlack women and how they navigated their status, race, and being invisible within the undocumented community. According to Meitzenheimer, the Black Feminist Theoretical framework was employed because Black feminist thought is rooted in both an understanding of the multiplicity of oppression and the need to mobilize marginalization as a source of strength. The design of the study included a phenomenological interview protocol that had three parts: focused life history, lived experiences, and reflective meaning. The focused life history included questions about the participants’ immigrant origin story and the moment they learned they were

undocumented. The lived experiences explored five undocuBlack women's higher education experiences. The reflective meaning proportion was about the women situated within the larger context of the immigrant community. Three 60-minute semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants. The design of this study influences the current study because it focuses on origin, undocuBlack students, and their place within the undocumented community. While Meitzenheimer's entire study is not situated within the context of higher education, it is suitable and relevant to the current study because participants were Black and undocumented. Also, as noted, the literature around undocuBlack student experiences within higher education is sparse, so Meitzenheimer's (2020) study is applicable as it takes into account the past collegiate experiences of participants. Furthermore, Meitzenheimer's (2020) study aimed to understand the experiences that the undocuBlack women face within the undocumented community, which can provide future directions for research to expand the visibility of this student group.

According to Meitzenheimer (2020), "The conversations in those interviews revealed what modes of belonging, through the politics of space and place, look like for undocuBlack women" (p. 119). The stories participants told revealed that they face significant invisibility in communities and within physical spaces on higher education campuses designated for undocumented students. "The ability to be fully represented in Black spaces or undocu-spaces that neither register their experiences as whole, complex, and nuanced is the question of how they are invisibilized on campus" (Meitzenheimer, 2020, p. 123). Additionally, in Black spaces, such as a Black Student Union club, their identity existed on its own, and in spaces for undocumented students, their immigration

status had to function on its own as well. The participants also revealed that they had to create their own positioning of what “home” meant to them as they felt foreign from their homeland, but also invisible in spaces for undocumented students. However, even with the invisibility that they faced, the participants in this study did not allow that invisibility to limit their existence, so they created their own spaces. They created their own spaces by internalizing their power or creating their own language and ways to express themselves.

Ultimately, this study is relevant because it guides explorations of race, higher education experiences, status, and invisibility within the undocumented community. Furthermore, the finding about how undocuBlack students experience physical safe spaces for undocumented students and the lack of safety within those spaces also informed questions about invisibility in order to deeply understand this phenomenon. For instance, the my study included questions about how undocuBlack students felt in a Black Student Union organization as compared to a club for undocumented students. Other interview questions inquired about whether invisibility led to disengagement from those student organizations. Moreover, Meitzenheimer’s study is corroborated by other studies such as Benjamin (2018), Tran et al., (2018) and Salinas et al., (2015), which also revealed that undocuBlack students often felt left out of spaces designated for undocumented students.

Benjamin (2018) explored how Black immigrants navigate their blackness and undocumented immigration status. Utilizing Cohen’s Theory of Secondary Marginalization (1999) and Strolovitch’s Theory on Secondary Marginalization (2007), the study aimed to analyze how Black undocumented immigrants are marginalized within

the immigrant community. These two frameworks were used to examine the factors that contribute to invisibility within the smaller undocumented community and the larger context of American society. The methodological approach employed was an analysis of three immigrant rights organizations which included in-depth interviews and participant observations. For the in depth-interviews, members from undocumented support organizations were interviewed and for the participant observations, the researcher attended conferences and interned at the National Immigration Law Center to gather information.

Findings revealed that “Black undocumented people have different experiences from Latinx population in regard to racial profiling, criminalization, educational attainment, and access to jobs and black immigrants are resisting marginalization and exercising agency by advocating for their own incorporation into mainstream immigrant rights organizations” (Benjamin, 2018, p. 14). These findings are congruent with Meitzenheimer (2020) and Palmer (2017) in that Black undocumented people face higher rates of criminalization because of their invisibility and the ways in which they are not the beneficiaries of advocacy. Ultimately, undocuBlack people are invisibilized within the undocumented community and are often excluded from advocacy and plans for immigration reform. Finally, while Benjamin (2018) study was also not situated within the context of higher education, it provides opportunity for my current study to contribute to the literature around undocuBlack students in higher education.

Tran et al. (2018) employed an ecological metaphor framework to understand the experiences of Black and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) undocumented communities who experienced marginalizing intersections within their identity.

According to Tran et al. (2018), the ecological metaphor is a salient framework to use because it helped the authors understand the relationship between Black and AAPI communities by focusing on historical contexts and relationships.

The findings of Tran's (2018) study reveal several themes. First, Tran found that AAPI positions within history were grounded in political/governmental exclusion, post-1965 immigration and refugee resettlement, and the model minority myth period. Second, they found that White supremacy prevails because there is hostility within the undocumented communities. Thirdly, they found that people within the AAPI community buy into the model minority myth, which then perpetuates the narrative that other immigrants might be bad, (i.e., Black immigrants). This finding was corroborated by others who suggest that AAPIs internalize the myth (e.g., Kim, 2015; Kim & Lee, 2014). Finally, they found that in order for immigrant communities to be more inclusive, AAPIs must find ways to disrupt the dominant narratives that promote White supremacy and anti-Blackness. Tran's study is relevant because it focuses on a group within the undocumented community that receives fair amount of attention; Asian undocumented people. However, Tran's study does not address the differences of marginalization that undocuBlack people face, compared to the AAPI community. Instead, Tran situates the study within the context of history and the role White supremacy plays in perpetuating the negative narratives about undocuBlack people. This study informed my current study because it provided context about history and informed interview questions about who occupy undocumented physical spaces on higher education campuses.

Salinas et al. (2015) conducted over 57 interviews with non-Latinx undocumented students to understand the barriers that these students face with the additional layer of

race. The authors identified four themes: (1) Latinx undocumented students tend to access information from more public sources (e.g., organizations and counselors) while non-Latinx tend to turn to more private sources (e.g., friends, family, private attorneys, and the internet). This is because the dissemination of information about policies and access to resources are usually geared towards the Latinx group, meaning in Spanish. As a result, non-Latinx undocumented students do not feel they have access to the information need to make informed choices about postsecondary education. The second finding is that financial resources are largely geared towards the Latinx community with relatively few available in non-Latinx communities. This is because the majority of the organizations that offer scholarships are situated within the Latinx community. Therefore, the scholarships intended for undocumented students tend to have criteria that exclude non-Latinx undocumented students, such as requiring that the undocumented student be from a Hispanic country (Salinas et al. 2015).

The third finding is that organizations that aim to provide support for undocumented students often focus on the Latinx undocumented students, which leads to obstacles for non-Latinx undocumented students such as invisibility, lack of access to information in other languages, and no diversity of representation. As a result, non-Latinx undocumented students often feel excluded from spaces for undocumented students, they have less access to financial resources and mentors, and information is not inclusive nor accessible. This study is important because the participants were non-Latinx undocumented students.

Although not all participants in Salinas et al. (2015) study were undocuBlack, the findings inform further research about the undocumented community by focusing on how

information is disseminated within the undocumented community. This finding is relevant to my current study because I try to address dissemination of information among undocuBlack students and whether they felt that information was catered for them. Furthermore, this study informs my current study because one of the findings suggest that financial resources are also limited to the Latinx community. This is problematic because undocumented students already do not have access to federal aid, so if financial opportunities are also discriminatory within the undocumented community, then it can deter undocuBlack students from applying for those scholarships. Therefore, I ask more questions about undocuBlack student experiences with applying for scholarships designated for undocumented people. Finally, Salinas et al.'s study suggests another gap in the literature around how non-Latinx undocumented students are at the forefront because the organizations are led by Latinx. It can propose ways of considering organizations and which individuals are providing support. It lends questions about whether Black organizations need to take on more of the work to partner with the undocuBlack community to provide support for college students. Therefore, this finding lends itself to understanding the role the Black community plays in ostracizing or including undocuBlack people.

## Intersectionality

### *The Origins of Intersectionality*

As mentioned earlier, intersectionality stemmed from Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a response to white women being at the center of the feminist movement; it was a framework to engage women of color. Essentially, the intersectionality framework argued that there are qualitative differences among intersectional positions, which means that

inequities are not a direct result of a single factor but are a result of multiple factors. The Black feminists who argued for intersectionality were exposing the limitations of feminist scholarship, which did not include race or gender as factors in shaping experiences. One of those Black feminists is Kimberlé Crenshaw; in 1989, as a response to the complexities of oppression that Black women faced within the legal system, she released her first essay aimed at framing intersectionality.

In her 1989 essay, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” Kimberlé Crenshaw made the term intersectionality the foundation to address issues of marginalization for Black women in law and within feminist theory. According to Crenshaw (1989), she described intersectionality as being at the center of a four way traffic stop, exposing how Black women experience oppression by ways of sexism and racism; all sides must be addressed. Furthermore, Crenshaw noted that by focusing on one axis of oppression, whether race or sex, we are failing to understand the true essence of oppression for Black women in the legal system. This thinking led to the prominence of intersectionality, which proposed that we cannot focus on one identity without taking into account the other. Crenshaw argued that theorists need to take both gender and race into account and show how they interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s experiences.

After the 1989 essay, Crenshaw released another body of work in 1991, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” where she used intersectionality to address the vulnerabilities that women of color faced around violence and social movements. In this body of work, Crenshaw proposed that we

view intersectionality in three forms: structural, representational and political. According to Duran and Jones (2019), the structural form represented policies and practices, the representational form represented cultural images of Women of Color, and the political form was the bridge between the structural and the political, which emphasized the intersection of multiple political agendas. While Duran and Jones (2019) had it right, Crenshaw's main argument was that we cannot simply look at race without looking at gender. Both identities, while distinct from each other, have to be considered when thinking about inequities. Crenshaw's 1991 work on intersectionality was important because the experiences of women of color were at the center of the narrative. After those two bodies of work, Crenshaw's work became the foundation for intersectionality, and she has since been regarded as the mother of intersectionality.

According to McCall (2005), intersectionality has been one of the most important contributions to women's studies. Furthermore, "Since the publications of 'Demarginalizing' and 'Mapping,' scholars and activists have broadened intersectionality to engage a range of issues, social identities, power dynamics, legal and political systems, and discursive structures in the United States and beyond" (Carbado et al., 2013, p. 304). As a result, intersectionality has been employed in many different disciplines, which has caused major apprehension towards the use of intersectionality. This is because many scholars have employed it to think through different issues without recognizing or addressing the limitations behind it. In fact, other researchers continued to expand the theory, taking up the work of intersectionality and arguing for an inclusive view of women which includes different social identities, especially race (Davis, 2008; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2007).

Because of its popularity, intersectionality became renowned as the way to discuss different social identities without limiting the role that race and gender play in shaping experiences. Scholars such as Cho (2013) and May (2015) have argued that those who were interested in the original intent behind intersectionality employ it “as an epistemological and ontological project, which in turn lends itself to applications in research” (p. 458). Therefore, intersectionality became a framework that is used to evaluate and think about researchable issues within numerous fields of inquiry. However, other scholars have employed intersectionality and have used it in different ways, which has created confusion around the theory. The many variations of the use of intersectionality have emerged in traditional disciplines and interdisciplinary fields. According to Collins (2015), “variations of intersectional scholarship can now be found across interdisciplinary fields as well as within more traditional disciplinary endeavors” (p. 2). The following section will briefly discuss the ways that intersectionality has appeared in the literature and the disagreements about the theory.

### *Intersectionality Over The Years*

Since Crenshaw’s groundbreaking 1989 and 1991 work, intersectionality has catapulted within the field of research as a lens to analyze competing identities and systems of power. In fact, intersectionality research now includes all types of categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, national belonging, immigration status, religion, language, phenotype, and able-bodiedness. The way that intersectionality has been employed has contributed to the way it has appeared in the literature. As intersectionality expanded over the years, researchers have explored its processes and the

interlocking system of oppression, which is at the heart of Crenshaw's argument about being Black and a woman. As a result, scholars have employed it in many different ways.

For many scholars, they argued that intersectionality started in the Black feminist movement as opposed to gender studies. Others have argued that intersectionality is not clearly defined and does not identify how it should be used in research (Hancock, 2007). Different scholars have argued that intersectionality addresses race in a problematic way because there is ambiguity around methodological questions (Nash, 2008). Some have argued that intersectionality is a theory and should be employed as such (Davis, 2008), while others challenge the merits of it being a theory (Collins, 2015). Certain scholars argue that intersectionality should be carefully applied, which questions to whom and what intersectionality should apply (Alexander-Floyd, 201). Others have argued that it is not important to argue about what it is, but the intention and performance behind it (Cho, 2013). Additionally, one of the most popular debates about intersectionality is that it has become a buzzword (Collins, 2015; Davis, 2008; May, 2015; Nash, 2011). However, while there are many debates and critiques about intersectionality, which have all contributed to the way it has appeared over the years, this portion of the research will only focus on two big critiques: the contention behind its use and the argument around its legitimacy as theory.

One of the biggest contentions around intersectionality is its original function. There have been disagreements from the feminist movement and the Black feminist movement about the way intersectionality is used in the literature. There are researchers who argue that intersectionality did not begin within the Black feminist movement, but instead, emerged from white feminists. One of those researchers who focus on this line of

critique is Lykke (2005), who argues that European feminists were already engaging in intersectional research in the 1970s. According to Lykke (2005), intersectionality is a way of thinking within feminist studies. Additionally, according to Phoenix (2006), intersectionality became guidance for feminist theorists who wanted to deconstruct multiple identities and intersectionality was the lens through which they could do so. This kind of usage or thinking becomes problematic because researchers have not cited Crenshaw and other mothers of intersectionality in the correct way (Alexander-Floyd, 2012). According to Davis (2008), "...intersectionality promises feminist scholars of all identities, theoretical perspectives, and political persuasions, that they can 'have their cake and eat it, too'" (p.72). Davis's main argument is that intersectionality should not be watered down in order for it to extend to all identities and perspectives. According to Floyd (2012), "many scholars reduce intersectionality to the definition provided by Crenshaw, but do so without significant attention to the depth of her theorizing regarding intersectionality and its application" (p. 4). Floyd's argument is that if scholars plan to cite intersectionality, they must first understand the way it should be applied.

Another researcher who criticizes intersectionality for its beginnings is Summi Cho. In "Post-Intersectionality: The Curious Reception of Intersectionality in Legal Scholarship (2013)", Cho argues that intersectionality does have mobility and can move across disciplines. More specifically, Cho argues that while intersectionality started within the Black feminist movement, it can engage other categories of power and experience, such as sexuality (Carbado et al.,2013). However, even though scholars such as Cho (2013) believe that intersectionality can be employed for multiple issues, there are some researchers who contend that intersectionality should be used to explore only Black

womanhood, such as Alexander-Floyd (2012). Floyd's position is aligned with Davis (2008) in that intersectionality should remain as the theoretical lens for women of color, not at the center of all social identities. Another scholar who supports Floyd and Davis' position is Bilge.

According to Bilge (2013), intersectionality cannot be positioned within the European framework because that line of thinking focuses on race as an afterthought. In *Intersectionality Undone: Saving Intersectionality from Feminist Intersectionality Studies* (2013), Blige contends that intersectionality cannot be used as solely a feminist project; instead, it should be used to counter it. Intersectionality should be used as "...counterhegemonic and transformative intervention in knowledge production, activism, pedagogy, and non-oppressive coalitions" (Carbado et al., 2013, p.307). According to Bilge (2013), intersectionality's origins lie in Black feminist struggles and cannot be used as an approach for all feminists. It would seem as Crenshaw herself would argue that intersectionality cannot be repackaged to include a universal consumption because it results in the re-marginalizing of Black women. The expansive usage of intersectionality has been overused and under theorized.

While many scholars argue about the usage of intersectionality, others critique its usefulness. One big critique of the usefulness of intersectionality is that it is not fully equipped to address social inequalities because it does not situate itself as a framework. Scholars have challenged intersectionality as a theory by arguing that class should be at the center. In "Intersectionality: A Marxist Critique (2019)" by Barbara Foley, she argues that intersectionality does not offer an adequate explanatory framework for addressing the root causes of social inequality. More specifically, Foley (2019) contends that

intersectionality is not a fully developed theory that can be used to address social inequality because intersectionality puts race and gender at the forefront, and those two distinctions are not the sole cause of discrimination. Instead, Foley (2019) argues that class is at the forefront. According to Foley (2019), “But I am proposing that some kinds of causes take priority over others—and, moreover, that, while gender, race and class can be viewed as comparable identities, they in fact require quite different analytical approaches” (p.12). Ultimately, Foley (2019) believes that intersectionality is not a fully developed theory to explain modes of oppression because an analysis with class at the forefront is more suitable for such an explanation. Finally, Foley (2019) asserts that intersectionality is less valuable in current times to define social inequality.

Some scholars argued that the intersectionality framework has been used to deal with all gender and other social identity issues. This is problematic because the origins of intersectionality stemmed deeper than gender and social issues; rather, intersectionality also focused on the systems of oppression that impede progress for a group of individuals. Furthermore, intersectionality has been employed to tackle gender and race in two ways. According to Shields (2008), “First, it promised a solution, or at least a language for the glaring fact that it is impossible to talk about gender without considering other dimensions of social structure/social identity that play a formative role in gender’s operation and meaning. Second, intersectionality seemed a generally applicable descriptive solution to the multiplying features that create and define social identities” (p. 303). However, this form of thinking has contributed to the overuse of intersectionality because intersectionality in its earliest form does not promise to be a solution, but, instead, a lens to think about systems of oppression. Ultimately, the intersectionality

framework was being employed as a lens to address social inequities but did not take into account interlocking systems of oppression. As the debates continued, intersectionality began being utilized in many disciplines.

### *Intersectionality and UndocuBlack Students*

Is it possible to investigate the identities of being Black and undocumented and honor the systems of power when examining the experiences of those students through the lens of intersectionality? In employing the intersectionality framework, I take the position of Jones and Stewart (2016), who argue that intersectionality provides a useful lens to understand marginality and privilege. In this case, intersectionality can be beneficial in understanding how competing marginalized identities such as being Black and undocumented shape the way undocuBlack students experience higher education. More specifically, intersectionality is a valuable theoretical framework to view and analyze the experiences of Black undocumented students in higher education because intersectionality provides a framework that emphasizes how overlapping axes of oppression uniquely impact individuals with multiple marginalized identities (Hancock, 2016).

### Summary of Chapter

In the major studies reviewed in this chapter, there were four consistent themes. The first theme was that all undocumented students, whether Black or Latinx face similar barriers to higher education such as an inability to access federal financial aid, lack of access to in-state tuition rates, and lack of support structures on higher education campuses. As a result of policies such as PRWORA and In State Tuition Rates (ISRT), there is limited access to financial aid for undocumented students, which has inhibited

their access to higher education. This theme was prevalent in almost all studies that frame the context for undocumented students and the section related to the literature on Latinx undocumented student experiences.

The second theme was that even though all undocumented students experience similar legal, financial, and structural barriers, undocuBlack students faced additional barriers related to invisibility, criminalization, and marginalization within the undocumented community. Because undocuBlack students are not usually involved in studies about undocumented students' experiences, their stories are often excluded from the conversation, and as a result, these students are not advocated for. Consequently, they are left without scholarships and access to information and resources aimed at serving the undocumented community. Furthermore, in addition to experiencing discrimination on campus because of their race, they also face isolation, and lack of support from faculty, staff, and peers.

The third theme is that undocumented students need critical support at the K-12 and higher education levels. These supports would ensure that undocumented students are prepared to tackle the college application process and can persist successfully as well. While this theme was not present in all studies; however, every study focused on the importance of peer, faculty, staff, and family support for undocumented students.

The fourth theme was that Black native students also experienced discrimination and a lack of sense of belonging on higher education campuses because of their race and other intersectional identities. In this finding, it was revealed that whether Black natives, Black international, undocuBlack, or Black immigrant students, all had to learn how to cope and navigate their negative experiences on higher education campuses.

While all studies reviewed in this section provided meaningful insight, over half lacked a diverse sample of undocumented college students. Furthermore, I observed that the literature lacked information on non-Latinx undocumented students, which is problematic because of the diverse body of undocumented students. Additionally, further research can also shed light on student organizing/activism on higher education campuses because both have led to major changes on higher education campuses for Black and undocumented students.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

The main purpose of this study is to utilize qualitative strategies to understand the experiences of undocuBlack students within higher education. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, qualitative research provides a tool to gather, analyze, and present undocuBlack students' experiences within the context of higher education. As a result, an interpretative phenomenology approach was utilized, which included one initial questionnaire and one semi-structured interview.

Interpretative phenomenology is a qualitative approach that aims to understand the lived experiences of individuals with a particular phenomenon (Lichtman, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Neubauer et al., 2019). The origins of interpretative phenomenology is credited to Jonathan Smith, a health psychologist based in the United Kingdom (Smith et al., 2009). Smith wanted to develop a qualitative approach that captured experiential data from psychological studies. Interpretive phenomenological approach has been widely used in research studies focused on counselor education, queer/questioning communities, and counseling (Chan & Farmer, 2017; Farmer & Byrd, 2015; Miller et al., 2018). The main objective of interpretative phenomenology is to provide understanding of an experience as it was experienced and how it was experienced (Teherani et al., 2015). Furthermore, one of the main features of interpretative phenomenological inquiry is the emphasis on how participants understand their experiences with a phenomena (Smith et al., 2009). Moreover, phenomenological inquiry aims at understanding a phenomena by

making meaning (van Manen, 2007). A successful phenomenological study will reveal similar patterns and shared meaning of the participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

Utilizing an interpretative phenomenological approach was appropriate for the current study as the goal of this research is to understand the experiences of undocuBlack students in higher education. Through this approach, I gained deeper insights on the ways immigration status and race affects undocuBlack collegiate experiences. This study addressed one main research question:

1. How do salient identities—Black and undocumented—affect the way that students experience higher education?

In alignment with an interpretative phenomenological approach, my research questions focus on making sense and making meaning instead of on causes and outcomes (Smith et al., 2009). My research question is positioned within that approach and aims to understand if the intersections of identities among undocuBlack students function on their own and whether there is a silencing of illegality in the Black community as well. Some researchers like Gonzales and Burciaga (2018), building on Gleeseon and Gonzales from (2012), and Gonzales (2016) have argued that being undocumented is a master status as oppose to race. My work has important contributions to make as these and other social identities intersect. This research question is as meaningful for the undocumented community as well as the Black community.

This research question is influenced by my own subjectivity because of my own experiences as a Black undocumented scholar. Therefore, it is acknowledged that subjectivity guided major parts of this research, including the selection of methodologies and interpretation of data. However, the interpretative phenomenological approach sees

this as an advantage for the study. One key aspect of interpretative phenomenological approach is that the researcher's past experiences and knowledge of the subject matter are valuable to the study and can guide inquiry (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, utilizing the interpretative phenomenological approach allowed for me to understand the lived experiences of undocumented Black people who were either current or formerly college students.

## Research Design

### *Participant Selection*

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select participants for this study because it is an ideal technique to use when trying to understand the experiences of individuals, especially when studying a sensitive issue (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Purposive sampling aims to select groups that display variation on the phenomena under investigation (Mason, 1991; Patton, 1990). Moreover, according to Babbie (2020), "purposive sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative, this is also called judgmental sampling" (p. 193). Purposive sampling recognizes that sometimes it is appropriate to select a sample based on knowledge of the population (Babbie, 2020).

This type of sampling method was useful for this study because undocumented students are a legally vulnerable and oftentimes invisible population within higher education institutions. Furthermore, this sampling method is consistent with an interpretative phenomenological approach. According to Ashworth and Chung (2006), interpretative phenomenological approach and purposeful sample is in alignment with participants' ability to provide insight about their lived experience. Additionally,

Dowding (2013) adds that purposeful sampling aims to identify and select participants who are informed about the experience associated with the phenomenon of interest. As a result, the criteria to select participants for the study was guided by a fixed set of dimensions based on the theoretical framework and the participants' perceived ability to provide insight into the phenomenon.

For participants to be selected to participate in the study, they had to meet the following criteria: 1) Identify as Black and Undocumented, 2) currently or previously enrolled at a two- or four-year institution. All participants met both requirements to qualify for the study. The reason for these two criteria is ensure that the participants in the study have similar markers relevant to the study such as being undocumented, Black, and someone who has navigated through higher education systems. Additionally, when employing interpretative phenomenology, it is important to have a homogenous sample based on contextual factors because it allows me to identify patterns of similarities and differences (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, I made the decision to only include undocuBlack people who have navigated higher education systems not because I want to only privilege their experience but to ensure that this particular study is grounded in only those experiences. While other experiences of undocuBlack people are important, I want to understand the experiences of those who are either currently traversing through higher education or those who have already persisted.

A weaker aspect of purposive sampling is that it does not allow for full control over the representativeness of the sample. However, to combat this issue, there were clearly identified criteria for participation, which is discussed in depth in the aforementioned paragraph. This was not an issue and I did not have to change the criteria

of participants to account for respondents in the study. Another weakness of applying purposive sampling is the inability to generalize. As stated by Babbie (2020), if purposive sampling is the method selected, researchers must be careful to not generalize data. Therefore, I employed specific data analysis methods that did not allow generalization of the findings. Overall, purposive sampling was beneficial because of the need to access an already established community.

#### *Participant Recruitment*

The purposive strategy relied upon a snowball technique to recruit the participants for this study. According to Devers and Frankel (2000), snowball sampling is useful when studying a sensitive issue that would require individuals from within the group being researched to identify others. The snowball sampling method allowed for my study to reach as many participants as possible. Additionally, since undocumented immigrants are a vulnerable group, this type of sampling was beneficial because it provided me access to a group of participants who are comfortable being public about their undocumented status.

Furthermore, snowball sampling suggests that each person who is contacted can ask additional people to consider the study (Babbie, 2020). This sampling method was beneficial to this study because snowball sampling is appropriate when a special population is difficult to locate, such as undocuBlack immigrants (Babbie, 2020). While there is an estimate of undocumented students enrolled in higher education institutions, it is still a difficult group to identify. Additionally, because most higher education institutions do not have a list of their undocumented students, snowball sampling allowed for the study to account for as many participants as possible. As a result of the nature of

this study, I tapped into already existing resources within a population of seen and supported undocuBlack immigrants.

Therefore, I created a recruitment email and a recruitment flyer that detailed the study such as the benefits, risks, purpose, significance, involvement, and eligibility criteria. After approval from the IRB, I then sent the recruitment email and flyer to members at the undocuBlack network, BAJI, and ACT, in order to find participants for the study. The reason for this is that these organizations already work with undocuBlack people and the practitioners within those organizations had networks and resources that led to participants for this study. The secondary source for recruitment was higher education institutions with an Undocumented Student Resource Center (USRCs) located on their campuses. “(USRCs) are institutionally supported physical structures on higher education campuses that provide access to opportunities for undocumented high school, transfer, undergraduate, and graduate students, as well as students from mixed-status families” (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020, p.52). Furthermore, the intended purpose for USRCs is to provide support and a welcoming environment in order to enhance students’ higher education experiences (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020). There are over 59 of these centers across the United States (Cisneros et al., 2019). The reason for including these centers is because they already have intentional space to support undocumented students. Furthermore, these centers were instrumental in helping me find current undocuBlack students who are currently enrolled at higher education institutions. Therefore, I sent the same recruitment email and flyer to practitioners at those institutions who lead those centers. A copy of the IRB approval can be found in appendix A. A copy of the recruitment email can be found in Appendix B. A copy of the recruitment flyer can be

found in Appendix C. The informed consent form can be found in Appendix D. The interview questionnaire can be found in Appendix E. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix F.

Finally, a third source of recruitment included other higher education practitioners who lead multicultural centers or worked in higher education. A specific list of practitioners for these centers do not exist, so I reached out directly to my network from all over the U.S. The reason for this is because not all undocumented students are involved in organizations that work to support undocuBlack students and not all undocuBlack students might utilize undocumented spaces on higher education campuses or outside of higher education, which was a major finding in the study and will be described in detail in chapter five. So, including multicultural offices accounted for undocuBlack participants who were not actively participating in the undocumented community spaces, but were or had participated with a Black Student Union on their college campus or are actively engaged with other groups on campuses.

In summary, I sent the recruitment email and flyer to the practitioners at those three major sources. In the recruitment email, I requested the practitioners to send the flyer to their networks, post on their websites, and hang up in their respective offices. Following the recruitment flyer, I received emails and text messages from participants who wanted to be involved in the study. I sent out the consent form that detailed the study for all interested participants.

As consistent with interpretative phenomenological studies, sample sizes are usually small and purposeful, ranging from about three to six participants (Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, according to Chan and Farmer (2017), in order to gain a thorough

understanding of the phenomenon to a particular group, sample sizes are recommended to be small. Furthermore, to enhance the quality of the study, I had initially noted that ten participants will allow for me to engage in multiple sources of data collection (Smith et al., 2009). Once recruiting started, many of the interested participants did not meet both criteria as the majority of the interested participants did not identify as Black. It was very difficult to secure undocumented individuals who wanted to be involved in the study because not many undocumented people are vocal about their status. At the end of the recruitment process, I had secured 15 participants for the study. There were two additional individuals who expressed interest in the study, but one was no longer undocumented as she had transitioned over to a permanent resident status, so she was excluded from the study. The other individual who expressed interest never followed up after receiving the consent form, so she was also left out of the study.

This dissertation reports on all 15 of the participants who participated in the interview and completed the questionnaire. All 15 met the criteria for the study and exhibited the ability to provide the insights needed for the phenomena under investigation. Additionally, all 15 participants added to the diversification of the sample because they were from all walks of the diaspora and all had unique experiences to add to the study. A profile of each participant is presented below. Table 3.1 below presents the demographic information on each participant.

Table 1  
*Demographic Data*

	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Immigration Status</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Educational Status</b>
1	DariusMajor	28	Male	DACA	Trinidad	Bachelor's Degree
2	Arion Dirk	28	Male	DACA	Jamaica	In final year of Bachelor's Degree
3	Lucy Ivette	26	Female	TPS Holder	Haiti	Bachelor's Degree. Currently enrolled in PhD
4	Abraham Brace	26	Male	Undocumented	Senegal	Master's Degree
5	Taryn Hoover	24	Female	DACA	Barbados	Bachelor's Degree
6	Shannon Avery	23	Female	Undocumented	Kenya	Bachelor's Degree
7	Fatima Oli	21	Female	DACA	Nigeria	Final year of Bachelor's Degree
8	Teresa Moore	26	Female	DACA	Malawi	Currently in community college
9	Mitch Monroe	20	Male	Undocumented	Gabon	Currently a sophomore at a 4-year institution
10	Anthony Esmine	22	Male	Undocumented	Imo State	Currently in community college
11	Rosemary Rundell	22	Female	Undocumented	Jamaica	Bachelor's Degree
12	Greg Talib	23	Male	DACA	Togo	Bachelor's Degree
13	Gabby Neumann	24	Female	Undocumented	Kenya	Bachelor's Degree/Currently in Law School
14	Sasha Oscar	30	Female	DACAmented	Trinidad	Associate's Degree/Currently in 4+1 program
15	Raven Reeves	20	Female	Undocumented	Jamaica	Currently in BA program

## Data Sources and Collection

### *Procedures*

Semi-structured interviews are great data sources for interpretative phenomenological studies (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, I collected data through a questionnaire and one semi-structured interview. Since I only used one interview, 15 participants ensured that I was able to gather enough information. Once all participants verbally agreed to the informed consent form via email, I sent them the questionnaire. First, information on background, overall experiences as an undocuBlack student in higher education, and questions about participation was collected via the questionnaire. One of the strengths of questionnaires is that it helped me with defining the characteristics of a population (Babbie, 2020). The questionnaire was used to provide me with background information such as questions about country of birth, origin story, and high school. The answers from the questionnaire were organized into an excel document and used as the main descriptor of each participant. The goal of the questionnaire is to be able to detail the profiles of who is involved in the study. Following the questionnaire, I scheduled a ninety minute semi-structured interview with the participants based on their availability.

Second, participants engaged in one semi-structured interview, lasting between 60 and 95 minutes. The semi-structured interview approach (Creswell 2014; Merriam 2009) provided a chance for me to conduct an extensive inquiry about the ways undocuBlack students understand their immigration status and race while giving me an opportunity to privilege the individual experiences of each participant.

All interviews were recorded with the permission of the participant. I also took handwritten notes during each interview. After the interview, I sent each participant a thank you email. Additionally, to ensure that the data accurately reflects the perspectives of the participants, a summary of the transcripts was sent to each participant for voluntary review. Of the 15 participants, all participants reviewed the summary. According to Madison (2005), because of the vulnerability of undocumented students, attention should be given to confidentiality and rapport with participants. As a result, particular attention was given to confidentiality of the participants and each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

#### *Interview Protocol*

When employing an IPA approach, it is recommended that in-depth, semi-structured interviews are utilized as the main source of data collection (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Additionally, according to Seidman (2006), for phenomenological-based studies, it is important that I conduct an in-depth interview. Therefore, I created an interview protocol with questions that would gather information from the participants, but also empowered participants to make meaning of their own experiences. I conducted one interview with 15 participants. All participants participated in one interview, via Zoom with a mix of structured questions and a flexibility for their narratives to be shared (Merriam, 2009).

With IPA, it is imperative that interview questions serve as a guide, not a solidified plan that would not allow for the participants' to make meaning of their experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Therefore, I allowed myself room to alter the interview questions based on the participant. For instance, there were many participants

who wanted to share their entire background before discussing their undocumented status and with IPA, I had the freedom to let them do that. After noticing that the first four participants wanted to share their background story, I began to allow each participant that opportunity before moving to the first question. Additionally, participants would share more information than was necessary during certain questions such as “what does it mean to be undocuBlack while in college?” and “how do you see status and race affecting your college experience?”

According to (Moustakas, 1994), during the IPA process, interviews should be informal and interactive to allow for participants flexibility. The interviews were semi-structured and informal to give the participants space to feel comfortable. Before starting every interview, I shared my story with the participants, so that they could feel comfortable knowing that I might have similar experiences. During that process, I noticed that the participants would smile and interrupt as they made connections to my story. This is important to note because one of the reasons I wanted to employ an IPA approach was because IPA values the role of the researcher and as someone who is currently undocumented, participants seemed eager to make meaning of their experiences as well as my own and how it connected to theirs.

### Data Analysis

This study employed techniques from the interpretative phenomenological approach for analysis. According to Chan and Farmer (2017) because the nature of interpretative phenomenology is guided by hermeneutics, there is no one way to analyze data. Analysis should capture description and must also be interpretative (Smith, 2011). Additionally, while utilizing the interpretative phenomenological approach, it is

important for the researcher to balance the experience of the participants and make sense of the participants' lived experiences (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Furthermore, my analysis procedure is a guided by the step by step process presented by Larkin and Thompson (2012) which includes: reflexivity, coding, and identifying emergent themes.

The first step that was conducted for data analysis was to prepare the data. The next step I employed was to transcribe all interviews from the recordings. The transcription process was influenced by McLellan et al., 2003. As mentioned earlier, this study included 15 participants, so there were 15 audio Zoom interviews and 15 interview transcripts. After each interview, I transcribed the interviews based on the automatic transcript produced by Zoom. This process included three parts. The first step in analyzing data is to conduct multiple close readings of the transcript (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Therefore, the researcher began the transcription process with this in mind. I first listened to the audio while reading the initial transcript to ensure that it accurately captured the participants' words. Zoom did not often pick up words like "DACA" or "undocumented" or "BSU (Black Student Union)" so those were the biggest changes that were made for each transcript. After the initial listening of the audio, the second step was to do another listen to confirm that each word the participants said was precisely noted. This was important because some of the participants had strong accents and as a result, there were some words that Zoom did not capture, so I had to insert those words into the transcripts. Re-reading the transcripts multiple times allowed me to take notes on initial thoughts and biases that I notice (Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

Finally, each transcript was labeled with the participants' pseudonym and date of the interview and downloaded to Dedoose. According to Saldaña (2015), cloud-based

qualitative data analysis is one of the major contemporary computer assisted qualitative data analysis tools. All sensitive information was removed from the transcripts, such as names or other unique identifiers. According to McLellan et al., 2003, it is important that transcripts include the appropriate label and other relevant information to maintain the knowledge about the participant. Therefore, I substituted the participant's names and other identifying data to secure confidentiality of the participants. All in all, transcribing each transcript took about three or four hours depending on the length of the interview.

After the transcription process, I continued to engage and become familiar with the data. As mentioned earlier, according to (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014), the first step in analyzing data is to conduct multiple close readings of the transcript. Therefore, after reading through the transcripts three times to transcribe all the interviews. I read through the transcripts for a fourth time, this time to send the participants a loose word for word version of their interview. Each participant received their interview summary, which detailed all the questions that were asked, start time of the interview, end time for the interview, and the date and time of the interview. The participants were able to voluntarily provide any changes or feedback they wanted. After this process, I created a cover sheet with all participants and labeling information. The cover sheet included a set of characteristics such as (pseudonym, age, gender, immigration status, country of origin, and degree status). As noted by (McLellan et al., 2003) a cover sheet can also include relevant identifying information that is important for analysis. This cover sheet served as a profile for each participant and for the researcher. After the creation of the cover sheet, I wrote a summary of each participant to describe and make meaning of their experiences as undocuBlack students.

Following the summaries, I did a line by line reading of all of my handwritten notes and noted all emerging themes for each participant. Through this process, I was able to develop the initial codes to make sense of the data. According to (Miles & Huberman, 1994), codes make sense of the data. Through the development of the codes, I was able to identify the perspectives of the participants as they relate to race, immigration status, and their experiences in higher education. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), developing initial codes provides the researcher with an opportunity to do a close line by line reading of the notes. Additionally, by utilizing a line by line approach, I was able to examine phenomenological objects of importance to the participants (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). With every code that was created, I add descriptive notes to them for initial understanding of why they were chosen. Through this step, I also write my own interpretation of the data and what it meant.

After the codes, I began to identify emerging themes. This step served as an interpretative step where I identified the themes and patterns based on my own knowledge of the topic, initial codes, and reflections. I first identified themes for each participant, then grouped all similar themes together. All emergent themes are listed in order of finding. After identifying the patterns and themes for each participant, I looked for superordinate themes as well. According to Smith (2011), “convergence and divergence is the hallmark of good interpretative phenomenological work” (p. 24). The superordinate themes capture the shared meanings in all the cases. I then organized the themes to demonstrate the way participants make meaning of their experience of being undocuBlack while navigating higher education.

The process of transcribing the interviews, re-reading all transcripts multiple times, developing initial codes, identifying emerging themes, and interpreting for superordinate themes was utilized for all interviews. This process is important for this study because it is consistent with interpretative phenomenological approach (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, et al., 2009).

#### Trustworthiness

To ensure validity and credibility of findings, member checks and peer-debriefing were employed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking is a method used to increase trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000). According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) member checks are a strong tool for trustworthiness. Additionally, member checks allow for improved accuracy and credibility of findings (Barbour, 2001; Doyle, 2007). The member checks that I employed happened after the data was analyzed. Member checks involved sharing identified themes and interpretations with participants and seeking their confirmation or validity of the themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I contacted each participant and explained the process of member checks and why they were necessary for research studies as this one. I then asked if they would be willing to be involved in this process. If they agreed, I shared the interview data, the emergent themes, and my interpretations of the themes that arose from their interviews. All 15 of the participants agreed to review the data via email. They all thought the data accurately captured their experiences. While member checks do not guarantee that the findings are not without fault, they do decrease the likelihood of incorrect data and interpretations (Creswell, 2007; Harper & Cole, 2015; Moustakas, 1994).

I also employed peer debriefing strategies to ensure validity and credibility as well. Peer debriefing involves a peer of the researcher to be involved with investigation of the findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Spall, 1998). Peer debriefing supports credibility by establishing overall trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, peer debriefing is valuable because it provides context that the interpretations and findings are credible (Spall, 1998). Furthermore, peer debriefing provide the researcher with mechanisms to cope with the stress of conducting qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Zigarmi & Zigarmi, 1980). I recruited two peers to review and discuss the data, emergent themes and interpretations with me. The first peer is a current doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania. His research focuses on undocumented critical theory. The second peer is the Chief Diversity Officer at a community college in Utah. I chose two peers who are studying undocumented students because I believed their knowledge of the topic would be beneficial to me as a researcher as they were able to provide insight while also challenged me. I met with each peer debriefer once and they provided their input on the themes and the discussion.

#### Researcher Positionality

Interpretative phenomenology holds that the researchers' previous knowledge and assumptions help them better understand the phenomenon under study (Hopkins et al., 2017). Through the interpretative phenomenological approach, the researcher's subjectivity is not regarded as a bias or a limitation of the study that would limit trustworthiness, instead, they are considered a strength that the researcher can utilize to accomplish a better understanding of the findings (Glesne, 2011). As the researcher conducting the study at hand, I hold the view that my knowledge and personal experience

as a Jamaican-born, American-raised, Black woman is a benefit, rather than a limitation. Therefore, I express my own subjectivity as an undocuBlack person and utilized this subjectivity to better engage all aspects of the research process (e.g. questioning, interviews, planning, data collection, data analysis). As mentioned earlier, I shared my story with each participant and they all maintained how important that was for them in opening up during the interview process. Following the interviews, many of the participants reached out to me independently to foster a relationship as many of them had never met another undocuBlack person.

My mother immigrated to the United States from Jamaica when I was very young. She wanted to provide a better life for her six children. Me, being one of those children, was brought to America when I was 12 years old. When I got to the U.S., I soon realized my obstacles in the land of opportunities. As a sophomore in high school, I noticed I did not have a social security number and quickly realized I was undocumented. As a result, I found myself in a precarious position having graduated from high school in Los Angeles without access to the state and federal financial resources for college students that were available to my peers. I became ashamed of my status and hid it from everyone. But, as the difficulties of my undocumented status got heavier to bear, I told my high school counselor, Mr. Torres about my status. He reassured me that my status would not limit me and while Mr. Torres' words served as motivation, I still found myself isolated during the college application process. As a Black immigrant, the scholarships intended for undocumented students were often closed to me because I was not from a Hispanic country. Additionally, after joining the only DREAMers club on campus, I was always

the only Black person in those meetings. In those moments, my undocumented status was further pronounced.

Fortunately, with a private scholarship and the help of strangers, I enrolled at California Lutheran University in the summer of 2010 after high school graduation. But, while I was at Cal Lutheran, I struggled to connect with the undocumented community, not because they weren't supportive, but because I was often the only Black person in any of the spaces designated for us. So, I would go to classes, the students would be predominantly white, then, I would go to these spaces that were for us, and still felt uncomfortable. There was no representation of Black immigrants at those meetings, at the events, or any of the programming. I would then go to BSU (Black Student Union) meetings and felt justified in my Blackness, but no one at those meetings were talking about immigration or status. It was as if both parts of my identity had to function on their own, so I stayed away from the clubs and became invisible. I hid in the shadows. Fortunately, in 2012, I applied for DACA and was able to begin working on campus, a privilege I know not all undocumented people have access to, which was evident in the current study. Having employment and identification opened up new opportunities for me. I graduated from CLU with top honors, but no connection the undocumented community and barely a connection to my Black peers.

After graduation, I pursued my Masters in Public Policy at Pepperdine University with three private scholarships and working four jobs to pay for my education. With much hard work, opportunities, and support from family and friends, I graduated from Pepperdine in 2015 with my Master's in Public Policy. I had achieved two degrees and was able to be employed with a work permit because of DACA. However, with the rise

of Trump, DACA was rescinded and my life felt like it was in limbo. It was then I decided I needed to do more. I wanted to use my voice and believed it was a unique one. I asked myself the question: How could I use my own experience to support other undocumented students? Other undocumented students who might not have made it as far as I did, especially Black undocumented students. So, I applied to Temple University as a doctoral student to study this topic (and as you can imagine, I faced many significant barriers because I did not have access to in-state tuition rates or other federal sources). This leads me to the research I am doing now. Therefore, I approach this study knowing that my own identities influenced how I conducted the study. As the researcher, I bring a unique perspective to the project because of my own positionality as a Black and undocumented individual. My goal is to contribute to the gap in the literature around the visibility of Black undocumented students in higher education, and with this research, it is my hope that I can provide more support and resources for Black undocumented students on higher education campuses.

My personal identity as an undocuBlack person and my involvement with members from the undocuBlack network and with coordinators and administrators at different universities who work with undocumented students makes me well suited to conduct this research. These identities supported me in the recruitment of participants and assisted with care of the data and analysis. Furthermore, my positionality enhanced the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS-PROFILES**

In this chapter, I provide an in-depth analysis of the qualitative data collected from each participants' interview. I detail a profile on all 15 participants including their background, initial experiences once they found out they were undocumented, and a summary of my overall interpretation. I also reflect on and make meaning of participants' experiences by summarizing the key findings and providing my interpretation of the findings for each participant as this type of interpretation is in alignment with an interpretative phenomenological approach. The profiles discussed herein address the research question: How do salient identities—Black and undocumented—affect the way that students experience higher education? The profiles detail participants' lived experiences and offers an exhaustive view of the phenomena under investigation. To protect participants, I use pseudonyms in place of participants' given names. Additionally, I disguised all other markers of individual identification. The profiles are presented in the order in which I conducted the interviews. Because of the nature of my research, it is important to provide the profiles of the participants as undocuBlack people are visually scant and these profiles present the participants in a unique way that has never been presented before.

In the subsequent chapter (Chapter 5), I present my interview results, and in the discussion in chapter 6, I place my findings within the context of the literature and theory.

## Participant Profiles

### *Arion Dirk*

Arion is a 28-year-old undocuBlack, DACAmented recipient. He was born in Jamaica and immigrated to the United States when he was 10 years old. He grew up in an inner city of California with his mother and four siblings. Arion understood he was undocumented when he was in high school after realizing he could not receive a driver's license like his peers. He notes that his initial experiences were of despair and feelings of giving up. "I think I gave up. I thought there was nothing else for me. I thought I couldn't go to school and I wouldn't be able to get a job, so what's the point?" Even with those initial experiences of despair and devastation, Arion still desired to go to college and made his way to community college and eventually enrolled at a four-year institution.

Arion had a unique path to higher education. After he graduated high school, a college education became secondary to securing his basic needs because he had to provide financial support to his mother, who is also undocumented. He attempted to enroll at a community college, but could never finish his degree because of his duties at home. Additionally, he did not have the support of his family to pursue a college education. Arion also detailed how difficult it was to access financial support. For example, the scholarships he researched were for Hispanic students. After one semester at a community college, Arion dropped out and focused his energy on supporting his family. He re-enrolled at the community college several times but could never maintain consistent enrollment because of his personal duties at home and lack of parental support. Within a few years, he had a new son and was homeless. Those two factors motivated Arion to reenroll in community college to seek a better path for himself and his new

family. This time, after reenrolling at a new community college, Arion performed at a high level, receiving all A's and B's in his coursework. While enrolled, he met an advisor who was also a DREAMer, with whom he confided about his undocumented status. Arion mentioned that this advisor changed his life because she recommended he join Black Student Union (BSU) and UMOJA(unity), two organizations for Black college students that she believed would serve him well. While those clubs did not have an impact on Arion, his advisor helped him select his classes and served as a great supporter. In 2019, Arion graduated with an Associate's degree and enrolled at a four-year private university where he received a full-tuition scholarship based on his prior academic achievement.

At the time of his interview, Arion was enrolled in his final year at the four-year institution. Arion joined a DREAMer student club at this university but mentioned that he was the only Black student in the club, which made him feel isolated. When asked if he felt race was a factor in joining the DREAMers club, he responded, "I always felt everyone was staring at me and now when I see people on campus, they act like they don't remember me. In that aspect, I think race plays a part." He felt as if he did not belong in that club even though he was undocumented. In BSU and UMOJA, while it was good to be in a group with other people that looked like him, immigration or legal status were never mentioned. He also details that his immigration status is only known or observable to others when he explicitly reveals it to others. However, if he does not reveal his status, he is treated a certain way because of his race. Arion suggests that his collegiate experiences were affected because of his Blackness, but not his immigration status.

Arion described his undocuBlack status as, “no one expects a Black person to be undocumented. For instance, in the DREAMers club, no one looks like me and when you show up, they don't even know what to do.”

As for experiences with faculty, staff, and other students, Arion said he was intentional about building relationships with faculty because he wanted to perform well in school. With staff and students, Arion described his experience with moments on campus where he felt he was treated a certain way because of his race by students and staff. However, if he does not reveal his status, no one assumes he is undocumented, which demonstrates that status is pronounced relative to physical spaces and context. In May 2022, Arion will graduate with a bachelor's degree.

#### Making Meaning of Arion's Experience

Arion's higher education experience was disrupted multiple times by homelessness, not having access to federal financial aid, lack of parental support, and most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited his time on a college campus. Therefore, Arion's collegiate experience was both impacted by his immigration status and his race. He describes his salient identities (Black and undocumented) as such: “People don't treat me differently because of my immigration status, but they do treat me differently because of my race.” The way he experienced higher education was often shaped by those two statuses. While he did seek out Black students for a sense of belonging by joining BSU and UMOJA, he did not feel he connected with the African American student experience.

Additionally, he tried to be involved in the undocumented student space on his campus, but often felt excluded because the student and programming, and aid

scholarships were geared towards Hispanic students. This was another form of exclusion that Arion experienced during his collegiate experience. Arion's story demonstrates that he never felt like he belonged in either a Black student space nor undocumented student space within his institution. His story shows the unique and diverse nature of the undocuBlack collegiate experience because he did not belong in any space because of his Blackness and his undocumented immigration status.

#### Abraham Brace

Abraham is a 26-year-old, undocuBlack, undocumented person. He immigrated to America when he was 14 years old from Senegal. He grew up in the state of New York. Abraham learned he was undocumented in high school when he was trying to obtain a driver's license and realized he was ineligible to receive one. Once he understood he was undocumented, Abraham described his initial experiences as "a lot of hiding, a lot of lying. A lot of shaming...I was always afraid." However, with the support of his family and his own desire to continue learning after high school, Abraham wanted to pursue a college education. His family was very supportive of his quest to enroll in college because a college education was normalized in his culture. However, because of his undocumented status, Abraham's transition to higher education was met with challenges.

Abraham began his higher education career at a local community college while working multiple jobs to fund his education. While enrolled at the community college, he disclosed his immigration status to an advisor in student government and while the advisor could not answer any of his questions about financial aid or scholarships, it was not a negative experience. He eventually transferred to a Historically Black University in Mississippi to complete his bachelor degree. While at the university, Abraham worked at

restaurants, drove classmates to the airport, and tutored to help fund his education.

Abraham did not know if any support services for undocumented students were offered at his community college or four-year institution. Abraham discussed his frustration with the international student office, stating that no one understood his undocumented status or how to advise him. Abraham indicated that the institutions at which he was enrolled did not offer clubs or organizations on campus for undocumented students. Additionally, he did not join organizations or clubs for Black students during his collegiate experience because he did not believe immigration status or connectedness would be offered in those spaces.

Although Abraham was not involved in on-campus student clubs or organizations, he joined the undocuBlack network which became a community for him. Abraham mentioned that one of the reasons he joined the undocuBlack network was because of race and he knew he wanted to be in community with others who shared the same experiences as him and looked like him. Furthermore, Abraham noted that being Black made his immigration status feel more pronounced because immigration is portrayed as a Latinx issue in the media and in the undocumented community. For Abraham, to be an undocuBlack college student is to navigate one identity that is visible to society while the other is hidden, but has tangible effects on many different areas of his life, such as in systems of education, banking, housing, healthcare.

Abraham did not seek out relationships with faculty and staff because he did want to share his story and possibly experience discrimination. He also described his relationship with students as non-existent because he did want to victimize himself with his story. As a Black undocumented college student, Abraham described how both of his

identities affected him completing his coursework. He elaborated that Black was the forefront of his identities but being undocumented limited him in many ways. “When you see me, you know I am Black, you don't know if I am undocumented. But, as an undocumented person, I have no access to healthcare and other tangible needs, but also being Black, you can see the way people speak to you and their microaggressions.” Abraham noted that his mental health was affected by constantly learning how to navigate his Blackness and status while enrolled in higher education. In 2019, Abraham graduated with a bachelor’s degree and went on to earn a master’s degree.

#### Making Meaning of Abraham’s Experience

While arduous, Abraham overcame obstacles by being strategic in order to graduate. His strategic nature meant that he interned for free for many years to bolster his resume. He also noted having a friend buy a car for him so he could have a car to make money. These are examples of his strategies that relate to degree completion because without a car or a job, he could not fund his education. Abraham’s situation was further complicated because he had limited employment opportunities given his immigration status and not having DACA status. Therefore, he navigated his undergraduate higher education experience as a very physically exhausted student because of the many employment opportunities he had to pursue. Furthermore, support services for undocumented students did not exist at his community college or at the HBCU he attended.

While Abraham found comfort in the undocuBlack network, both statuses (Black and undocumented) affected his collegiate experiences with staff, students, and faculty because he did not build any meaningful relationships with them. It is my interpretation

that because of his connection with the undocuBlack network, Abraham was able to successfully matriculate. His connection with the undocuBlack network provided him with connection with other undocuBlack people and he felt a sense of community and support from the members.

His story signifies that students feel comfortable when they see others who look like them. It also shows that navigating higher education as an undocuBlack student is difficult because of the lack of support services offered on his campus, the lack of access to federal financial aid, and the lack of legal employment opportunities for unDACAmented students. Abraham's story also reflects the invisible nature of an undocuBlack person because the images that are portrayed are of the non-Black Latinx population. Additionally, his experience shows that undocuBlack students often feel lonely because they don't disclose their status out of fear and also don't necessarily feel a sense of belonging in Black spaces. Finally, his story shows that students cannot be engaged if they have to worry about the basic necessities of surviving.

#### Fatima Oli

Fatima is a 21-year-old undocuBlack, DACAmented person. She was born in Nigeria, and immigrated to the United States at six years old. She grew up in the state of Georgia. As a high school student, Fatima learned she was undocumented when she attempted to obtain a driver's license and did not have a social security number. After understanding the limitations of her undocumented status, Fatima fell into a state of depression and began to experience feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness. However, with a 3.7 cumulative high school grade point average, Fatima desired to enroll in higher education, and because a college education was normalized within her African

culture, she disclosed her status to her high school college counselor in hopes that he would direct her. Fortunately, her counselor told her about the DREAM.US scholarship, a full tuition scholarship that also covers room and board for undocumented students. The DREAM.US partners with higher education institutions across the U.S in states where undocumented students cannot access state-funded financial aid. Fatima was awarded the DREAM.US scholarship, which made her transition to higher education a more manageable feat than many of her undocumented peers.

After high school, Fatima became a full-time undergraduate student at a HBCU. While in higher education, Fatima was a member of the DREAM.US undocumented student group on her campus. She frequented group meetings, in which she was consistently one of the only Black students. As she described it, “people were always surprised when they found out I was undocumented.” Besides the DREAM.US program, Fatima also joined the African Students Association, but did not attend many meetings because she wanted to focus on her academics and career trajectory. She mentioned wanting to join a DACA club but felt that because the majority of the members would be Hispanic, she did not identify with them. Therefore, she did not join the DACA club. Additionally, Fatima worked two on campus jobs to sustain other areas of her life, such as her car payments, food, and clothing.

As for relationships with faculty, staff, and students, Fatima had vibrant relationships because of her involvement on campus. She ran for corresponding secretary for the DREAM.US group on the platform of being Black and undocumented. She was also employed with the dean’s office of the university and served in the role of assistant to the dean of engagement.

While Fatima worked hard to ensure she felt connected to her higher education community, she struggled to find others who looked like her and shared the same immigration status. Because Fatima was enrolled at a HBCU, she believed her undocumented status was not pronounced in most campus spaces except for in spaces specifically for undocumented students such as DREAM.US. Additionally, she did not hear stories about Black undocumented members of the campus community which made her status feel invisible. Ultimately, she described her undocuBlack higher education experience as lonely and stressful. However, she shared that both identities motivated her to complete coursework because she wanted to successfully matriculate. For Fatima, to be an undocuBlack college student means that her Black identity and her undocumented immigration status were two obstacles. At the time of her interview, Fatima was in her last year of undergraduate studies and is projected to graduate in May 2022 with a bachelor's degree.

#### Making Meaning of Fatima's Experience

Fatima was one of two participants who was awarded the DREAM.US scholarship. She had tuition covered and her basic needs secured. She also had DACA status which made it possible for her to also have a legal job on campus. While Fatima's higher education journey was still met with challenges because of Blackness and her immigration status, she mostly felt comfortable on her campus because it was a HBCU. She also felt secure and welcomed in the DREAM.us spaces even though she was often the only Black student. While both statuses (Black and undocumented) affected the way she engaged with faculty, staff, students, engagement on campus, and even her outlook on life, she had a fairly positive and supportive higher education journey. Yet, her

journey illustrates the importance of food and housing security for higher education students, especially undocumented students. Because of DREAM.us scholarship helped Fatima secure her basic needs and expand her employment options, she could focus on involving herself within her community and on her studies, thus deriving more from her higher education experience than other participants. Her story signals the invisible narrative of undocuBlack college students as she described that she was often the only Black student in the DREAM.us space.

#### Lucy Ivette

Lucy is a 26-year-old undocuBlack, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holder. She was born in Haiti and has lived in Miami since she was nine months old. At seven years old, Lucy watched as ICE agents took her father from her home and deported him to Haiti. At that moment, she understood that she was different from her peers. When she was 13 years old, she applied for a scholarship, but was told by her counselor that because she did not possess a social security number, she could not apply. That incident made Lucy realize she was undocumented and the limitations that came with that status. According to Lucy, her initial experiences of being undocumented felt like a hindrance and she felt lonely because of her undocumented status. However, as a student, Lucy was passionate about science and wanted to pursue higher education. During her senior year of high school, she shared her undocumented status with her teacher. Fortunately, the teacher was able to introduce Lucy to the undocuBlack network which provided her with the network of supportive undocuBlack individuals that supported her desire to obtain a college degree.

With the support of her family, her own motivation to enroll in college, and her connection to the undocuBlack network, Lucy first enrolled at a small private college in Florida but couldn't persist successfully because she was working two jobs and would often not have enough money to pay her tuition expenses. She eventually transferred to a public university so she could pay cheaper tuition while maintaining her two jobs. While at the state school, Lucy noted that it was hard for her to participate in clubs or organizations because she was always exhausted from working and attending classes. As a result, Lucy never joined any clubs or organizations on her higher education campus for Black students or undocumented students. Furthermore, Lucy noted that her institution did not have any support or institutionalized services for undocumented students, so she often felt alone in navigating her status as a Black person on a college campus. While there was no support or services for undocumented students, Lucy was vocal about her status because she felt it would provide her with more opportunities for support. Because she was vocal about her status, she had strong relationships with her professors and other staff members. Without a safe space for undocumented students and having no time to engage in Black student organizations, Lucy noted that being a member of the undocuBlack network gave her all the support and community she needed.

At the time of her interview, Lucy had already graduated with her bachelor's degree in 2020 and was concluding her first year as a Ph.D. student at a public university.

### Making Meaning of Lucy's Experience

Lucy faced many struggles throughout her undergraduate experience. She noted that being Black and undocumented in college is like living at the intersections of

identities, which always made her feel alone. Lucy's undocuBlack college experience was filled with loneliness, hardships, and invisibility. Therefore, if she was not Black, her experience would have likely been different, but she would have still experienced the hardships of an undocumented person. This feeling of aloneness contributed to the invisibility that she felt as an undocuBlack person. According to Lucy, her blackness made her invisible within the undocumented community and even in the Black community. She noted,

“...there are marginalized groups, but then there are the marginalized within the marginalized and that is lonely. Not only is it lonely, but it makes life precarious. Black people in general are over policed, so when you are Black and undocumented the chances of having to explain why your ID says temporary or being detained is increased and that's just no way to live.”

The reference Lucy makes to Black people being overpoliced is an important point because it heightens the possibility of an undocuBlack person being profiled for their Black identity, which could lead to deportation consequences. She also mentioned “the marginalized within the marginalized,” which accurately describes the experience undocuBlack people because of the intersections of their Black and undocumented identities.

Lucy's story is no different from other participants who believed that the combination of Black and undocumented statuses creates a path of loneliness, invisibility, and hardship when trying to traverse higher education. Similar to other participants, Lucy did not let obstacles stop her from successfully graduating from college. Her story demonstrates that her collegiate experience was invisible within the undocumented and

Black community. Additionally, her story demonstrates that lack of institutionalized services or communities for undocumented students on a higher education campus can lead to disengagement.

#### Shannon Avery

Shannon is a 23-year-old undocumented person. She is originally from Kenya but migrated to the United States from Canada with her mother when she was 12 years old. Shannon arrived legally in the United States but her documented status expired after a few years. Shannon completed middle and high school without knowing she was undocumented. As a high school senior, Shannon applied to colleges without any knowledge of her legal status. However, according to Shannon, because going to college was homogenized in her culture, it was not a question of whether she would attend.

Shannon considered it a blessing to apply to schools without knowing she was undocumented because she did not place restrictions on her higher education search. However, it meant that she applied to college as an international student. When searching for scholarship opportunities, she noticed the CA DREAM Act through which she learned she was undocumented. As stated by Shannon, once she realized she was undocumented, she was very scared, lonely, and fearful of what that meant for her future. Shannon began to experience more grief once she also learned that she did not qualify for DACA.

Without access to DACA or much support from her mother, Shannon enrolled in a four-year public university. The university that Shannon attended had a DREAM Center for undocumented students. During her higher education experience, Shannon worked at the DREAM Center without compensation because she was not authorized to

legally work in the United States. As noted by Shannon, because she volunteered at the DREAM Center and was very vocal about her undocumented status, everyone knew about her status. She was often the only Black person in the DREAM Center spaces. Shannon noted that while she was the only Black person at the DREAM Center, she had to utilize the services they provided because the institution did not have other services for undocumented students. While everyone was very welcoming to Shannon, she recalled that there was a lack of Black voices or programming geared towards undocuBlack students. Shannon remembered having to advocate to DREAM Center staff for unDACAmented students. She championed for more student-centered unDACAmented programming and stories that highlight Black immigrants. Additionally, she felt her immigration status was pronounced because she was often the one who had to discuss intersectionality within undocumented spaces, but she felt she had to assert her dominance so that others knew undocuBlack students existed.

Furthermore, she also experienced additional loneliness because she was one of the only students who did not have DACA status within the DREAM Center. According to Shannon, not having DACA status was isolating because she could not take advantage of other services that her peers were able to utilize such as internships, summer jobs, and scholarships specifically for DACAmented students. The lack of opportunity was a severe burden for Shannon. In experiencing loneliness within the undocumented spaces, Shannon joined BSU and Nigerian Student Association (NSA) to seek community related to her blackness. However, she noted that immigration or legal status were never topics of discussion in those groups. Yet, being in a space with other Black people gave her a sense of community that she could not find in undocumented student spaces.

Shannon's higher education experience was very strenuous as she was involved in advocacy for immigrant rights, which took a toll on her mental health. Because of the advocacy work, Shannon could no longer focus on achieving high grades, but instead, she switched her focus to surviving. According to Shannon, "I just focused on graduating. I got to a point where I only cared about getting a passing grade." Advocacy was important to Shannon so she could access the resources she needed to persist in higher education. Shannon noted how she never walked around campus without identification because she was always terrified that she would be profiled as a Black person and get deported for being an undocumented person. This realization made her even more adamant about using her voice in undocumented spaces. Because Shannon was vocal about her immigration status, she is estranged from her mother who did support Shannon's decision to be public about her undocumented immigration status. However, Shannon knew that she had to advocate for herself so that others would know she needed help.

She had good relationships with faculty, staff, and students at her institution, mainly because of her engagement in working to secure funding and advocating for undocumented students.

In summation, Shannon graduated from her higher education institution with a bachelor's degree in 2021 and plans to continue advocating for undocuBlack people without DACA status.

### Making Meaning of Shannon's Experience

Shannon was in a unique position without DACA status, without paid employment, without housing security, and without support from her family. For Shannon, she had to be a vocal advocate for unDACAmented students because there was

a lack of representation of those stories and support for unDACAmented students. Shannon carried a burden of responsibility in the DREAM Center space on her campus because of her Black and unDACAmented identity. While the spaces were not uncomfortable, they were always a delicate place for her to navigate because she had to take on the role of teacher. Ultimately, she decided that if no one else would provide student programming or funding opportunities for unDACAmented students, she had to be the one to do it. This meant that her academic work became secondary to her advocacy. However, her advocacy caused exhaustion and has academic implications from failed tests, missed classes, and the need to constantly fight to maintain good academic standing.

Additionally, because Shannon was aware that Black undocumented people are more likely to be arrested and deported than their White citizen peers, she was hyper vigilant. For Shannon, to be Black and undocumented as a college student meant a hyper vigilance through policing herself to avoid police encounter due to double criminalization of both her Blackness and undocumented status. However, she also noted that being an undocuBlack student allowed her to live the Black American experience with an invisible immigrant identity. As a result, she felt like she had a responsibility to bridge the gap between people in the African diaspora and on the continent since she experienced living in both settings. Shannon was one of two participants who did not have support from her immediate family. Additionally, she was one of seven participants without DACA status. Shannon's story demonstrated that undocuBlack identity is invisible and difficult within the undocumented and the Black community. Furthermore, her story exhibits the importance of support services and dream centers on higher education campuses.

### Darius Major

Darius is a 28-year-old, undocumented, DACAmented person. He is originally from Trinidad but migrated to the United States when he was nine years old. He grew up in Pennsylvania. Darius was one of the only participants who always knew he was undocumented because his mother explained it to him from an early age. However, he began to understand the weightiness of his legal status after his cousin called his house and pretended to be an Immigration, Custom, Enforcement (ICE) agent. After Darius received the call from his cousin, he ran to his mother's job to inform her that ICE was looking for them. At that moment, he understood the heaviness of his undocumented status. His initial feelings in high school were feelings of pressure, seclusion, and fear. Even with his undocumented status, Darius always knew he would enroll in college because it was expected of him, and he had dreams of becoming an attorney. So, during his senior year of high school, he applied to a public institution knowing that his mother would support him.

Darius was accepted to a four-year public university and immediately enrolled after high school. Without access to federal financial aid or in-state tuition rates, Darius and his mother had to pay out of pocket for tuition and on-campus housing. However, his mother was adamant about Darius enrolling in higher education, so she worked multiple jobs to support him financially. Additionally, Darius worked two off-campus jobs as well to pay for college. While navigating the struggles of being undocumented, Darius chose not to disclose his legal status to many people. He told two friends and a professional mentor who worked in his residence hall. Telling those individuals was a positive

experience for Darius because they were supportive of his story and his background. However, there was not much they could do for him.

Darius traversed through his higher education career without much support. Furthermore, his university did not offer support services, clubs, or organizations for undocumented students. However, he joined a SOCCA, Caribbean, and BSU club for Black students. Darius' experience in those clubs were mostly focused on his Blackness, but immigration status was never mentioned. Darius recalled never being able to participate in the Black Lives Matter protests because he was terrified of encountering the police. During those moments, he had to lie to members of BSU about why he could not participate. In fact, Darius noted that he never told anyone in those spaces he was undocumented, instead, he blended in with the other students for his own peace of mind.

While Darius had the financial support of his mother, he still worked two jobs off campus to maintain his enrollment at his university. He felt isolated from his peers and was always stressed about not having access to federal financial aid or in-state tuition rates. Additionally, he did not have much time to develop relationships with faculty, staff, and other students because he was always restricted by both identities (Black and undocumented). Darius' higher education journey was lonely and isolating because of the arduous and exhausting nature of navigating his Blackness and his immigration status. However, both identities (Black and undocumented) motivated him to complete his coursework and he graduated from college in 2021.

#### Making Meaning of Darius's Experience

As a Black student, Darius was able to access Black spaces and felt fairly comfortable but was uncomfortable in moments such as the BLM protests. He also noted

that he felt a privilege that his Black peers did not assume he was undocumented, so he was able to build community with them without revealing his undocumented status. However, that invisibility made his immigration status further invisible because he did not have access to any support for undocumented students. Darius noted that he always felt immigration was a Black issue, but that it would only get the attention if undocuBlack people made it an issue. This was because, according to Darius, undocuBlack people were invisible within the undocumented community and on higher education campuses as well.

Darius saw his invisibility as a result of White supremacy that permeated organizations with a sole mission to support undocumented people. Therefore, Darius' own view of the support that was available to him was skewed based on his own personal and lived experiences. For Darius, being Black and undocumented meant that he was never able to fully exist in one space, that his identities were varied and conflicting. His identities affected the way he engaged with other students, faculty, and staff because he had to work to fund his education. Additionally, because he did not feel comfortable disclosing his status to many people, he never felt safe enough to fully belong or engage in any space.

#### Taryn Hoover

Taryn Hoover is a 24-year-old, undocuBlack, DACAmented person. She was born in Barbados and immigrated to the United States at 12 years old. She grew up in the state of New York. According to Taryn, she learned she was undocumented in middle school, but did not really understand what it meant until she could not get a state identification card. After not being able to get a state identification card like her friends,

Taryn gave up on the possibility of a future and began to perform poorly in school. Her grades declined and her attitude became negative. She would lie to her friends about why she could not return to Barbados, and as explained by Taryn, she was always in a “negative funk.” Taryn also noted that she initially felt abnormal, alone, and different. However, she realized that her friends were still working hard in high school, so she decided that she needed to continue trying. She started performing well with a new goal to enroll in higher education.

Taryn’s family wanted her to enroll in college, and although they did not have the tools or the resources to support her, they played a significant role in motivating her to successfully matriculate. Additionally, Taryn had a high school college counselor who believed in her academic abilities, so she worked closely with this counselor to make college a reality. According to Taryn, the counselor had never worked with an undocumented student before, so she began taking workshops for the sole purpose of helping Taryn navigate the higher education process. The counselor was instrumental in supporting Taryn’s college-going process.

Unfortunately, Taryn was not accepted by any of the institutions to which she applied even though she graduated valedictorian of her high school class. While applying to college, Taryn simultaneously was applying for her DACA status, which made the college process even more stressful. Fortunately, her lawyer told her about the DREAM.us scholarship. It was through the DREAM.US that Taryn was able to attend college. She was accepted to one of its partner schools and was awarded a full tuition scholarship.

Once Taryn was in higher education, she commuted from home because the college did not offer on-campus residences, which made it hard for her to develop meaningful friendships or relationships with staff and faculty because she was never on campus. However, she was heavily involved with the DREAM.us and since the DREAM.us was for undocumented students, Taryn disclosed her status to members of that group and felt supported with her DACA renewal process, registering for classes, and her undocumented status. While she was supported in many ways, one of the most substantial stressors for Taryn was when Donald Trump was elected president and threatened to rescind DACA. During that time, the DREAM.us staff held workshops for all students to support their mental health. They even helped Taryn avoid being homeless by advocating for her to receive an emergency housing grant.

Although the support that DREAM.us provided was beneficial, Taryn noted that she was often the only Black person in the room. Furthermore, as she engaged with DREAM.us staff, all she saw were non-Black Hispanic people, who made her feel even more excluded. Taryn recounted moments when the DREAM.us staff would speak Spanish and ignore the English speakers in the room. It was an isolating feeling and contributed to her feeling uncomfortable and excluded, but she continued to successfully persist. In hopes of feeling included, Taryn joined an African and Caribbean club on campus, but she encountered similar moments in those two clubs where members would laugh about immigration and legal status was rarely a focus.

According to Taryn, her higher education journey was filled with hiding and limitations. She worked full-time to pay for books and transportation while also balancing her schoolwork. Taryn encountered professors who were biased and exclusive

and noted that certain professors would often question her academic ability and the quality of her work. It was difficult for Taryn to create meaningful relationships with faculty, but her most valuable relationships were with the janitors, security guards, and the lunch workers because they were Black and never made her feel othered.

Additionally, every semester, she had to fight to not be charged an international tuition rate. With the new Muslim ban that President Trump enacted and having to forfeit her Mandarin major because of a travel requirement, she stopped attending classes, was often depressed, and her cumulative undergraduate grade point average declined from a 3.5 to a 2.1. Fortunately, her grandmother and parents served as members of her support system and helped Taryn redirect her attention to her academic studies. Taryn graduated with a bachelor's degree in 2019.

#### Making Meaning of Taryn's Experience

For Taryn, being Black and undocumented made her immigration status conflicting because she never fit in undocumented spaces, or Black spaces. Additionally, as an undocuBlack college student, she often felt invisible within the undocumented community and on her college campus. According to her,

“...needless to say, I do feel very much invisible and sometimes I feel as though my struggles are not heard. I often feel torn and in a sense feel like I am living a double life. On the outside, people will see me and will not think I am undocumented. In all honesty, I feel as though I will never be able to truly fit in society. I will have to keep scurrying away from the truth like the rats in the NYC subway stations.”

However, despite the many obstacles she faced, Taryn graduated with a bachelor's degree. For Taryn, her Blackness and her immigration altered the way she experienced higher education. Both identities together limited her engagement; her relationships with faculty, staff, and students; and comfort in spaces designed for her to be in. The silencing of her immigration status reflects a silencing of illegality that she experienced in the Caribbean and African clubs, which also contributed to her feeling invisible and alone. experience was unique to the Black spaces.

#### Mitch Monroe

Mitch Monroe is 20-year-old undocuBlack, undocumented person. He is originally from Africa and migrated to America when he was in high school. Mitch and his family arrived in America on a tourist visa but he overstayed and his documented status expired. Mitch was unaware of his undocumented status until his junior year of high school when his friends were getting summer jobs and he realized he could not be legally employed. Learning about his undocumented status contributed to feelings of loneliness, fear, and the need lie to friends. According to Mitch, he had to lie to friends constantly about why he could not participate in the activities or achieve the milestones as his friends. Even with his undocumented status, Mitch had dreams of becoming an airline pilot, so he wanted to attend college for aeronautics. However, he thought higher education was an impossibility because of his legal status. Fortunately, he had a science teacher who was a member of the undocuBlack network, so Mitch disclosed his status to her and she was able to help him navigate the college application process as an undocumented student. According to Mitch, without the support of this teacher, he would

not have applied to college. Additionally, with the support of his family, he was awarded a full scholarship to a Christian university.

Even though Mitch had a positive experience with his science teacher in high school, he decided to not disclose his immigration status to anyone at his university out of fear of deportation. He noted that he had surface level relationships with his professors and with staff members, but no one knows about his undocumented student status. Furthermore, Mitch noted that his institution does not offer support services on campus for undocumented students, which makes it harder for him to feel comfortable disclosing his status or seeking help. Furthermore, when he attempts to learn about support and resources for undocumented students, he only sees resources solely for Latinx undocumented students, which further adds to his isolation. Mitch also noted that he feels invisible within the undocumented community because of the focus on Latinx students, and specifically, non-Black Latinx students. Therefore, Mitch's story reflects the invisibility he faced. Additionally, his institution does not offer a support group or student club for undocumented students. Therefore, he navigated higher education without support from faculty, staff, or other students.

One positive for Mitch is that he is at an HBCU, so he feels at home with the Black students. Mitch believes that because the student population is predominantly Black students, he feels as though one piece of his identity is supported on his campus. Also, as a member of the undocuBlack network, Mitch had support from the members with building community, and providing him with resources. Mitch is currently in his second year as a college student and plans to graduate in 2025 with a bachelor degree.

### Making Meaning of Mitch's Experience

Being Black and undocumented has affected the way Mitch experiences higher education because of the many obstacles he faced such as not having access to a car, a driver's license, not being able to have a job or pay his own bills. Mitch was always reliant on other people for support. Because Mitch does not have DACAmented status, he experienced isolation from the undocumented community. Additionally, he experienced invisibility within the undocumented community. Mitch's story demonstrates that both his Black and undocumented identities have affected his higher education experience in profound ways such as limiting his access to jobs, internships, and scholarships. As a result, his story reflects the invisibility he faced within the undocumented community and the isolation he experienced because of his unDACAmented status. Since Mitch was in his second year as a student at the time of his interview, there is ample opportunity for him to become more involved on campus and even find other safe spaces that he can join as a student. However, after one year of navigating higher education, his experiences are already being shaped by his identities.

### Anthony Esmine

Anthony is a 22-year-old undocuBlack person. He was born in Nigeria, but immigrated to the United States with his family at 18 years old with the hopes of being approved for a student visa. Anthony's story is unique compared to other participants because he did not attend high school in the United States and had no prior schooling in the United States before attending college. Anthony did not learn he was undocumented until after he completed three semesters at a local community college. According to Anthony, he was waiting on a letter from immigration to inform him whether he was

approved for a student visa. However, after a few months, he was notified that his application was rejected. The rejection of his student visa application meant that he could no longer apply for asylum, DACA, or any other legal status. He found himself in a precarious situation wanting to attend college, but without the information or resources to successfully access higher education.

As noted by Anthony, during the time of the rejection of his student visa, Donald Trump was in office, which made him feel added fear of his options. However, he enrolled at a local community college and learned that his institution had a DREAM Center for undocumented students. The DREAM Center became a safe space for Anthony because he was able to learn about financial resources, how to apply for identification, and the limitations of an undocumented status. Through the DREAM Center, he was introduced to Immigrants Rising, an organization working to support undocumented students. With access to the DREAM Center and Immigrants Rising, Anthony was able to apply for an ITIN number, secure a job, and share his story with others. Even though the Dream Center has been beneficial for Anthony, he noted that most of the student events and programming were geared towards Hispanic students, and he was often the only Black student in those spaces. However, being the only Black student in the Dream Center did not affect the way Anthony felt about being in the space. Anthony said he was focused on being in a community that understood the struggles he faced as an undocumented person, so the lack of Black staff or students in the DREAM Center did not manifest as a concern or evoked any feelings of isolation.

Within the 2020 academic year, Anthony struggled to develop relationships with faculty, staff, and other students because of the COVID pandemic. Also, he has spent

considerable time working to fund his education. Anthony noted that he sometimes must take a semester off from school to earn enough money to fund the following semester. At the time of the interview, Anthony was in his second year at his community college. As Anthony navigates his higher education journey, he hopes to transfer to a four-year university within the next two years.

#### Making Meaning of Anthony's Experience

Anthony was one of few participants who is currently enrolled in higher education at the time of his interview. His experiences demonstrate the impact the COVID pandemic has had on his relationships, the effects his undocumented status has had on his well-being, and that Blackness for him did not cause isolation. For Anthony, being Black and undocumented means, being secluded, "You feel like an outsider, full of fear, just full of anger, sometimes full of depression, and it's like, I just don't know who to talk to about it, it feels lonely." Similar to all participants, Anthony believes that his undocumented status contributes to feelings of loneliness and isolation. However, unlike most participants, Anthony had fewer issues with being the only Black student in undocumented spaces. I believe this is because Anthony did not grow up in the United States Anthony's story adds to the narrative that both Black and undocumented identities affect the way participants experience higher education. His higher education journey is filled with many limitations because of his undocumented status.

#### Rosemary Rundell

Rosemary is a 22-year-old, undocuBlack, undocumented person. She was born in Jamaica but immigrated to the United States when she was 11 years old. Rosemary noted that she always knew she was undocumented because her mother had a hard

time registering her for school. Rosemary's initial experiences after understanding her undocumented status involved her living a very cautious life. For example, she would not attend school events or parties because of the fear of encountering police. Her status created a mental barrier from a very early age. In fact, she did not even believe she could enroll in higher education because of her limited finances and her undocumented status even though she had stellar grades in high school. However, her love for science and the possibility that she could change her life if she earned a college degree motivated her to apply to college without support from her high school counselors. Rosemary was awarded a full ride to a public university, but was later told that she could not receive the scholarship because of her undocumented status. As a result of this devastating news, Rosemary enrolled at a local community college with a hope of earning a bachelor degree.

While enrolled at the community college, Rosemary disclosed her immigration status to one person in the international student office, who supported her with finding scholarships and the transfer admission process. After two years at the community college, Rosemary transferred to a four-year public university. While enrolled at the four-year institution, Rosemary told more people about her undocumented status with a hope they could help her navigate and find resources for undocumented students. However, as stated by Rosemary, "they kept sending me in circles, they were not equipped to advise an undocumented student." Without a support system on campus and no formal support services for undocumented students, Rosemary often felt isolated and uncomfortable with her undocumented identity. According to Rosemary, "while there were no clubs on campus for undocumented students, if they existed, I probably would've never joined

because I did not want to be the only Black person.” She also noted that because she did not have DACA status, she could not relate to students with DACAmented status, so she still would not have joined.

Although Rosemary did not feel comfortable in spaces for undocumented students, she wanted to be in community with other students, so she joined the Caribbean student club and the Black Student Union. Yet, in those spaces, she still felt isolated and alone. “Immigration was never mentioned and if it was, it was more about first-generation and second-generation differences.” Additionally, she never quite felt like she could relate to the African American students in those spaces. Additionally, she did not want to be in undocumented spaces because she did not want to be the only Black student and she never felt comfortable in Black spaces because undocumented status was not a topic of discussion.

She did not develop strong relationships with faculty or staff members because of her intense focus on attaining the grades required to maintain her scholarships. Additionally, she worked multiple jobs to support her basic needs. Moreover, after attending the four-year university for a few months, the COVID pandemic changed the course of her collegiate experience because she had to begin virtual learning, which affected her opportunities to build meaningful connections with other students, faculty, and staff. According to Rosemary, “in higher education, it feels as if I am a unicorn and that I am navigating these processes on my own and as the first of my kind. It can feel very lonely.” Fortunately, Rosemary was able to earn an Associate’s degree from a community college within two years and graduated with a bachelor’s degree from the public university in 2021. She is now applying to PhD in Science programs.

### Making Meaning of Rosemary's Experience

For Rosemary, being undocuBlack affected her higher education experience in many ways. Her undocuBlack status made her feel conflicted because people never assumed she was undocumented, yet, she could not access resources for students who were documented. Additionally, even as an undocuBlack person, she felt she did not have access to resources available to the undocumented community because she did not have DACA status and resources were geared towards undocuLatinx students. Having both identities meant she had a hidden identity, less visibility, sparse resources, and a lack of community. One example of this was her story around the initiative for minorities to be included in STEM. While Rosemary qualified for the STEM initiatives because of her Blackness, she couldn't take advantage of any of them because of her undocumented status. Therefore, both identities played a substantial role in limiting her options. Furthermore, she believed that undocuBlack people are invisible within the undocumented community itself because undocuBlack people are rarely included in the narrative around the undocumented community. This was especially true for Rosemary because she did not join student clubs or organizations on her college campus because she was afraid to be the only Black person or the only person without DACA status. Rosemary never felt she belonged in any space that was designated for her. Her experiences were filled with loneliness and isolation as she navigated higher education. She felt lonely in her Blackness and isolated because of her undocumented status. Her experience is a reflection of the invisibility that undocuBlack people face, and the conflicting nature of navigating Blackness and an undocumented status. Finally, her

experiecn also emphasizes the importance of higher education campuses having resources and support for undocumented students.

### Gabby Neuman

Gabby Neumann is a 24-year-old undocuBlack, DACAmented student. She was born in Kenya but came to the United States when she was five years old. During her sophomore year of high school, when all her friends were applying for their driver's license, she realized she could not obtain one. It was then that she understood she was undocumented. Like many undocumented students, she experienced a range of emotions including loneliness, depression, and defeat, but still envisioned college as part of her journey. According to Gabby, enrolling in college was the only option for her because she could not legally work in the United States. Fortunately, her family was very supportive of her goal to enroll in college, so with her impressive high school grades, she secured admission to a public university with a merit-based academic scholarship that covered tuition.

Once Gabby enrolled at the university, she did not disclose her status to anyone because she did not feel comfortable doing so. Additionally, there were no support services on campus for undocumented students, so she did not want to tell someone who could put her in danger. When asked if she joined any clubs or organizations for undocumented students, Gabby noted that "I did not join because nothing existed for us. They had a group for DACA students, but I did not have DACA, so I did not feel safe enough to join." Additionally, she noted that if a club or organization for undocumented students existed, she would not have joined because she only saw Hispanic students in the DACA group meetings. "My struggles are different from a Hispanic undocumented

person. We go through racial issues here and because we're undocumented, we go through issues that they don't necessarily go through, so I feel like our struggles are different.” Furthermore, Gabby’s fear of disclosing her status was amplified after an incident left her feeling vulnerable. As reported by Gabby, when DACA was rescinded, her school sent an email to all DACAmented students sharing their support. However, they forgot to Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) the students, which meant all the names of undocumented students were publicized. While Gabby did not have DACA, she felt it was careless that the university would make such a public mistake and compromise the students’ identity.

Not only did Gabby feel uncomfortable in undocumented student spaces, but she never felt a need to join clubs or organizations for Black students. She described her higher education experience as “isolating” and “mentally exhausting.” The isolation was a result of not having safe space on campus to discuss her undocumented status. She navigated higher education without disclosing her status to anyone, which led to a devastating impact on her mental health. According to Gabby, “I feel like it's been more taxing on my mental health to be in school and see all my friends get all these opportunities that I'm not able to, it was depressing.” Gabby sought mental health counseling but was left unsatisfied because she had to constantly explain the limitations of an undocumented status to her therapist, which was mentally taxing. Similar to other participants’ without DACA, Gabby felt isolated from the undocumented community because of her non-DACA status. This isolation was further exacerbated because even after graduation, she would not be able to use her degree because she did not have DACA.

For her, to be undocuBlack is to be twice rejected, to not belong to undocumented spaces or Black spaces. Additionally, like other students without DACA, she felt excluded from the undocumented community. As mentioned by Gabby, “when I was applying for scholarships, scholarships were for Hispanic undocumented students or students with DACA.” When asked if she felt undocuBlack college students were invisible within the undocumented community, she responded, “yes, because we are not involved and we keep ourselves invisible because our consequences would be different from others.” Therefore, she always felt she was isolated from the undocumented community and because she was not actively involved in a support group on her college campus (because one did not exist), Gabby felt her immigration status was hidden.

Being Black meant that no one assumed she was undocumented, which left her in a precarious position about whether to disclose her status. Furthermore, as a Black woman, she dealt with the stereotypes and prejudice because of her skin color. While Gabby’s higher education experience was characterized by secrecy and lack of support, she graduated in four years with the help of scholarships and the unwavering support of her family. She is now in her third year of law school and is worried about what she will do if she cannot take the bar exam or practice law.

#### Making Meaning of Gabby’s Experience

Gabby was one of the seven participants who did not have DACA status and struggled to fit into any space, whether it was for Black students or undocumented students. She felt isolated because she did not have DACA status. She did not feel she could join any space for undocumented people because the programming and the opportunities were for DACAmended or undocuLatinx students. Therefore, in addition to

feeling isolated because of not having DACA status, Gabby was ostracized because she did not see Black people represented in those spaces. For Gabby, both her identities greatly affected her higher education experience. Gabby's experience reflects the lack of invisibility she faced because of her unDACAmented status, the conflict she felt about her Black identity, and the lack of opportunities to be engaged on campus because clubs or student programming did not exist for her.

#### Greg Talib

Greg is a 23-year-old undocuBlack, DACAmented student. He was born in Togo but migrated with his family to the United States when he was one year old. From a young age, Greg knew he was undocumented because his mother often advised him to be cautious and not get in trouble. During his sophomore year of high school, Greg obtained a very prestigious internship with a pathology lab, and after a year, they offered him a full-time job. When Greg wanted to accept it, his mother sat him down to explain why it was impossible for him to be hired as a full-time employee. This news made Greg feel like the world was unfair and he was mad at himself for working so hard all the time. However, during that same year, DACA was announced. He applied and was awarded DACA status. With DACA status, Greg was able to accept the job offer for the following year. During his senior year of high school, Greg also saw the impact his status had on him because he was unable to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and could not apply to all the higher education institutions he wanted because he knew he could not access federal aid. He had to apply to higher education institutions that were more affordable for him and his family. He was accepted to a local public university.

With the support of his family, Greg's parents moved into a smaller house which allowed them to support his tuition. When Greg arrived on campus, he joined the Dream Center, a safe space for undocumented students. At this center, he disclosed his status and had a positive experience with the staff. Besides the Dream Center, there were no other support services on campus for undocumented students. However, he joined an activist organization on campus specific for DACA students. According to Greg, this club was beneficial to him, especially after President Trump was elected. The group served as a physical safe space to discuss their fears and support each other through that uncertain time. Greg was often the only Black person in the DACA group but noted that everyone made him feel welcomed. Other spaces in which Greg found refuge were BSU, African Student Association (ASA), and the National Society for Black Engineers. However, while those Black spaces honored his blackness, immigration or status were never mentioned. Greg was able to graduate college in five years because of the love and support of his family. He graduated in 2021 with a bachelor's degree.

#### Making Meaning of Greg's Experience

Greg was one of the few participants who discussed the impact that Donald Trump's presidency had on him. As noted by Greg, when Trump was in office and constantly threatened to rescind DACA, he found it very stressful. Additionally, he did not feel he could talk to many people on campus because they always referred him back to the Dream Center. Without the support of the staff at the Dream Center, his higher education experience would have been different. Also, even though he had refuge in undocumented spaces, programming and events were always for undocuLatinx culture.

Therefore, he felt that being Black made his immigration status invisible. For Greg, to be undocuBlack is to not have a home.

“I think Black Americans here are excluded from the community, they kind of are outside of it. So that makes it trippy because I'm not even from the United States I'm not even from Africa. Like, I don't belong anywhere in the world. I'm a vagabond.”

Both Black and undocumented identities affected the way Greg experienced higher education, but with DACA status and a Dream Center, he was able to navigate higher education with support and resources. His experience also reflects the invisibility of undocuBlack people within the undocumented community, and his Blackness emphasize the conflicting nature of being in community with other Black people. Finally, his experience points to the importance of institutionalized support on a higher education campus because he had access to a DREAM Center and a DACA club, he was engaged with on-campus collegiate experience.

#### Teressa Moore

Teressa Moore is a 26-year-old undocuBlack, DACAmented student. She was born in Africa and immigrated to the United States when she was two years old. She learned that she was undocumented in stages; first when she could not get a driver's license, and then when she was ineligible to submit the FAFSA. According to Teressa, learning about her undocumented status was a bit devastating because she did not understand its impact when she was in high school. When she could not get a driver's license, she thought it was because most of her friends did not have one. However, during her senior year of high school when she submitted the FAFSA through a federal grant

program that she was a member of since the 7th grade, it was rejected. Not understanding why her FAFSA was rejected, she sought answers and was told in very direct words that she was not a citizen and would not qualify for a federally funded tuition scholarship. For Teresa, this was disastrous because she had been involved in the college preparatory program since she was in 7th grade. The promise was that students who were in the program would be granted a full-tuition scholarship for college. At first, Teresa went through stages of denial, then she experienced depression, and eventually anger. With this news, Teresa no longer viewed college as a possibility.

Teresa waited until her final semester of high school to apply for college and was waitlisted or denied to most institutions to which she applied. With no four-year university options available, she decided to enroll at a local community college. As stated by Teresa, she was embarrassed and could barely understand what her life would look like without citizenship. After just one semester at the community college, she left college because of extenuating family circumstances. After a few years, she applied for DACA status and re-enrolled at the community college. With renewed hope, she began to share her story and eventually told the entire campus about her status through a recorded video. As noted by Teresa, telling everyone about her status took a weight off her shoulders. Since disclosing her status, she has not had negative experiences. However, she noted that her community college does not have offer support or clubs or organizations for undocumented students. However, the institution provides DACA students access to a food pantry, access to Uber for transportation to and from school, counseling services, and many DACA-specific scholarships.

Without access to an undocumented support group or community, Teresa became the vice president of BSU with a goal to build community. In the BSU space, she can share stories about her status and inform the members of the diversity of the undocumented community. She is also the president of the student body, which has given her many opportunities to build positive relationships with students, faculty, and staff. At the time of the interview, Teresa was in her sixth year at the community college. She plans to transfer to a four-year university within the next year.

#### Making Meaning of Teresa's Experience

Although Teresa found some refuge with the Black community, she still feels that undocuBlack college students lack representation in the undocumented community and noted that they are invisible. She noted that scholarships are often categorized for Latinx students, and she is often the only Black DACAmented student advocating for undocumented students. This reality has left her feeling discouraged and isolated. For her to be undocuBlack is to choose which identity to represent on any given day. "During the Black Lives Matter movement, it felt like I had to put down my immigration status and just be Black." Additionally, she noted that "As much as when we're talking about Black Lives Matter and people were emphasizing different types of Black lives, I didn't necessarily hear Black immigrants being pulled up into the conversation." Teresa pointed out that while undocuBlack students are invisible within the undocumented community, they are also invisible within the Black community as well. Her experiences are a reflection of invisibility, institutionalized support, and the conflict that her Black identity adds to her collegiate experiences.

### Sasha Oscar

Sasha Oscar is a 30-year-old undocuBlack, DACAmented student. She was born in Trinidad and immigrated to the United States when she was eight years old. Sasha recounted that she always remembered her family discussing the importance of a social security number and “papers” that she did not have. However, she did not understand what it meant until she wanted to apply for college and her family sat her down and told her, “You cannot apply for college because you are undocumented.” Sasha remembered feeling shocked and eventually depressed. She worked hard in middle and high school with a hope to enroll in college. However, at that moment, it felt as if her dreams were being altered. Additionally, none of her high school counselors advised her that higher education was still an option as an undocumented student. Once Sasha graduated high school, she started babysitting and nannying around her town to earn money. However, she was still depressed about the state of her life. After about three years, Sasha realized she did not need a social security number to apply for college admission. She felt feelings of anger and pain because her high school counselors and her family had advised her incorrectly.

In 2013, Sasha applied for DACA and was granted DACA status. In 2014, Sasha enrolled at a local community college as a part-time student while working three jobs to cover tuition and her living expenses. Sasha’s mother and father are not present in the United States, so she did not have much support from family members to pursue higher education. While at the community college, Sasha disclosed her status in one of her English essays. Sasha noted that her faculty members at the community college, especially her first Black professor, were very supportive of her. However, support

services were not offered at her community college, so it took her six years to graduate with her associates degree. After graduating, Sasha transferred to a four-year university in the same state where she is now enrolled in a 4+1 program. The 4+1 program is a joint bachelor and masters degree program.

Sasha noted that her experience at the community college was limited because she did not have time to be engaged in student clubs or organizations. However, her experience at the four-year institution has been fraught with challenges. According to Sasha, when she was first accepted to the school, she qualified for an in-state tuition rate. However, after a year, her academic record was audited and she was listed as a “non-resident alien” student which meant instead of paying \$8,000 per semester, she was required to pay \$12,000 per semester without access to federal financial aid. Because Sasha could not afford to pay \$12,000 per semester, she fought to present her case to a board at her university. She was granted a hearing but was denied on the basis that she might leave the state after graduation. As noted by Sasha, this was a devastating result because she had been living in this state since she was nine years old. Additionally, Sasha noted that the institution does not offer support services for undocumented students. There are no staff or faculty members she can talk to because she believe they do not understand undocumented student issues. Furthermore, given her job responsibilities, she does not have adequate time to join student clubs or organizations to build community. At the time of the interview, Sasha was in her second year of the 4+1 program and plans to graduate with a bachelor and a masters in two years.

### Making Meaning of Sasha's Experience

Sasha noted that her undocumented status feels invisible because she always must explain why she is undocumented. According to Sasha, “people are often surprised because they don’t think Black people can be undocumented. Then, if I put myself in undocumented spaces, I am usually the only Black person present, with the exception of the service workers.” For Sasha, to be undocuBlack is to constantly live with anxiety and to constantly be worried about legislation as a Black person and as an undocumented person. Furthermore, she added that undocuBlack students are even invisible within the undocumented community because there is not enough representation. Additionally, within Black spaces, she often feels as if she does not belong because she is not African American. Sasha’s experiences are a reflection of the hardships she faced without access to federal or state aid, the invisibility she encountered in the undocumented and Black community, and the difficulty of being able to join communities because she had to always maintain multiple jobs to fund her college education.

### Raven Reeves

Raven Reeves is a 20-year-old, undocuBlack, undocumented college student. She was born in Jamaica and immigrated to the United States with her mother and older sister when she was eight years old. Raven recalls always knowing she was undocumented, but never understood what it meant until she was a senior in high school. According to Raven, once the other students started getting their driver’s licenses and working at the mall, she realized she could not do either of those things. That is when she understood what limitations her undocumented status placed on her. Her initial experiences as an

undocuBlack student were feelings of confusion, doubt, discouragement, and anger. She hated the thought of knowing she could not access the basic things her peers could.

Raven had dreams of being a physician, so she continued to work hard in high school with a hope of receiving a scholarship to college. Unfortunately, even though Raven's mother is supportive, she never produced the support Raven needed, such as a promise for financial or emotional support. However, Raven was awarded a sizable academic scholarship from a four-year public university and with some additional external scholarships, she enrolled in 2020.

During her first year in higher education, Raven performed well academically, but did not have access to the campus because of COVID-19 protocols. To prepare for her second year in college, Raven applied to become a resident assistant so she could live on campus. She was awarded the job but was later informed that because of her status, they would not be able to grant her the job. This experience was devastating for Raven because it was her only hope to experience college life. Therefore, during her second year, she commuted to campus because she could not afford to live on campus. As noted by Raven, commuting has made it extremely difficult to build relationships with faculty, staff, and students. However, she has built some strong relationships with faculty and staff because they know about her undocumented status. Despite this, Raven has struggled to foster relationships with other students because of her strenuous schedule.

Another challenge for Raven is that she often feels she cannot access undocumented or Black spaces or services on campus. When asked if there were support services on her campus for undocumented students, she noted, "not specific to any undocumented students, but they have services for DACA students. I don't personally

feel comfortable utilizing those programs. I just often find that they are not helpful to me, they help students with DACA, but not me.” Raven detailed the challenge of accessing those spaces and support. While DACAmented students are still undocumented, Raven feels immense isolation of not belonging in those spaces. She also mentioned that the undocumented spaces that she is aware about only have undocuLatinx members, which further diminishes her sense of belonging. Additionally, Raven also struggles in Black spaces because of the divide between African American and Caribbean Black students. She does not feel they have similar lived experiences, so she has not joined those spaces. At the time of the interview, Raven was in her second semester of her undergraduate higher education journey. She plans to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in 2024.

#### Making Meaning of Raven’s Experience

For Raven to be undocuBlack is to be a minority in every sense. In her own words, she noted, “I’m one of those people, all odds are against me, it’s not only that I’m Black, but I am undocumented, and a woman, there’s many different obstacles.” Furthermore, she feels her status is hidden because there is no representation of undocuBlack people in undocumented spaces. Therefore, it is hard for her to share her story. As mentioned by Raven, “you are the first undocuBlack person I’ve ever met.” Her collegiate experience as an undocuBlack person is impacted with challenges and obstacles. Her experience is a reflection of invisibility and difficulty because of the difficulty she faces to exist within the undocumented and Black community. It also demonstrates the lack of institutionalized support and services afforded on her higher education campus and how that affects the way she engages with faculty, staff, and

students on her college campus. Finally, her experiences reemphasize that her undocuBlack identity affected her higher education experience.

### Summary

From all 15 profiles, it is evident that participants experienced invisibility within the undocumented and Black community. Participants felt that they were not honored by the undocumented community because their stories did not reflect the undocuLatinx perspective, which is often rooted in anti-Blackness. Some participants also experienced further isolation because they did not have DACAmented status. Additionally, it was observable that higher education institutions with DREAM Centers or other institutionalized support for undocumented students led to those participants being engaged with clubs and organizations on their college campuses. Finally, it was noted that participants often struggled or had conflicts with both identities-Black and undocumented competing for a sense of belonging and understanding.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESULTS-THEMES**

In this chapter, I discuss the three superordinate themes that emerged based on the participants' collegiate experiences as they pertain to race, undocumented immigrant status, and the intersection of these identities. The themes address the research question: How do salient identities—Black and undocumented—affect the way undocuBlack students experience higher education? Each superordinate theme is discussed in detail. I reference the transcripts and provide insight into the participants' voices. The themes are presented in context of all 15 participants and their collegiate experiences. All participants were in different stages of life and had different collegiate experiences, whether they attended a community college, a four-year private university, or a four-year public university. However, because of the unique nature of this study, it was important to honor all 15 participants and their experiences.

Additionally, a number of emergent themes are ingrained with each superordinate theme. The themes are the result of an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the original narratives of the participants as well as my interpretations of their experiences. The themes connect to the literature in many ways, such as demonstrating that undocuBlack individuals feel invisible within the undocumented and Black community (Anderson, 2016; Benjamin, 2018; Bryce-Laporte, 1972) and within higher education (Chan, 2010; Palmer, 2017; Meitzenheimer, 2020). The themes also demonstrate that undocuBlack students navigated conflicting identities and struggled with a sense of belonging. Participants struggled to find a safe space in the undocumented community and in Black spaces. For participants who found a safe space within the undocumented

community, they often took on the role of “teacher” and were usually the only Black person in physical spaces. On the other hand, participants who found refuge in Black spaces did not feel comfortable talking about their immigration status and had difficulty relating to the African American student experience because to be African American is to be Black, but to be Black does not always mean one is African American. It was also evident that undocuBlack college students lack a community of practitioners, faculty, students, and staff who are competent about undocumented issues; therefore, participants had a difficult time navigating community. The participants recounted not knowing who to go to for questions or whether to disclose their status. Finally, the themes provide more insight into the scarcity of undocuBlack studies because the undocuBlack population is under researched. Table 2 presents the structure of the themes in order of the findings.

Table 2

*Structure of Superordinate and Emergent Themes*

Superordinate Themes	Emergent Themes
UndocuBlack Status is Invisible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UndocuBlack College Student Experiences are Diverse</li> <li>• UnDACAmented Status Produces Isolation</li> <li>• UndocuBlack Stories are Underrepresented</li> </ul>
UndocuBlack Identity is Conflicting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of Belonging in Black Spaces</li> <li>• UndocuBlack Network as a Safe Space</li> </ul>
UndocuBlack Student Engagement Related to Institutionalized Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DACAmented Status Leads to Engagement</li> <li>• Dream Centers Lead to Engagement</li> </ul>

What does it mean to UndocuBlack on a College Campus?

*UndocuBlack Status is Invisible*

The first superordinate theme that arose from my analysis of the interview data is that undocuBlack participants felt invisible. Participants described their undocuBlack identities as never fitting in one space, whether that was in undocumented or Black

spaces. They often felt invisible within spaces where they wanted to belong. I asked all participants the question, "What does it mean to be undocuBlack?" All participants mentioned some form of invisibility or hidden identity. Table 3 includes some of the responses to my question to demonstrate the consistency amongst the responses.

*Table 3*  
*What Does It Mean to be UndocuBlack?*

Participant	Response
Abraham	"To be undocuBlack means to deal with different identities. One is visible while the other is not until you deal with the systems of education, banking, housing, healthcare."
Arion	"To be undocuBlack means being invisible in a world that only recognizes Hispanics as immigrants. And being Black does not help because I constantly get categorized as African American so when it's time to apply for scholarships, I don't fit any of the requirements."
Rosemary	"To be undocuBlack means having a hidden identity. It means less visibility, sparse resources, and also a lack of community. In higher education, it feels like I am a unicorn and that I am navigating these processes on my own and as the first of my kind. It can feel very lonely."
Taryn	"To be undocuBlack is to feel very much invisible and sometimes I feel as though my struggles are not heard enough. I often feel torn and in a sense feel like I am living a double life. On the outside, people will see me and will not think I am undocumented. In all honesty, I feel as though I will never be able to truly fit in society. I will have to keep scurrying away from the truth like the rats in the NYC subway stations."
Greg	"I would say being Black and undocumented is 100% invisible inside the undocumented community, like 100%. It feels lonely."

These five responses demonstrate the invisible nature of being Black and undocumented while navigating higher education. Although all 15 participants were not quoted, they all described their experiences with both identities as either hidden or invisible. This superordinate theme consists of three emergent themes, and shows how the undocuBlack participants situated their collegiate experiences related to race and immigration status. Synthesizing their experiences, these themes demonstrate that the salient identities contributed to participants feeling invisible.

The first emergent theme is that the undocuBlack college student experiences are diverse. This emergent theme reflects the diverse nature of undocuBlack people as they

navigate higher education. As reflected by the participants' experiences, all had their own journeys to and through higher education once they understood their undocumented status. The second emergent theme is that participants without DACA status felt isolated from the undocumented community. This theme reflects participants' experiences with varied documentation status. Some participants felt further separated from the undocumented community because they were not DACAmented. The third emergent theme is that undocuBlack stories are underrepresented. This theme mirrors the experiences of participants as they struggled to see their stories represented. These themes, which synthesize the way undocuBlack students experience higher education, suggest that participants' experiences with both identities are diverse.

#### *UndocuBlack College Student Experiences are Diverse*

The undocuBlack college student experience is diverse as reflected by participants' individual histories. I asked the question, "What were your initial experiences of being undocuBlack?" All participants answered this question by reflecting mostly on their undocumented status, not their Blackness. As is evident, participants already knew they were Black, but with an undocumented status, their experiences were exacerbated by uncertainty and limitations. In alignment with feeling invisible, participants noted that their initial experiences after finding out they were undocumented elicited feelings of loneliness, fear, depression, and anger. Fourteen participants learned they were undocumented in high school, so their initial experiences originated there but continued to affect them as they accessed higher education institutions. One participant did not learn he was undocumented until he was already enrolled at a local community college. However, after finding out his undocumented status, he also experienced similar

feelings as other participants. Table 4 includes several responses that demonstrate the diversity of undocuBlack college student experiences.

*Table 4*  
*Initial Experiences of UndocuBlack Students*

Participant	Response
Fatima	"I would say heartbreaking in a sense, just because I would often have to rely on other people to get rides so I just sort of asked friends who had cars and stuff. I felt worthless. I felt hopeless."
Gabby	"It was depressing. I missed out on the milestones, like getting my first job, getting my driver's permit, getting my driver's license, like I missed out on all those. I didn't get to experience those milestones."
Anthony	"Well, the number one feeling was fear because I know that I pretty much left everything I knew back home."
Lucy	"It was just really interesting. It's like I wasn't alone, but I was still lonely. You know it's very easy as a Black person in a white dominated field, or in the school, to already feel alone and then putting that factor of being undocumented forward. It can be very isolating and very lonely, and it's just hard."
Mitch	"As an undocumented person, I kind of feel like our institution, I'm kind of alone and like I said, like lot of restrictions. I cannot do some stuff others do, even though I really want to do it, like get a job, get a license."
Teresa	"First it was denial. I just kept searching for an answer...it felt terrible. It was just very confusing; people didn't know what DACA was at the time, or I guess undocumented people going to college was also unheard of... then I went into depression. I was angry, I was like really, really angry for a while, partially at my parents and just a lot about the circumstances."

As noted by Fatima, her initial experiences caused her to rely on others for support because her undocuBlack status made day to day activities defeating because of limitations due to her undocumented status. Gabby's experience was similar to Fatima's; both experienced a sense of worthlessness in connection with their Black and undocumented identities. As for Anthony, his experiences were dominated by fear, which influenced the way he navigated higher education. Lucy and Mitch experienced loneliness as both did not know where they belonged. After learning about participants' initial experiences of being undocuBlack, I wanted to know how participants understood how these two identities shaped the way they navigated higher education. Again, the experiences they described reflect the diverse nature of each participant.

*Table 5*  
*Black and Undocumented Affected UndocuBlack Students' completing coursework*

Participant	Response
Shannon	"Initially I was actually going to apply as a nursing major, but then I found that I couldn't even do clinicals because I was non DACA, so like I automatically can't even do this. But my undocumented status affected my grades because I had to do a lot of advocacy to survive, so I just wanted to graduate, and I did not care if I had a 3.0 GPA."
Abraham	"I just focused on my academic work, so I just put my head down and got it done. But with everyday life, I drive without a license because I don't have DACA and we've all known that if you'd be more likely to get pulled over, and the effects were not in the classroom; they were in real life, like not having access to health care."
Darius	"Both identities pushed me. It was like, you overcame so much already, you shouldn't, one you shouldn't be here, um you need to you need to do this, you need to like continue, pursue and show that like you belong here, because you shouldn't be here in all actuality, so they motivated me. But, I get depressed around DACA renewal time because I am coming out of pocket."
Fatima	"It gives you a determination to complete the work. Two things are going against me. I have to do everything to not fit into this narrative. Keep going."
Taryn	"I fell into a funk. I couldn't major in nursing because DACA was not enough; I needed to have a green card. So, my status was not enough, and I was always stressed having to renew my DACA every two years. Also, my minor was Mandarin, and I had to go abroad for it, which I couldn't do because Trump had limited advance parole when he came into office. I was very depressed; I stopped going to classes and even almost got kicked out of my scholarship."

While Shannon, Abraham, Darius, Fatima, and Teresa described different ways that their undocumented and Black identities affected them, it was clear that their undocumented status was the dominant identity that impeded or motivated them to continue persisting in higher education. For Shannon, her mental health was most affected because she had to advocate for herself as an unDACAmented person on a higher education campus, and therefore had less time and energy to devote to her academic work. For Abraham, Fatima, and Darius, both identities motivated them to complete their coursework. Although Teresa did not mention her mental health explicitly, she reflected on facing depression, which affected how she navigated higher education. It is noteworthy to mention that for this interview question, participants did not mention their Blackness as an identity that affected how they navigated higher education. This could be because they were experiencing tangible consequences as a result of their

undocumented status. Although their initial experiences included feelings of fear, anger, or depression, those experiences transformed into motivators or challenges once participants enrolled in higher education.

### *UnDACAmended Status Produced Isolation*

The second emergent theme reflects the divide between DACAmended and unDACAmended higher education students. This divide was described by unDACAmended participants (individuals without DACA) who felt disconnected from their peers with DACA. Examples of unDACAmended students feeling isolated mostly emerged when I asked interview questions such as 1) “Did you join any clubs or organizations on your college campus for undocumented students?” 2) “What challenges or obstacles did you face as an undocuBlack college student?” Through both of these questions, participants who did not have DACA or Temporary Protected Status (TPS) would reference the discrimination and bias they experienced during their collegiate experiences. Table 6 includes several of the responses that exemplify this emergent theme.

*Table 6*

*What challenges or obstacles did you face as an undocuBlack college student?*

Participant	Response
Raven	“All of the resources were mostly for DACA students, so I don't personally feel comfortable joining those programs. But I have talked to people from those programs, but they are not helpful to me. They help students with DACA, but they can't help undocumented students. There's just a big divide between DACA and like completely undocumented students.”
Rosemary	"The thing is like DACA vs undocumented; that's what I run into a lot, and it discourages me. I think I've seen different people that I would have wanted to reach out to, but then I realized that they do have DACA, and then I realized that our paths have been different."
Gabby	"Scholarships that I came across were specifically for Hispanic undocumented people or people with DACA; I don't think I saw one that was for Black undocumented people."
Shannon	"I started doing advocacy around creating fellowships for undocumented students, specifically those who don't have DACA because programming at the Dream Center or other undocumented spaces are

	geared towards DACA folks. I started to feel awkward because everybody else had DACA, so it made me feel somewhat isolated.”
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For Raven, even though spaces for undocumented students existed on her higher education campus, she did not feel comfortable joining because she felt isolated from her DACAmented peers. As Rosemary reflected on her collegiate experience, she never felt like she belonged in undocumented spaces; she did not feel she could connect with DACAmented students, which led to isolation. Possessing an unDACAmented status made participants feel invisible within spaces, whether on higher education campuses or in the undocumented community. Additionally, unDACAmented students mentioned many incidents related to scholarships, jobs, internships, or undocumented spaces where they were not included. According to Gabby, her isolation from undocumented people came in the form of access to scholarships because unDACAmented college students were ineligible to receive scholarships. As for Shannon, even though she found ways to advocate for unDACAmented students, she still felt isolated from her coursework.

UnDACAmented participants felt isolated whether because of a lack of access to scholarships, resources, organizations, or safe spaces illustrates the invisibility that this subset of participants felt. It also demonstrates the need for the undocumented community to be more inclusive of the diversity of the undocumented community. This theme was reflective of how participants made meaning of how their undocumented status affected their higher education experiences.

### *UndocuBlack Stories are Underrepresented*

The third emergent theme that contributed to invisibility was that undocuBlack stories were underrepresented, whether in undocumented spaces, in the media, in Black spaces, or on higher education campuses. Responses that reflect this theme were

primarily elicited through the interview question: “Do you consider being undocuBlack as being invisible within the undocumented community and in college? Can you detail this experience?” All participants described feeling invisible within the undocumented community. Table 7 includes responses that underscore this emergent theme.

*Table 7*

*Do you consider being undocuBlack as being invisible within the undocumented community and in college? Can you detail this experience?*

Participant	Response
Lucy	"I mean honestly, yes. I think when I see stories about undocumented people and the undocumented plight, I don't see Black stories."
Mitch	"Yes, I mostly see Latinx. They don't see us as undocumented. They think we are refugees. They only think of Latino people. I feel like they exclude us, but I try to stay positive."
Rosemary	"I don't think we are frequently a part of the conversation, you know, like we just explored, the needs are a bit different, but they're mostly tailored to one demographic and visually, we are not as visible."
Gabby	"When you hear stories about people being undocumented, it's always Hispanic people."
Anthony	"The only thing that you know bothers me is that when people talk about undocumented immigrant, it's mostly focused on Hispanics. No one thinks about oh there are White people who are also undocumented, Black people who are also undocumented, so you can pretty much be under the bus, most of the time."
Abraham	"Black undocumented people are not portrayed in the media. It took horrific experiences of the Haitian migrants at the Southern border for others to realize that immigration is a racialized issue. Even within the African immigrant community with legal status, they look down on other immigrants who are undocumented/without legal status."

As described by some participants, undocuBlack representations were scant. As for Lucy, during discussions about the plight of undocumented individuals, undocuBlack stories were disregarded. Additionally, Mitch noted that the undocumented community misidentifies undocuBlack people as refugees. Through Rosemary's reflection, she indicated that undocuBlack immigrants are not present in many spaces, which makes it difficult for those individuals to be represented. As reflected by Anthony, because there is a lack of representation, others are unaware of the presence of undocuBlack individuals.

According to Abraham, he did not see his own story in the media or within the Black or undocumented community.

This theme underscores the superordinate invisibility theme because it reveals how there is a lack of attention to this student population. Seeing undocuBlack representation influenced whether they joined a club, disclosed their status, or their view of successfully navigating a higher education space. Because of this lack of representation, they felt invisible. This was especially true for seven participants who were involved in undocumented spaces on their higher education campuses; they all noted that the programming, the stories, and the scholarships mainly catered to Latinx students. While they were not made to feel unwelcome, they felt invisible because of the lack of representation in student programming, available information, and access to scholarships.

#### Constructing Race and Immigrant Status on a Campus Setting

##### *UndocuBlack Identity is Conflicting*

The second superordinate theme is that the undocuBlack identity is conflicting. In the context of this study, of the 15 participants, nine participants never joined undocumented student spaces on their campus because they did not want to be the only Black person in those spaces. The other six participants did join an undocumented student club, but said they were the only Black person in the space. Furthermore, of the 15 participants, seven of the participants did not have DACA status and did not want to join undocumented spaces because they felt support was only for DACAmented students. Regardless of documentation status, undocuBlack participants struggled to feel a sense of belonging anywhere on campus. Their race was a key factor in the struggle for belonging,

as the programming, scholarships, and language in undocumented student spaces catered to Latinx students. Deciding whether to join an undocumented student space presented a conflict because participants were always the only Black person in those spaces.

Additionally, for unDACAmented students, finding support also led to conflict because the resources in those undocumented spaces were dedicated to DACAmented students.

Participants who noted that their higher education campus did not have an undocumented student club, organization, or person they could go to for support felt conflict in where they belonged as well. The undocuBlack identity reflects a conflicting conceptual and physical space for all participants.

Within the undocuBlack identity is conflicting superordinate theme are two emergent themes. The first is that the experiences of participants reflect a lack of belonging in Black spaces. Students who are Black and undocumented have multiple intersecting identities and often experience a silencing of their immigrant identity whenever they interact with other areas of their demographic characteristics, in this case, their Blackness. Participants noted that immigrant status was never mentioned or celebrated in Black spaces and their immigrant status always seemed invisible in Black spaces, unless they explicitly disclosed their status. However, as noted by many participants in the profiles, while their race is the first characteristic that others notice, which then dictates how they are treated, they face the most noticeable effects on their lives because of their undocumented status. While none of the participants used the word “master status,” it is comprehensible that it connects to the conflicting space that participants in this study occupy because of their salient identities. The concept of master status will be discussed further in chapter 6.

The second emergent theme is that the undocuBlack network was a safe space for many participants. Participants who did not feel comfortable joining spaces on their higher education campuses for undocumented students had a connection to the undocuBlack network. The undocuBlack network as a safe space is a noteworthy theme to discuss because it demonstrates the need for undocuBlack people to have a dedicated space to build community and to feel a sense of belonging with others who share similar identities.

### *Belonging in Black Spaces*

UndocuBlack participants struggled to feel a sense of belonging in Black spaces. Of the 15 participants, six participants noted that they joined the Black Student Union (BSU) student group on their campus but did not feel validated in their Black experience. Additionally, five participants joined an African Student Association club, and four participants did not join a club or group for Black students. I asked, “Did you join any clubs on campus for Black students? What was that experience like?” because I wanted to gain insight into undocuBlack participants' sense of belonging on their campus. Responses from this question demonstrate that participants who joined a club for Black students wanted to experience a sense of belonging, but instead, these participants experienced a silencing of illegality and further isolation from their Black counterparts. Participants noted that immigrant status was never discussed or that they felt alienated from their African American counterparts. Table 8 includes responses that underscore this emergent theme.

Table 8

*Experience in Black clubs on campus*

Participant	Response
Arion	"I am in the Black Student Union but never go to any of their meetings. I just feel like I am not African American, so I felt distant between Black Americans and immigration status was ever mentioned. I also joined UMOJA, they talk about things not important and they should've been discussing more social issues and helping kids on campus."
Rosemary	"I joined a Caribbean student club and BSU. With BSU, I felt like it was mostly African Americans, and I feel like I could never relate to African Americans completely either. Immigration was only mentioned in terms of discussing differences between like first generation immigrants."
Sasha	"I'm also just kind of like, I have a unique Black experience. I have a difficult time when I get into spaces. And first of all, there's people who believe that people from Africa and the Caribbean aren't Black. So, like I have a difficult time being in those spaces because I don't consider myself African American. I consider myself Black. And you know, to be Black does not mean that you're African American, but to be African American does mean that you're Black, and I think that a lot of people miss that, so I just have a really difficult time navigating a lot of those spaces."
Darius	"I was part of SOCA, which is a Caribbean organization, as well as Black Student Union. My experience was that I never told anyone I was undocumented, just like blended and flowed and did all the things. Everyone knew I was from Trinidad and I grew up there, but no one ever questioned why I did not go back for spring break. Immigration was never mentioned."
Taryn	"I minored in African and Caribbean studies, so I joined all of the little clubs. I joined like the Caribbean club, where we talked about culture. I joined the African club, but most of the time when I realized immigration was not brought up or if it was brought up, it was like laughed about. Like 'Oh wow like, why are you bringing up such an old joke haha like you're saying like I'm coming off the banana boat,' and they'll laugh it off, but it was like a nervous laugh."
Fatima	"I am Black at an HBCU so I fit into the narrative, so my status is not pronounced on campus. In the dream.us group, it is clear that my status is pronounced because I am one of the only Black people in that group."
Mitch	"I feel good because I am at HBCU. I feel alone as an undocumented person."

As Arion described, he never felt as if he could connect to the Black students in the BSU space because there was a disconnect between the African American experience and his own Black experience. He also noted that his time in UMOJA was fruitless because the mission of the group was not focused on social issues. In Rosemary's reflection, she described her lack of a sense of belonging in Black spaces because she could not relate to the African American experience as well. Furthermore, Sasha's experience also demonstrates the lack of belonging she anticipated with being in a Black space on her campus. All three participants joined the Black spaces for a sense of

belonging, yet they experienced isolation. The three reflections above represent a conflicting space that the undocuBlack participants in this study often navigate because of their salient identities: Black and undocumented. It demonstrates the marginality that the participants faced in higher education because of their intersecting identities.

Other participants discussed their experience in Black spaces as a space where they did not quite exist as their full selves. According to Darius, even though he joined the SOCA and BSU clubs to gain a sense of belonging, he still did not feel comfortable disclosing his undocumented status. Therefore, he could not exist in all his identities because he was fearful that his undocumented status would affect his experience. His reflection demonstrates that while the undocuBlack participants often did not feel seen or represented in undocumented spaces, they had conflicting views about belonging in Black spaces as well.

Additionally, one participant noted that when she revealed her undocumented status in Black spaces, she received insensitive questions. Therefore, while Darius was reluctant to share his status in the Black spaces he joined, Taryn felt she needed to disclose her status. Taryn's experience is an example of a participant who wanted to fully exist as herself but experienced uncomfortable remarks about her undocumented status. As Taryn continued to reflect on her experience, she mentioned never fitting into any space because of her Blackness and undocumented status. Her experience reflects the lack of belonging that undocuBlack participants navigated while pursuing higher education.

While Arion, Rosemary, Sasha, Darius, and Taryn attended predominantly white institutions, four participants attended HBCUs. Of the four participants who attended

HBCU's, two did not reflect on their experience as students enrolled at a HBCU because they were both members of the undocuBlack network. However, two of the participants described their experience as "fitting the narrative," by which they meant that they did not feel out of place because they were on a campus with many other Black students. These two participants did not feel invisible in their Blackness and did not describe any lack of belonging as it relates to Blackness. For Fatima, her Blackness gave her privilege and a sense of belonging on a HBCU campus, but as she continued to reflect, her undocumented status was further pronounced in the undocumented space on campus because she was the only Black student in the undocumented student space. Fatima was in a unique position because she was a recipient of TheDream.US scholarship, and she also attended a HBCU. Therefore, her experience as an undocumented person was discussed in the undocumented space, and she never felt a need to talk about her immigration status to other Black students on campus. However, while Mitch felt an immense sense of belonging because he was on a campus with other Black students, he did not have a Dream Center, so he felt alone in navigating his undocumented status.

UndocuBlack participants in this study had a constant conflict regarding where they felt they belonged. Participants who sought Black spaces could not fully exist in all their identities. In other words, participants felt the need to compartmentalize their experience and show up only as relevant to a particular space and context. Those who did not join any Black spaces described being concerned that they would not have much in common with the students in those groups because of the African, Caribbean, and African American divide amongst students. Students at HBCUs also reflected that while comfortable in their Blackness, they still felt alone in their undocumented student

experience. Therefore, the undocuBlack participants in this study lacked a sense of belonging in Black spaces, which demonstrates the conflicting nature of their identities.

### *UndocuBlack Network as a Safe Space*

Although participants in this study experienced a lack of belonging in Black spaces on their college campuses, some of them sought a sense of belonging off-campus. Of the 15 participants, five mentioned the impact that the undocuBlack network had on their collegiate experience. Five participants who were involved with the undocuBlack network were introduced to the organization by either a high school college counselor or a high school teacher. Organizations like the undocuBlack network are important for undocumented students because of the mission of the network. Participants who spoke about the undocuBlack network mentioned how supported and connected they felt to others with whom they shared similar personal and lived experiences. Participants described the sense of community they felt in the undocuBlack network. Table 9 includes responses that underscore this emergent theme.

Table 9

### *UndocuBlack Network*

Participant	Response
Gabby	"I went to the convening they had in Philly, and it was amazing because we went out, and everybody had their passports. And I was like oh my God, I don't feel lonely, like I'm not the only one that's pulling out my passport. So I loved being in the same room as every single person, because you just knew, like every single person was either once undocumented or they currently are undocumented."
Mitch	"I had one teacher who was part of the undocuBlack network; she was from Trinidad, and she helped me go to college and get scholarships. Um, she was my favorite teacher, so I joined undocuBlack because of all the similarities."
Lucy	"There was a Black Student Union that I could've joined, but I felt that I had a large support system with undocuBlack. Especially because, like within undocuBlack, I met so many amazing people, and I have so many friends."

For Gabby, the undocuBlack network provided the opportunity to connect with others who shared similar experiences. Being a member of the undocuBlack network gave her a sense of belonging because the members were Black, and also shared a former or current undocumented identity. For Mitch, his undocuBlack network experience started in high school, and he continued to be involved with the undocuBlack network during his time in higher education. Lucy did not seek out a Black space on campus because she already felt supported through the undocuBlack network. All three participants described their sense of belonging because they were in community with people who had similar shared experiences related to both of their identities.

One participant mentioned she was a member of BAJI (Black Alliance for Just Immigration). Sasha stated, “I’ve been in spaces, and now I put myself, I work with a national org, I’m not sure if you’re familiar with BAJI. So I work with them, so I’m in spaces where it’s like, okay like we’re here; we’re alive. This feels good.” Sasha mentioned her connection with BAJI as she discussed her lack of belonging in Black spaces. She reflected on her positive experience in BAJI. Similar to participants who felt connection to the undocuBlack network, Sasha’s experience was worth noting because BAJI is an important space for undocuBlack people.

Overall, participants felt a sense of belonging in the undocuBlack network spaces. This theme reflects the importance of the existence of undocuBlack spaces for undocuBlack students navigating higher education. As is consistent with the literature, sense of belonging is critical to engagement and successful persistence for marginalized groups.

## Constructing Engagement within the Higher Education Context

### *UndocuBlack Student Engagement is Related to Institutionalized Resources*

The third superordinate theme is that undocuBlack participants' engagement is influenced by institutionalized resources available on their campus. The undocuBlack participants in this study who had access to institutional resources such as scholarships, a Dream Center, a supportive staff or faculty member, an undocumented student group, or an office where they could access information were more engaged in campus activities. UndocuBlack participants who were engaged in on campus activities had resources and support services available to them. It was not surprising that the connection between engagement and resources was present in the current study.

This theme was revealed through my analysis of the data of the question: "What did it mean to use or not use support services for undocumented students on your campus?" In response to this question, participants noted the difficulty they faced with faculty and staff who did not know how to answer questions specific to their undocumented status. As a result of this lack of knowledge among faculty and staff, participants would often continue to hide their status or forgo opportunities to engage in campus activities or clubs. Additionally, participants also noted that they would seek support from the international student services office as they would often get classified as international students, but the staff in those offices did not know how to guide them. Some participants noted that their campuses did not offer support services for undocumented students. The responses demonstrate the need for formalized support and accessible resources on campuses for undocumented students.

Of the 15 participants in the study, 11 noted that there were no support services or physical space on their higher education campus for undocumented students; the other four noted that there was a Dream Center. Table 10 includes responses that underscore this emergent theme.

Table 10

*What did it mean to use or not use support services for undocumented students on your campus?*

Participant	Response
Sasha	“No, they don’t have any. I will ask one question and that person will point me to one direction and another to another direction, so I would literally kind of studying it, and I was just like none of y’all got answers. I would ask questions through email, because last semester was completely virtual, so I was just kind of like emailing everyone, and some people would just not respond, and I’d keep sending the same email, and eventually they would respond and send me somewhere else, and then that person would say, ‘Oh try this person,’ and I’m like already spoke to them, but I have not found any services.”
Mitch	“I don’t think so. I mean sometimes they have a board where they post everything on campus; I’ve been looking through it, and I didn’t see anything about, they don’t have anything for undocumented students. I don’t know like if there are other students in my situation.”

As Sasha reflected on her experience, it was evident that because of the lack of knowledge among the staff she encountered, she did not trust them to help her navigate higher education as an undocumented person (Contreras, 2009; Pérez et al., 2010). Sasha’s experience exemplifies the lack of social support that undocuBlack participants in this study had while in higher education. As Sasha continued to make meaning of her own experience, she noted that she had to work hard to understand the issues she faced, fund her education, and perform at a high academic level. As a result, she was unable to engage in campus activities or organizations. Mitch expressed a similar experience as Sasha. For Mitch, he searched for undocumented student resources but was unsuccessful. He claimed that the lack of applicable support hindered him from sharing his status or from participating in activities on campus. Mitch possessed a desire to find resources and get involved, but he was unable to do so because no support services for undocumented students existed on his campus.

As mentioned, there were also participants who sought support from the international office. Abraham noted,

I didn't use any because I don't think that existed. But I did utilize other services, but they were not helpful. For instance, I went into the F1-J1 'International Student' office but they did not understand my immigration status. I tried getting an internship, and they did not know how to help me.

Abraham sought help, but the staff he encountered could not support him or answer his questions. As Abraham reflected on his experience, he noted that because he could not find support on his campus, he had to work to find his own resources, which did not leave him time to participate in activities on campus. Darius also noted a lack of resources and noted, "I did not know of any services for undocumented students at [my institution]" While Darius's reflection was brief, his response echoed the lack of resources available to undocumented students.

#### *Participation through Dream Centers*

The first emergent theme is that campuses with Dream Centers fostered more engagement among undocuBlack students. For most students in higher education, being engaged on campus creates a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2020). For undocuBlack students, it was no different except for the available opportunities. The general noticing was that the students who had a Dream Center or someone on their campus who could answer questions about undocumented students felt more inclined to share their status or find ways to be involved or engaged on campus. Of the 15 participants, only four students had a Dream Center on campus; however, all four participants noted that they felt supported. It was clear from the participants' reflections that because they had access

to a physical safe space and undocu-competent staff on their campus, they were involved in campus activities. Those four participants recalled being the only Black person in those groups but felt comfortable receiving support with DACA applications, internships, scholarships, fellowships, or other opportunities to engage on campus.

According to Taryn,

We had TheDream.US scholarship and through them, we created a Dream Team. The Dream Team was created because of the students in TheDream.US workshop; what if there's other Dreamers that are like, they don't have the scholarship but they're going to...so I was a part of it. I would mentor the younger kids that came in because you know it's gonna be very scary and most of the time we found out that there are a lot of kids that didn't have TheDream.US scholarship.

Through Taryn's reflection, she noted the importance of TheDream.US team on her campus and how they contributed to her joining a group to support others. Because she had support, she felt she could support others, which led to her being more involved on campus. Shannon and Faith also reflected on the importance of a Dream Center on their campus. According to Shannon,

I used the services at the Dream Center. I also participated in Dream Summer and utilized the California Dream Act for financial aid. I also used emergency housing grants.

Shannon had multiple opportunities to gain access to scholarships and to create student programming through the Dream Center on her campus. Because of her involvement at the Dream Center, she was able to utilize other services available to her because she had staff at the center who provided her with this information. Shannon's

experience reflects the importance of access to information, staff, and opportunities to support the undocumented student experience. Faith also noted that the Dream Center was a place of support. She stated, “I utilized TheDream.US services, but nothing else on campus.” For Shannon and Faith, access to the Dream Center on their campuses provided them with resources and the support they needed while navigating higher education. However, as Faith noted, while there was a Dream Center, she did not have access to other resources for undocumented students.

According to Greg,

So there was the DREAM Center, and I utilized their resources. There was this one website called educate-utah.org, and that one provided a bunch of scholarships that were good for undocumented students, so that was a big help. When DACA first came out, [he] actually helped me and my family do the application and the renewals.

For Greg, the Dream Center on his campus was a substantial support for him in many ways, such as with DACA applications, mental health support, and access to information.

This next quote by Anthony demonstrates a similar reflection to Greg’s about the support on his campus for undocumented students. According to Anthony,

To be very frank, apart from the Dream Center, I don't think there's like any other resources out there. The Dream Center has offered me so far just scholarship opportunities. And then information about, you know, what is going on federal wise about immigration situation and then also mental health support and all that.

For both Greg and Anthony, the Dream Centers on their campuses were a substantial support for them in many ways, such as with DACA applications, mental health support, and access to information. Both participants were engaged in activities on campus. This finding highlights the importance of having undocu-competent staff and faculty in higher education. As the literature suggests, undocumented students need access to institutional agents who are knowledgeable about undocumented policies so that students can feel comfortable and engage on campus ( Cisneros et al., 2021; Contreras, 2009; Gildersleeve & Ranero, 2010; Nienhusser et al., 2016).

#### *DACAmented Status Led to Engagement*

The second emergent theme is that DACAmented students were more engaged. Seven of the 15 participants had DACA status, one had TPS, and all eight with either form of documentation felt more comfortable engaging in student clubs, sharing their stories, and applying for scholarships or student jobs on campus. Because the seven participants without status felt separated from the undocumented student community, they were less engaged in campus activities. Even in spaces for undocumented students, they did not feel comfortable because the opportunities were always for DACAmented or undocumented Latinx students, which made it harder for students without any legal status to participate in activities.

According to Teresa,

I wouldn't say they have anything specifically on this campus for undocumented, but I will say that they look out for DACA students with like initiatives and grants and programs. I also use their financial advising so they help you with any financial literacy that you may need, and therapy, that is, you know, accessible to any DACA

recipient; the food pantry is accessible to DACA recipients. There's also a list of scholarships in the scholarship office that are DACA specific scholarships.

For Teresa, she had access to many resources because she had DACA status, but she noted the discrepancy for unDACAmented students. Because Teresa had access to many resources, she engaged on campus in student clubs in which she served in leadership roles. Additionally, she felt comfortable disclosing her status because she knew DACAmented students are supported at her institution. Teresa's experience was reflective of the importance of available resources for vulnerable student populations. Other participants like Raven and Rosemary also shared similar sentiments. According to Raven, "I found that most of the services available to undocumented students were specifically for DACAmented students."

This next quote by Rosemary describes her conflict as an unDACAmented student and what she had access to because of that liminal status. Rosemary noted, "Not specific to any undocumented students, but they have services for DACA students. I don't personally feel comfortable joining those programs, but I have talked to people from those programs. I just like often find that they are not helpful to me; they help students with DACA, but they can't help undocumented students." The DACAmented participants in this study had more opportunities than their unDACAmented counterparts. For example, DACAmented participants had the ability to obtain a legal job on campus. Participants shared that the resources, opportunities, and scholarships designed to support the undocumented community are primarily intended for DACAmented students. DACAmented participants felt more inclined to be involved on campus and share their experiences more readily. As the participants made meaning of

their experiences, DACAmented participants understood the privilege they had with access to resources and support services. Additionally, DACAmented participants' experiences demonstrate the importance of readily available resources for all undocumented students.

### *Summary*

The superordinate and emergent themes that were derived from my analysis of the interview data indicate that the collegiate experiences of undocuBlack students are unique because of the intersection of their race and immigration status. Both identities affect the way undocuBlack students belong, feel seen, and engage in campus activities. Participants experienced invisibility within the undocumented and Black communities. They also faced challenges experiencing a sense of belonging because some participants did not feel comfortable in Black spaces, while others completely disengaged out of fear of not belonging. Furthermore, participants with DACAmented status had more resources available to them allowing them to more fully engage on campus. Ultimately, each participant's own lived and personal experiences related to their race and undocumented status demonstrate the diverse, conflicting, and invisible nature of the undocuBlack experiences.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary of the Study

According to Farris and Sibling Mohamed (2018), the United States media coverage of immigration during the decade from 2000-2010 was mainly focused on Latinx individuals' stories and experiences. Additionally, in the last decade, there has been an increase in educational and sociological research focused on undocumented students (e.g., Abrego, 2006; 2008; Cervantes et al., 2015; Conger & Chellman, 2013; Gonzales, 2009, 2010; Passel, 2006; Patler, 2018). This research has shed light on campus climate, financial difficulties, and the barriers that undocumented students face when accessing and completing higher education. Studies have also highlighted the choice of community colleges for undocumented students as their first postsecondary educational option because of the lack of access to federal financial aid (Abrego, 2008; Flores, 2010b; Flores & Horn, 2009). As a result of the Latinx focus, little is known about non-Latinx undocumented students (Salinas Velasco et al., 2015), and more specifically, undocuBlack college students and their experiences in higher education. As noted in the previous chapters, the focus on the Latinx narrative is merited, as Latinx individuals comprise two-thirds of the undocumented population in the United States. However, the danger of only centering one narrative is that the experiences of those who do not fit into that narrative are diminished. Therefore, in the current study, I center the experiences of non-Latinx Black students. The undocumented community is diverse, and undocuBlack college student experiences must be addressed to make meaningful change that will assist all undocumented people to access and successfully persist in higher education.

Researchers such as Benjamin (2018), Chan (2010), Cho (2019), Huber and Malagon (2007), Meitzenheimer (2020), Tran et al. (2018), and Salinas et al. (2015) have produced academic literature focused on the non-Latinx undocumented narrative. However, fewer researchers have focused on undocuBlack students specifically: Benjamin (2018), Bryce-Laporte (1972), Meitzenheimer (2020) and Palmer (2017). UndocuBlack students and their collegiate experiences are often overlooked in the literature and in practice, and despite the aforementioned studies, there remains a dearth of literature about undocuBlack collegiate experiences. Therefore, the purpose of my study is to contribute to the literature by focusing on an under-researched group amongst an already vulnerable population: undocuBlack college students. The main goal of this study is to understand how race and undocumented status affect undocuBlack collegiate experiences. Understanding the experiences of undocuBlack students is instrumental because the research findings can inform faculty, staff, higher education practitioners, activists, and policymakers about the diversity of the undocumented student population and the resources and services they need to successfully persist in higher education.

To understand the experiences of undocuBlack college students, I took an interpretative phenomenological approach to make meaning of participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2009) After analysis of interview data, three superordinate themes and multiple emergent themes became evident. The themes demonstrate the invisibility that undocuBlack students face in higher education and within the undocumented community, highlight the conflicting nature experienced in undocumented and Black spaces, and speak to the importance of institutional support services for undocumented students on higher education campuses. My research adds to the literature by exposing the lived and

personal experiences of undocuBlack students and how they navigate the marginality they face because of race and immigration status. Additionally, my research highlights a vulnerable group that has been overlooked by their own communities, the media, higher education, activists, and policy makers.

### Discussion of Findings

In subsequent sections, I place the major findings of the study in context of prior literature on undocumented students and their collegiate experiences. This current study includes researchers who have broadly centered narratives outside the Latinx narrative. Situating the findings in the context of the literature has the potential to demonstrate gaps within the literature, inform higher education professionals, and provide implications for practice.

#### *What does it mean to be undocuBlack on a college campus?*

One of the central questions of the current study, “What does it mean to be undocuBlack on a college campus?” illuminates the experiences of undocuBlack students as they navigate higher education. This question is important as it allows participants to reflect on their own experiences and describe them in their own words without any direct questioning about barriers or struggles. It is well known that undocumented students face tremendous financial, social, legal, and systematic barriers to successfully accessing and persisting in higher education (Cervantes et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015). Therefore, this question is meant to let participants make meaning of their own experiences without influencing their answers.

As the participants answered the question, it was clear that the main descriptor of what it means to be an undocuBlack college student is to be invisible in a world that only

recognizes or centers the undocuLatinx perspective. The finding of invisibility among participants aligns with the purpose of this study, which is to demonstrate the experiences of this group. Throughout my analysis, participants made connections to existing in an undocumented space, a Black space, or in spaces on higher education campuses for students of other identities without feeling like they were recognized as undocumented. While many participants also noted the benefits of being invisible as an undocumented person, they mostly discussed the isolation they experienced in spaces for undocumented people. In those spaces, participants felt that because they were invisible, they were not advocated for and there were no student programming or student events that catered to their unique experiences. In this chapter, I position the invisibility finding within the context of the media, the undocumented community as a whole, and the Black community as a whole. Furthermore, I contend that the implication of invisibility among undocuBlack people is such an issue is because it leads to overcriminalization of undocuBlack immigrants and a lack of advocacy for the vulnerable subgroup.

#### *UndocuBlack Status is Invisible*

One indicator of undocuBlack invisibility is the lack of representation through the media. According to Benjamin (2018), the media in the United States shows disproportionate images and stories about immigrants who are from Central America or Mexico, which centers the Latinx community. Meitzenheimer (2020) adds that the dominant narrative in the media is the Latinx community. Furthermore, Ira de Reid (1939) wrote that the Black immigrant narrative has never been a concern for most historians nor for those who center the immigrant perspective. Therefore, this finding of invisibility within the media is aligned with the literature and asserts that there is a lack of

representation of undocuBlack stories. As many of the participants reflected on their experiences, they elaborated on the lack of image they see within the media. Lack of representation was a point of frustration for many of the participants in my study. Also, while the main public media coverage mainly focuses on Latinx students, the narrative is also pervasively anti-Black and ignores the experiences of undocuBlack Latinx individuals. Alan Pelaez Lopez (2018) and Claudia Garcia-Louis (2019, 2021) tease out anti-Blackness in Latin America as corresponding to undocumented status and illegality (Alan Pelaez Lopez) and higher education (Claudia Garcia-Louis). Therefore, the media also promotes an anti-Black agenda. There is a need to highlight more undocuBlack stories. If undocuBlack students can see themselves in the media, they are more likely to want to share their stories and navigate higher education without being in the shadows of their peers. Additionally, representation broadens the narrative of the undocumented community and promotes diversity.

The second theme of invisibility that emerged was that participants felt invisible within the undocumented higher education student community. As many participants noted, they felt invisible within the undocumented spaces they encountered on campus because they were often the only Black person present. Additionally, they felt invisible because the scholarships, programming, and resources available in those spaces were mainly intended for Latinx students. This finding corroborates prior literature that highlights the invisibility that undocuBlack people face within the undocumented community. According to Salinas et al. (2015), non-Latinx students in undocumented student spaces felt there was a disparity with resources, regarding scholarships, events, and policies. In Chan's 2010 study, he described the invisible experiences of non-Latinx

immigrants and labeled their experience as a “double-edged sword” (p. 30). As Chan noted, the non-Latinx students felt their intersecting identities gave them an invisibility in spaces in which they were meant to be present. Similar to participants in my study, Chan’s participants felt that they had identities going against them: one was their undocumented status and the other was their race, which contributed to them being invisible in undocumented spaces on campus.

According to participants in my current study, they also observed a lack of representation with staff in the Dream Centers (otherwise known as undocumented student resource center or USRC) or other undocumented student spaces, which contributed to feelings of invisibility. Again, this finding aligns with prior studies (e.g. Harris & Patton, 2017; Patton, 2005) that highlights the importance for Black students to see faculty, staff and others who share similar lived experiences as them because it helps them navigate feelings of isolation or invisibility.

Additionally, in Meitzenheimer’s (2020) study, participants revealed that they faced significant invisibility on higher education campuses while in undocumented spaces because of their undocuBlack identities. Furthermore, this Meitzenheimer’s finding also aligns with Huber and Malagon (2007) who noted that undocumented students have varied experiences and non-Latinx undocumented students face additional barriers in education. This finding is important because it demonstrates the need for undocuBlack narratives and experiences to be centered within the undocumented community.

The third theme reflected invisibility of undocuBlack college students within the Black community. As reflected by the participants, they are also invisible in both

undocumented and Black spaces. The reason many participants felt invisible within Black spaces was because of their immigrant status. Participants felt that they had to exist in Black spaces as Black Americans, which alienated them. According to Carbado et al., (2013), Black immigrants are categorized as Black American before anything else. This categorization leads to an invisibility and a silencing of illegality within Black spaces. Participants in my study did not want to disclose their status in Black spaces because there were no discussions about immigrant status. According to Meitzenheimer (2020), Black spaces can provide access to resources and community building around identity for students on college campuses. As noted by participants in my study, one of the main reasons they joined Black spaces was for community. However, similar to undocumented spaces, undocuBlack participants in my current study experienced a feeling of invisibility because they had different experiences from their Black American counterparts.

### *Invisibility and Criminalization*

Participants in my current study experienced invisibility by way of the media, the undocumented community, and the Black community. This invisibility has consequences. I argue that the lack of visibility leads to overcriminalization of undocuBlack people and lack of advocacy. As noted in prior literature, Blackness has direct and indirect consequences related to political and structural consequences for Black immigrants (Benjamin, 2018). According to Lipscombe et al. (2016), Black immigrants are five times more likely to face criminalization than their Latinx counterparts. According to Cho (2019), Asian undocumented people can exist in the world where they are not primarily racialized as threatening, so they have a unique undocuAsian experience, in which they are seen as a model minority. Meitzenheimer (2020) adds that undocuBlack people are

overpoliced because of their Blackness. Therefore, undocuBlack individuals are primarily racialized because of the color of their skin, and experience a double criminalization of being undocuBlack. This experience was echoed by the participants in my study because even as they could exist solely as Black, their undocumented status had indirect consequences that could lead to criminalization. The invisibility they faced was crippling and contributed to the indirect consequences of being invisible within the undocumented community.

Furthermore, scholars such as Miller (2002) contend that mass incarceration and immigration are connected, especially as it relates to Black immigrants. Miller provides an example about the 1980s mass deportation of Haitians and contends that their Blackness was a primary cause. Essentially, undocuBlack people face direct consequences because of their Blackness, and also experience additional consequences because of their immigrant status. Ultimately, undocuBlack people need to be visible within the community and in the narratives being centered because of historical oppression and exclusion that have led to disproportionate deportation rates for Black immigrants.

#### *Invisibility and Advocacy*

Because race is tied to exclusion in America, it demonstrates the connection between Blackness and advocacy. This amplifies the point that invisibility of undocuBlack immigrants leads to a lack of advocacy for the undocuBlack population. Lack of advocacy limits access to resources. A lack of resources was evident when participants mentioned that no student programming or events at USRC's were focused on the undocuBlack narrative. Participants also noted this when they described the

scholarships available to undocumented students, which were mostly for Hispanic or DACAmented students. Therefore, if undocuBlack people are invisible within the media, the undocumented community, and even in Black spaces, the consequences they face will affect them at all policy levels because policymakers will not know that they exist.

Furthermore, higher education professionals will not advocate for policies for this group if they are unaware that they exist. As contended by Teranishi et al. (2015), marginalized undocumented students want to feel represented by higher education practitioners. Additionally, research suggests that when faculty, staff, and peers understand the undocumented student experience, they serve as allies for them, which could lead to advocacy (Cervantes et al., 2015; Chen & Rhoads, 2016). As previously mentioned, undocuBlack students in my current study felt they could not disclose their immigration status because the people they encountered did not know how to answer questions about undocumented student issues. This demonstrates how invisibility leads to a lack of advocacy. Also, I contend that this exemplifies how a marginalized community is being further marginalized because undocuBlack people are excluded from policies at the institutional, state, and federal levels, but will be affected by them. The lack of advocacy that undocuBlack people face is a demonstration of the stories told about the undocumented community. As noted by Garcia and Tierney (2011), undocumented students need access to resources to help them traverse the barriers they face within higher education because of their immigrant status. However, if they are invisible, they would not gain access to resources because no one will advocate for them. As noted by one participant in the current study, she had to organize events, programming and do her

own advocacy work on her campus for undocuBlack students because no one else was doing it.

These findings demonstrate the need to highlight undocuBlack college students' stories and experiences. They signify the underrepresented narratives and consequences they have on a vulnerable student population. The theme of invisibility also lends insight into the conflicting nature that undocuBlack participants experience, which is the focus of the following section.

### Constructing Race and Status on a Campus Setting

Another focus of the current study concerns participants' experiences and sense of belonging on a college campus. After my analysis of the interview data, there was consensus that participants did not feel a sense of belonging on their college campuses. Participants navigated a conflicting identity about where and with whom they belonged. More specifically, they did not feel they belonged in Black spaces because they often did not relate to the African American college student experience. Additionally, participants did not feel they belong in undocumented spaces because they were often the only Black person present. Therefore, the participants in my study were in a conflicting space about their identities. This finding demonstrates the importance of sense of belonging on a college campus and the role it plays in influencing collegiate experiences for undocuBlack students. In this section, I discuss the lack of sense of belonging that undocuBlack participants in this study experience on college campuses. Through the lens of sense of belonging, I also discuss the impact of liminality and master status on undocuBlack collegiate experiences.

*UndocuBlack Identity is Conflicting*

The theme of conflict demonstrates that undocuBlack participants experience a lack of belonging on higher education campuses. Participants noted that they did not know how to exist in spaces that were supposed to be designed for them. Many participants noted that in undocumented spaces, they felt a sense of invisibility, which made it hard for them to engage with the group. Additionally, they were always the only Black person in those spaces, which further reinforced feeling “out of place.” Participants who did not join undocumented student spaces were deterred because of fear of being the only Black person. Moreover, participants experienced the same conflicting feeling in Black spaces, such as a Black Student Union or an African Student Association. While there were other Black students in those groups, participants noted that the goal of those groups was to cater to the African American student experience, which left them feeling like they did not belong in those spaces. Therefore, students were often balancing a sense of choice, which added to the conflicting feeling they had about their Black and undocumented identities. Prior literature corroborates this conflicting feeling; it has been noted that the presence on campus of one or multiple salient identities among students may “reinforce one another,” or may engender conflict (Stryker & Burke 2000, p. 290). Therefore, because participants in the current study were navigating being Black and undocumented, they described experiencing conflict with their identities. The lack of belonging they experienced translated to liminality and a struggle with master status.

### *Sense of Belonging*

As Maya Angelou famously said, “The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.” By this she means, we all want to belong and not feel as though our belonging is fleeting. Participants in my study were

no different as they too long for belonging, whether it was in undocumented spaces, Black spaces, or in society. To understand participants' sense of belonging, I asked students if they joined Black spaces, undocumented spaces, and whether their campus had services for undocumented students. Additionally, I asked how they felt in those spaces, with students, faculty, and staff. In response, participants described a lack of belonging, though through different vocabulary. One participant, Greg, noted that he felt like a "vagabond" and that he did not belong anywhere. Another participant, Sasha, maintained that she did not have a "home" because she did not identify with the Black students and did not associate with undocumented students. Throughout my interviews, these statements were prevalent and consistent.

As noted in earlier chapters, my exploration of sense of belonging is influenced by Strayhorn's (2012) work, in which sense of belonging is described as,

...students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers). (p. 3)

I place sense of belonging within that context. Sense of belonging is an important concept to discuss because it is one of the major markers for successfully persisting in higher education as noted by many scholar Strayhorn (2012). One of the ways that Strayhorn (2012) defines belonging is through social support on higher education campuses. Social support could be through faculty, staff, and students. Other scholars maintain that strong social networks foster connection and belonging for students on higher education campuses (Hurtado et al., 2015; Strayhorn, 2019). Additionally, if undocumented

students can build positive relationships faculty and staff on their college campuses, they are able to build community (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Contreras, 2009; Gonzales et al., 2013; Garcia & Tierney, 2011; Teranishi et al., 2015).

Most of the participants in my study lacked belonging. It is important for vulnerable populations such as undocuBlack students to experience a sense of belonging on college campuses. Although the literature does not solely focus on undocuBlack students, other scholars have demonstrated the need for a sense of belonging for all college students. For instance, prior literature suggests that intersectional identities do shape undocumented students' sense of belonging on college campuses (Enriquez, 2016; Gonzales, 2016; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). Through my analysis of the interview data, I noticed that participants in the current study did not feel a sense of support from or connection with faculty or staff. Many participants were frustrated with faculty and staff who did not know how to answer questions related to the undocumented student experience. As mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5, many participants were told to go to multiple staff members for support but were then directed elsewhere because no one knew how to answer their questions. This finding is consistent with other studies that demonstrated that undocumented students had difficulties with faculty and other administrators who could not provide support or answer questions (Contreras, 2009; Pérez et al., 2010). Furthermore, this finding shows the importance of having faculty and staff who can competently answer undocumented student-related questions. It is important to provide undocumented students access to faculty and staff members who can effectively support them (Cervantes et al., 2015; Chen & Rhoads, 2016; Suárez-Orozco et

al., 2015). My study upholds that having undocu-competent faculty and staff is important in fostering belonging for undocumented students.

Additionally, participants noted that they did not see undocuBlack staff in USRC's or other spaces designed to support undocumented students. This observation is important because even the participants who joined undocumented student clubs or those who engaged with the USRC's on their campus were hoping to engage with staff who understood their experiences. Participants often observed that the staff members in undocumented student spaces were only Latinx, which contributed to their lack of belonging. For instance, participants noted that they did not see staff who looked like them; and they did not see other undocuBlack students on campus or within these spaces. It is important for staff in those spaces to serve as representatives for undocuBlack students. Prior literature asserts that undocumented students' belonging in those spaces is powerful because it provides membership and intimacy to navigate higher education as an insider (Torres-Olave et al., 2021). However, participants in my study struggled to connect to staff members in those spaces because they did not represent any social markers that they deemed important for connection and community.

Furthermore, research suggests that relationships with faculty and staff members create motivation and support for undocumented students (Contreras, 2009; Gonzales et al., 2013; Pérez et al., 2010). Additionally, according to Gonzales (2016), faculty and staff members can play a crucial role in undocumented students' lives by providing them with ways to own their narratives. Studies have shown that supportive and sensitive staff who are knowledgeable about state and federal policies and institutional practices can counter the negative and discriminatory messages undocumented students receive (Chen

et al., 2010; Contreras, 2009; Perez & Rodriguez, 2011; Perez et al., 2010). Additionally, studies have demonstrated that positive student and faculty interactions impact student persistence and success (Lange, 2014; Tinto, 1993). Therefore, it is crucial that higher education institutions provide undocumented Black students with access to faculty and staff members who are informed about immigration and the issues facing the undocumented students they serve.

Participants experienced a lack of belonging with students as well. As prior research proposes, students with multiple intersecting identities or salient identities seek connection and community on college campuses (Valdez and Golash-Boza, 2020). Participants in my study reflected on the student experience as one that was conflicting and isolating. When students were in Black spaces, they had a hard time connecting with African American students, and when they were in undocumented spaces, they had difficulty connecting with undocumented Latinx students. Some participants claimed, Latinx students do not have similar experiences to them because they are not Black. Even though undocumented Latinx students share the undocumented identity, these participants felt further removed from them because of their Blackness. This finding is aligned with the argument that undocumented students may not feel a sense of belonging on college campuses, especially when navigating a homogeneous environment (Johnson et al., 2007; Stephens et al., 2012) such as undocumented student spaces that only have undocumented Latinx students. The same concept can be applied to Black spaces as well.

In summation, participants in the current study did not feel a strong sense of social support from faculty and staff on their respective higher education campuses, both inside and outside of undocumented student spaces. Furthermore, participants also did

not feel community with other students, whether Black or undocumented. These findings indicate that participants lacked a sense of belonging in undocumented and Black spaces on campus. As noted by scholars such as Buenavista (2016), non-Latinx undocumented students recognize their undocumented status as different from their Latinx counterparts. This means they do not assume the same identities as undocuLatinx students. Therefore, undocuBlack participants in my study often felt alone. This finding is aligned with prior research that suggests that undocumented students are always in an ambiguous belonging space (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). As noted by Torres-Olave et al., (2021), if students on a college campus do not feel a sense of belonging, they will feel isolated and alienated, which would affect their persistence in higher education. While all participants in the current study were either successfully persisting in higher education or already graduated, my findings reflected the impact that a lack of belonging had on participants' collegiate experiences. The ways in which students made sense of their identities were shaped by the ways they experienced spaces and people.

### *Liminality*

Through my analyses, I noticed that participants experienced a lack of belonging because of liminality. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2011) define liminality as “the transitional moment between spheres of belonging when social actors no longer belong to the group they are leaving behind and do not yet fully belong in their new social sphere” (p. 444). Given this definition, participants in the current study experienced liminality because they realized that their undocumented status limited their options. They realized that society no longer viewed them as hard-working students but instead as students who were not guaranteed protection or opportunities. This finding is aligned with other studies that

state that undocumented students begin to reassess their life choices once they understand the limitations that an undocumented status places on them (Gonzales et al., 2013; Jacobo & Ochoa, 2011). In my current study, all but one participant found out they were undocumented before college. Once the participants understood how their undocumented status would affect them and their pursuit of higher education, they experienced liminality, which contributed to a lack of belonging. As Menjivar (2006) noted, once undocumented students come to terms with their undocumented status, they develop a sense of liminality which creates a feeling of not belonging anywhere. This understanding of status contributed to a lack of belonging because participants no longer felt they were similar to their undocumented student counterparts. This finding is important because the moment from “finding out” to “understanding” impacted the way participants experienced their undocumented and Black identities.

According to Zhong and Batalova (2019), most students who graduate high school feel a sense of opportunity or freedom. However, many participants in my current study felt angry because they understood it meant they had no access to federal financial aid, limited access to scholarships, limited access to acquiring a driver’s license, or the reality that they could not obtain a job if they were not documented. Some participants in the study were valedictorians of their high school class, earned all A’s in their high school coursework, or worked hard because they were told that if they worked hard they would have ample opportunities to pursue higher education. However, once they understood the limitations of their undocumented status, they no longer felt that the opportunities they were promised were available to them. Participants reflected on how this understanding caused them to “lower their standards” or “alter their dreams.” Others

completely gave up their dreams of higher education for a time while they searched for normalcy.

While feelings of liminality began in high school for the participants in this study who found out about their status in high school, it continued throughout their collegiate experiences. This was true for all participants in the current study. The literature has centered the impact of liminal status for undocumented students, those who are caught between legality and illegality (Gonzales, 2011; Heeren, 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Once participants enrolled in higher education, they still struggled with balancing what it meant to be an undocumented student and how their Blackness contributed to the new identity they now must navigate. Many participants noted that they struggled with their mental health, and experienced depression or feelings of hopelessness. The mental health effect of liminality has been well documented by scholars such as Gonzales and Chavez (2012), Salas et al., (2013) , and Suárez-Orozco et al. (2011). Similar to participants in the current study, in the aforementioned studies, liminality had a negative effect on undocuBlack participants' health and growth. Additionally, literature highlights the complexity of liminality for those with access to DACA or other intersecting identities and how those identities can affect higher education experiences (Gonzales, 2011; Heeren, 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Another prevalent understanding in my study is that there is a difference in experiences between DACAdmented and unDACAdmented status. For instance, those without DACA status often felt they did not belong in spaces and were even further isolated because of race and a doubly disadvantaged immigrant status. They felt they were caught in a space of illegality and legality because they could not access

opportunities those with DACA could. However, even while students with DACA status could now access a driver's license or find a job that could legally pay them, they still feared being deported, as DACA does not provide protection from deportation.

Understanding the differences in experiences between unDACAmented and DACAmented students is an important finding of this study. It was important for me as the researcher to acknowledge the privilege of DACA recipients. The difference between participants with DACA and without DACA finding demonstrated the need for practitioners and scholars to be more mindful of only highlighting or providing experiences and opportunities for DACAmented students. It is also important for practitioners to understand the limitations of DACAmented status. As noted in previous studies (e.g., Benuto et al., 2018), while undocumented students grow up feeling like they do not belong, once they attain DACA status, the feeling of limitation is temporarily masked because the DACA executive order can change at any time. This is important for unDACAmented students to know as well because while DACAmented students have temporary protections, they still face challenges like other undocumented students, such as cost of attendance and lack of federal aid (Gómez et al., 2017; Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014).

Although a sense of belonging was influenced by the spaces occupied by participants, they also experienced a lack of belonging because they were caught between legality and illegality. According to Gonzales and Burciaga (2018) illegality is influenced by race, social class, and other demographic characteristics. They navigated spaces without feeling as if they truly belonged and that affected how they experienced higher education.

*Master Status*

According to Hughes (1945), who famously discussed master status, demographic characteristics and social categories strongly influence how people are treated and automatically put one status over the other. For Hughes, a master status identity is defined as an identity that can impact the life opportunities of an individual when interacted with other identities. Essentially, Hughes argued that the most salient identity functions as the master status. Since then, scholars such as Gonzales and Burciaga (2018) contend that when intersecting identities are involved, the undocumented status functions as a master status. As noted by Terriquez (2015), illegality functions as a master status and significantly affects postsecondary outcomes for undocumented students. According to scholars such as Valdez and Golash-Boza (2020), undocumented status is not a master status as it relates to sense of belonging and neither is ethnicity or class. Enriquez (2017) argues that undocumented status serves as a “final straw” not a master status because when accompanied with other marginalizing identities, it affects educational outcome for students (p.1527). While most of the scholars who have researched master status centered Latinx participants, the studies they conducted are still important to reference as the literature for undocuBlack participants is scant. However, I argue that race serves as a master status for undocuBlack participants in my study. My contention aligns with Hughes (1945), who asserts that race functions as a master status, especially for Black Americans, as “[being Black] tends to overpower, in most crucial situations, any other characteristics that may run counter to it” (p. 357).

The discussion of master status emerged in my analysis because of the intersecting identities of participants and was influenced by the intersectionality

framework that guided the study. For many participants, their reflections suggested that being undocumented affected the way they experienced life; they could not get a driver's license or access federal aid or health insurance because of their immigrant status. However, as many noted, if they were Black American citizens, they could access a driver's license, health insurance, and federal aid. Nonetheless, when they described their Blackness, they saw it as an indirect consequence of their experiences, such as being discriminated against because of their skin color or faculty members not valuing their academic work, but they did not see their Blackness as an identity that limited their opportunities.

Based on their reflections, one could argue that participants deem their undocumented status as a master status because they often felt most affected by their undocumented status. However, I contend that their undocumented status is not a master status; it is a "compounded status" and that race functions as the master status. For instance, participants discussed the direct effects of their undocumented status: the financial burden they faced, the lack of inclusion they felt in Black spaces, the inability to obtain a driver's license, the inability to access healthcare, not being able to obtain a job on campus, and the burden of being deported. However, they did note that all these challenges were made harder because they were also Black. They viewed their undocumented status as an identity they could navigate if they were not also Black, which supports my argument that race functions as a master status. If they were not Black, undocumented status could serve as a master status, but with the history of racism in America, race functions as a salient identity for most people. For instance, according to Easter (2018), not only do undocuBlack people think about deportation, but they have the

additional fear of systemic racism that has afflicted Blacks in America for years.

Therefore, I also agree with Enriquez (2016) that undocumented status is not a master status. However, I argue that it is a compounded status that when combined with other identities serves as a “final straw” effect. Master status is important to address in this study because it affects the sense of belonging among undocuBlack college students.

According to Paulos (2018), the communication director for Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI), “Black people in this country have historically been invisible in a lot of legislation, a lot of public policy. That invisibility only gets amplified as an immigrant” (Easter, 2018). My study shifts the conversation about sense of belonging, liminality, and master status and challenges scholars to think of undocuBlack people as a focal group. My study demonstrates the nuances of social and demographic effects that race, especially Blackness, compounded with undocumented status has on undocuBlack students. However, while my study is focused on undocuBlack college students, my findings lend insight to undocuBlack people in general. This study shows that Blackness can function as a master status because of the systematic racist society in which participants exist. My study challenges scholars to consider the nuances of master status when discussing undocumented people.

#### Constructing Engagement within the Higher Education Context

Another central goal of the current study is to gain perspective into undocuBlack college students’ engagement as it relates to institutional support and services available to them. A plethora of research suggests that if college students are engaged on their campus, it leads to better academic performance (Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 1993). Some studies focus on the importance of civic engagement and the sense of belonging it creates for

undocumented students (Muñoz, 2016; Negrón-Gonzales, 2014; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Additionally, other studies demonstrate that undocumented students seek opportunities to be involved in extracurricular activities in higher education (Gonzales, 2016; Hernandez et al., 2010). Furthermore, the literature lends insight into the importance of undocufriendly campuses and how such an environment supports undocumented students to successfully navigate higher education (Suarez-Orosco et al., 2015). However, within the context of my current study, I focus on student engagement as it relates to whether participants joined clubs or organizations, formed relationships with faculty or staff members, and how they utilized institutional resources. Focusing on student engagement in this way is important to understand the impact that institutional resources had on undocuBlack students.

Prior literature suggests that engagement on college campuses leads to greater student persistence (Chen & Rhoads, 2016) and that access to campus resources can also increase student success (Quaye & Harper, 2014; Tinto, 1993). Themes that emerged suggest that undocuBlack students' engagement was closely related to the resources and services available to them on their respective campuses. A compelling finding was that DACAmented students were more engaged than their unDACAmented counterparts. This finding demonstrates the relative privilege that DACAmented students experience because they have access to scholarships, jobs, internships, and other opportunities. Another finding was that students who had access to undocumented student resource centers (Dream Centers) were more engaged in campus activities as well. This finding is corroborated by scholars such as Cisneros and Valdivia (2020), Cisneros and Reyna Rivarola (2020), and Cisneros et al. (2021) who suggest that undocumented student

resource centers provide opportunities for undocumented students to be engaged on their college campuses. This section provides a discussion about the importance of institutional support for undocuBlack students on college campuses and why institutional agents and undocumented student resource centers are necessary for undocumented students to be successful in higher education.

#### *UndocuBlack Student Engagement is Related to Institutional Support*

Participants' use of services was impacted by what was available on their campus. As noted in Chapter 5, 11 participants indicated that their higher education institution did not offer support services for undocumented students. Their institutions also did not provide access to faculty or staff members who could answer questions, scholarships that cater specifically to the undocumented student experience, or clubs or organizations for undocumented students. This finding is supported by other studies that suggest that undocumented students are often denied access to institutional resources and services (Enriquez et al., 2019). Additionally, this finding demonstrates the need for more informed institutional agents who can provide support to undocumented students.

According to Stanton-Salazar (2011), the term "higher education institutional agents" refers to college administrators (e.g., admissions staff, financial aid officers, recruitment staff) who are "high-status, non-kin, agents who occupy relatively high positions. . .and who are well positioned to provide key forms of social and institutional support" (p. 1066). For the purposes of the current study, I refer to institutional agents in the same way. Nienhusser (2018) contends that institutional agents are important to undocumented students' access and success in higher education. However, based on my findings, the institutional agents that participants encountered were not helpful, which led

to students not wanting to be engaged. This is because institutional agents are often not prepared to work with undocumented students (Stebbleton & Aleixo, 2015). This finding is not surprising as other scholars have also corroborated the lack of knowledge that many institutional agents possess related to advising unDACAmented and DACAmented students (Contreras, 2009; Gildersleeve & Ranero, 2010; Nienhusser et al., 2016). Therefore, while institutional agents are important for undocumented students, it is paramount for students to have access to institutional agents who are competent and informed so that those undocumented students can have access to more opportunities on campus.

Research supports the value of informed institutional agents asserting that they serve as allies to students and expand resources and support on campuses (Chen & Rhoades, 2016; Nienhusser, 2018). Additionally, others have argued that if institutional agents are undocu-competent, they will encourage undocumented students to be engaged on campus (Tapia-Fuelier, 2019; Valenzuela et al., 2015). I argue that undocu-competent institutional agents provide undocuBlack students with the safety and security they need to engage in campus activities, which will then lead to positive campus experiences and success within higher education. While every campus might not have the capacity or funding to create a USRC or DREAM Center, they can implement policies and guidelines for staff who can support undocumented students and thereby encourage greater student engagement, leading to important educational outcomes.

#### *Undocumented Student Resource Centers Led to Engagement*

As noted in Chapter 5, only four of the participants had access to an undocumented student resource center on their college campus, but those four were more

engaged in campus activities. Those undocuBlack participants were involved in student government, organizations, leadership roles, and had a more positive collegiate experience with competent staff. This finding demonstrates the need for more higher education institutions to create undocumented student resource centers. The literature supports that the benefits USRCs provide including support services to undocumented students and the greater campus community (Cisneros & Rivarola, 2020; Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018; Cisneros et al., 2021). Because of structural and legal barriers, undocumented students seek access to undocumented student centers because they offer unique support such as scholarships, mental health counseling, and food pantries (Cisneros & Reyna Rivarola, 2020). Additionally, undocumented student resource centers provide a sense of belonging for undocumented students (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020; Enriquez et al., 2019). Furthermore, undocumented students often lack opportunities to build community on campus because of immigrant status and lack of institutional supports (Garcia & Tierney, 2011). Undocumented student centers or safe spaces for those students provide opportunities for them to build connection and find resources. Therefore, I argue that more higher education institutions need undocumented student resource centers on their campuses.

In my study, while some of the institutional agents in the undocumented student resource centers understood undocumented student issues, they were often uninformed about the undocuBlack experience. This demonstrates the need for diversity of staff in these centers and greater training. According to Salinas (2015), non-Latinx undocumented students rarely see different ethnic or racial groups in undocumented student spaces. Additionally, Chang (2013) has noted that scholars have pointed to the

lack of diversity on higher education campuses, which also points to the literature around the microaggressions that institutional agents have exposed undocuBlack students to (Munoz & Vigil, 2018; Perez Huber, 2009). Additionally, scholars have noted that undocumented students will often seek spaces through diversity offices or other organizations if they do not have an undocumented student resource center on their campus (Contreras, 2009; Huber & Malagon, 2007). This is important to note because participants in the current study reported the lack of representation they encountered in undocumented spaces, classrooms, and on their respective campuses as a whole. If undocumented student resource centers become a place for undocuBlack students, the staff and programming need to be reflective of the student population served.

This study provides insight into how support services impacted the way undocuBlack students engaged in campus activities. Ultimately, undocuBlack students who had access to institutional resources and support were more inclined to be engaged in campus life. Those with access to informed institutional agents had a more positive higher education experience. Participants without access to any form of institutional support spent less time on campus, rarely utilized other services, and had a hard time finding opportunities to engage on campus. Conversely, participants with access to undocumented student resource centers were more active in campus life. The need for informed institutional agents and undocumented student resource centers is supported by the literature. Furthermore, diversity of staff on higher education campuses is crucial in the success of undocumented students.

## Limitations

As mentioned throughout the study, intersectionality served as the guiding theoretical lens for the current study and was beneficial for centering the narratives of undocuBlack students in higher education, exposing the inequities they face, such as invisibility and lack of resources, and revealing the conflict they experience with balancing their identities. However, while I contend that the intersectionality lens was the right lens to guide my study, there were other suitable frameworks that could have guided the current study as well. For instance, UndocuCrit theory would have had advantages as well. UndocuCrit is influenced by Critical Race Theory and is a new attempt to understand the varying experiences of undocumented life (Aguilar, 2019; Gonzales, 2016). UndocuCrit provides a way to acknowledge the different struggles within the undocumented community (Castrejón, 2020). UndocuCrit focuses on understanding the nuanced experiences of undocumented life. Further research is needed to examine the experiences of undocuBlack students in higher education through other nuanced theoretical lenses.

Additionally, because the current study focused primarily on the intersection of race and immigrant status, further studies are needed to explore the intersections of race, gender, and status. For instance, in the current study, there were six males and nine females, but I did not address gender differences between the participants, and I did not focus any of my interview questions on gendered experiences. This was an intentional focus, as I wanted to understand more about the experiences of how being Black affects undocumented student experiences and less about the role that gender plays in those experiences. Additionally, because the undocumented student population is so small and

even smaller for undocuBlack students, I chose to contain my analysis to race and undocumented status. However, my study is unique in that the sample size did have a fairly even split between males and females, which indicates that there could have been some information learned from this study about the complexity of balancing gender, race, and immigrant status. Further studies that center the intersections of multiple complex identities would help us understand how different complex identities affect undocumented student experiences.

Furthermore, there were other limitations within this study such as the impact of the Trump presidency, location of participants, and the role the COVID-19 pandemic played in affecting the experiences of undocuBlack students. For instance, in the current study, five participants discussed the mental anguish they experienced while former president Donald Trump was in office. Participants with DACA status noted that after the Trump administration rescinded the policy, they felt like their lives were altered. Additionally, unDACAmented participants noted that Trump's presidency served as a catalyst for them to stay hidden in the shadows. However, I chose not to focus specifically on the impact of Trump's presidency because it was not unique to undocuBlack students. Nonetheless, further studies are needed to understand and explore how Trump's presidency affected undocuBlack higher education experience. In addition, the location of the participants in my study was not discussed in detail. Participants were located in different states such as California, Georgia, New York, Texas, and Utah. Further research is needed to understand the role that location plays in influencing the experiences of Black undocumented students traversing through higher education. This is important because of the different state policies regarding immigration in every state.

Additionally, while I did not discuss the impact the COVID-19 pandemic played in affecting the experiences of undocuBlack students in this study, there were four participants who noted that the pandemic affected the time they spent on campus. Further research is needed about the impact of COVID-19 on undocuBlack students, especially considering the effects of the pandemic on the Black population at large.

Moreover, I did not include Afro-Latinx participants in my study. The current study involved Black undocumented students from the African diaspora, but did not include Afro-Latinx students. It is important to address that this was not an intentional exclusion. After my recruitment was publicized, only undocuBlack students from the African diaspora reached out to be involved in the study. Therefore, my study is unique in nature as it only includes undocuBlack students from the African diaspora. However, it is important to note that undocuBlack and undocuLatinx are not mutually exclusive.

Finally, while higher education students were my focus, as systemic and structural barriers limit undocuBlack students' opportunities to access higher education, future studies should focus on those who have not been able to access higher education.

The findings of the current study provide insight into undocuBlack students' collegiate experiences and highlight the invisibility that undocuBlack students experience while navigating higher education. It reveals the conflicting nature of balancing both Black and undocumented identities and suggests that engagement in campus activities is influenced by access to institutional resources. Furthermore, the current study demonstrates the need for further scholarship about the undocuBlack student collegiate experience and inclusive practices on how to support a diverse undocumented community. Of particular significance to theory and practice are findings pertaining to

how race impacts undocumented identity and the tangible ways in which race causes undocuBlack people to not be served by policymakers, higher education professionals, and the undocumented community. My study provides insights for higher education practitioners, faculty, and staff members. Additionally, my findings inform recommendations to undocumented student allies about how to center and include the undocuBlack narrative in policy decisions.

### Implications

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### *Implications for Theory*

The intent of this study is to understand how being Black and undocumented affect the collegiate experiences of undocuBlack students. The intersectionality framework asserts that differences with intersectional identities are a result of multiple factors, which leads to inequities (Crenshaw, 1991; Nichols & Stahl, 2019). Specifically, the undocumented community is diverse and the multiple identities that undocuBlack students hold shape how they experience the world, including higher education (Collins 2015; Davis 2008). Additionally, because undocuBlack students are not centered in the immigrant conversation, the intersectional theoretical lens asserts that this sub-group should be centered and promotes the idea that undocuBlack students have complex overlapping identities (Hancock, 2007). Furthermore, Crenshaw (1991) argued that intersectionality critiques oppressive forces and the findings from my study allows for this.

Investigating race and immigration status from an intersectional approach highlights the way that undocuBlack students are excluded from undocumented and Black communities. It demonstrates that intersecting identities further displace those who are already marginalized. If policymakers, scholars, activists, and institutional agents fail to acknowledge the unique nature of those identities, then they fail to include them in laws, activists' agendas, and higher education policies that affect undocumented students. UndocuBlack students have less access and support within higher education (Clark-Ibáñez et al., 2012). Additionally, Black undocumented students are not centered in the current research, which mainly focuses on the Latinx higher education student experience. My study critiques the homogeneity of the undocumented student experience

and points to prior literature that captures the power dynamics of intersectionality within communities (Cho, 2013). More directly, the intersectional framework asserts the various experiences of undocuBlack students within existing systems of privilege and oppression and argues that the stories of undocuBlack students should be visible and analyzed for equitable legal, structural, and institutional changes to be made. According to Carbado (2013), the intersectional framework identifies the subjectivities of the undocumented community and initiates opportunities for agency and resilience among the Latinx undocumented population. I apply the same approach to contend that my study advances the intersectionality framework by highlighting undocuBlack students' collegiate experiences and providing insight into the ways that policymakers, higher educational professionals, and the undocumented community can move toward equitable changes. This is an important step in advancing the narratives of the undocumented student experience within higher education.

The findings of my study allow for the undocumented community, higher education professionals, and policymakers to be critiqued about how they have ignored the undocuBlack student experience. Furthermore, the findings of the current study demonstrate that undocuBlack participants experienced inequities because of the two marginalized identities they held while navigating higher education. Additionally, the current study extends the intersectionality framework to issues pertaining to race within the undocumented community and offers a view for understanding undocuBlack students' collegiate experiences. The undocuBlack experience expands the understanding of intersectionality to include the effects of immigration status when combined with

being Black. My study provides additional support for the intersectionality framework by illustrating the unique experiences that undocuBlack students face in higher education.

### *Implications for Practice*

The current study has several implications for higher education practice. Through the intersectionality framework, it is evident that there needs to be a greater understanding of the way that undocuBlack students interact with their Blackness and immigrant status as they navigate higher education. The implications for practice are influenced by the intersectionality framework because the intersectionality lens calls out faculty members, staff members, and immigrant rights activists to work to develop a broader understanding of the experiences of undocuBlack college students; the way undocuBlack students experience undocumented spaces, the resources and services available to them, the way they are portrayed and valued, and how they are included in policy decisions. Based on the current study, practitioners interested in supporting undocuBlack students should create opportunities for a more inclusive higher education campus, diversify programming in undocumented spaces, provide mental health support, expand the Black narrative in Black spaces, and challenge the undocumented community to be more inclusive with the stories they tell. My analyses of the interview data showed perspectives of the collegiate experiences of undocuBlack students and detailed how they are excluded from the undocumented, Black, and higher education communities. These insights will be of importance to everyone who aims to fully support the diverse community of undocumented college students.

There are many immediate and long-term changes that can be put into practice. One of the most immediate practices should be to establish an on-campus food pantry for

all students experiencing food insecurity. Many of the participants in the current study noted how difficult it was to eat while on campus for classes because they did not have a meal plan or sufficient funds. Additionally, the literature underscores the importance of food pantries on college campuses for undocumented students (El Zein et al., 2018; Marshak et al., 2010). Another important practice is to create institutional housing grants for undocuBlack students. Of the 15 participants in the current study, 12 were commuter students because they could not afford to live on campus. This is significant because living on campus creates a sense of community, belonging, and higher levels of student persistence. Higher education professionals must work to create a sense of belonging on higher education campuses for undocuBlack students and create a more inclusive campus community (Valdez & Golash-Boza, 2020). Therefore, I believe institutions with a large population of undocumented students should create their own institutional housing grants to support with housing insecurity within the undocumented community.

Another immediate opportunity for practice is for higher education institutions to train faculty, staff, and other practitioners on how to support undocuBlack students on their campus. The literature already highlights the importance of trained and informed institutional agents working with undocumented students (Reyes, 2017). Institutional agents should also work to create mental health services for undocuBlack students. Mental health professionals should be available to assist students by addressing trauma and issues related to their undocumented status. This mental health support can also lead to higher academic performance and enrollment persistence (Lee et al., 2009; Schwitzer et al., 2018). While many students have access to mental health services while enrolled at a higher education institution, many students are not aware of the services available.

Higher education staff should work to promote the availability of mental services for undocuBlack students.

Other long-term change include diversifying undocumented spaces, such as undocumented student resource centers. One way to diversify undocumented spaces is to invite undocuBlack people to those spaces to share their stories. Exposing undocumented students to the Black narrative will broaden the portrait and perspective. It will be beneficial for undocuBlack students, as well as undocumented students of other sub-groups like undocuQueer and undocuAsian because then they will begin to see the diversity of the undocumented community. This will provide opportunities for undocuBlack students to see themselves represented and could also lead to more engagement in campus activities.

Another long-term practice is to be intentional about the training that is provided for the staff in those spaces. For most USRC roles, qualifications suggest that one must be fluent in Spanish, which already asserts that the Latinx community that will be served; it also eliminates undocuBlack people who might not speak Spanish to apply for those roles. Organizations and universities must be intentional when hiring a diverse group of staff who are representative of the undocumented population. Many participants noted how important scholarships like TheDream.US were for their college experience but also protested that the staff was never representative of them. These organizations can be more intentional about having a representative staff. The spaces on higher education campuses that serve undocumented students should have a diverse group of staff to serve a unique population with many intersecting identities.

Other long-term implications for practice include providing unDACAmented students with access to internship opportunities. Because many undocumented students still do not have access to DACA, undocumented organizations and centers must be deliberate and mindful of this difference and work to create opportunities for unDACAmented students to not feel ostracized while in those spaces. Participants in the current study reflected on the isolation they felt, as they could not access opportunities for DACA students. The undocumented community must be mindful of including unDACAmented students, as they deserve to be advocated for as well.

There are many changes that can be implemented to serve the undocumented community, and I believe that diversifying staff in USRCs, creating additional USCRC on campuses, providing access to internships for students without DACA, establishing food pantries, and mandating training for staff to support undocuBlack students is instrumental for future progress.

Ultimately, the findings of the current study provide insight into the conflicting realities of balancing multiple identities, the invisible nature of undocuBlack students, and the way they engage on college campuses. There is no way to fully serve the undocumented community if undocuBlack people remain invisible or isolated from the community to which they belong. UndocuBlack students must be represented in undocumented student spaces. UndocuBlack people must be present on staff teams such as the TheDream.US scholarship; they must work in undocumented student resource centers; their voices should be at the table with lawmakers; they should be represented in the classroom, and they should be at the table with other scholars. Additionally, the Black community must also do a better job of valuing undocuBlack lives by centering their

narratives as well. With inclusion in those spaces, undocuBlack narratives and experiences will be known, allowing activists, policymakers, and higher educational professionals to accurately advocate for the rights of the undocumented community.

### *Implications for Future Research*

The current study provided an interpretative phenomenological approach as it relates to the collegiate experiences of undocuBlack students. The findings demonstrated that the undocuBlack student perspective is under-researched and theorized within the literature. Additionally, the current study shed light on the need to fully understand the diversity of the undocumented community. Particularly, the findings demonstrate that undocuBlack students are made invisible within the undocumented community, the Black community, the media, and the literature. Also, undocuBlack college students balance the conflicting nature of being Black and undocumented, which affects their sense of belonging. Finally, the findings note that undocuBlack students with access to resources and support on their campuses were more engaged in campus activities. However, while the findings are important, they also point to critical questions and challenges that should be addressed within the literature. The most notable is that the undocuBlack perspective is insufficient, and there is a scarcity of literature about this group. The collegiate experiences of undocuLatinx students are well documented within the literature (e.g., Abrego, 2006; Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, 2010, 2011, 2015). Therefore, scholars have a duty to not only shed light on the higher education experiences of Latinx undocumented students but undocuBlack students as well. Further research is needed on the undocuBlack student experience, specifically regarding the additional barriers that undocuBlack students face when accessing or trying to persist in higher education

because of their intersecting marginalized identities. This research is necessary because it will help to create representation and resources for a vulnerable group.

Another notable area that was mentioned by participants is the isolation that unDACAmented Black students experience. The participants without DACA status felt further isolated from the undocumented community. Specifically, those unDACAmented students felt they could not connect or build community with other undocumented students or even the staff in USRCs because they felt excluded from opportunities. Therefore, further research is needed to address those additional barriers that unDACAmented students face.

Another area that needs to be explored is the experience of undocuBlack students in Black clubs and organizations on higher education campuses. Many of the participants in the current study noted how the Black spaces were only focused on the African American experience. Further research is needed to understand the role that immigrant status plays in isolating Black people from the Black American experience.

Finally, participants who had access to the undocuBlack network were vocal about the importance of that organization in their persistence in higher education. Further studies should be conducted to highlight those undocuBlack networks and the role they play in advancing access to higher education for undocuBlack people. The additional need for research can broaden the narratives of undocuBlack people and provide scholars, higher educational professionals, activists, and policy makers with an expanded view of the undocumented community.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the collegiate experiences of undocuBlack students as they relate to Blackness and immigrant status. The current study offers invaluable information to higher education professionals, the undocumented community, and activists on how to properly support undocuBlack students. The insights from this study have the potential to advance scholarship focused on the undocumented community; improve awareness and visibility of undocuBlack people; and influence institutional, state, and federal policies. As undocuBlack people are affected by federal, state, and institutional policies, their race, and their undocumented status, they deserve to be represented and supported by the undocumented community. It is important for the undocumented community to do a better job of creating inclusive supports for undocuBlack students. Furthermore, it is paramount that higher education institutions create more resources and support services on their campuses for this group. Finally, undocuBlack experiences should be centered and highlighted. UndocuBlack students should be able to occupy Black spaces without feeling as if the only way for them to belong is to be African American, and they should be able to feel represented in undocumented student spaces. Finally, scholars like myself, Black and undocumented, should be able to see our stories and experiences represented in the literature.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A. IRB APPROVAL FORM



Research Integrity & Compliance  
Student Faculty Center  
3340 N. Broad Street, Suite 304  
Philadelphia PA 19140

Institutional Review Board  
Phone: (215) 707-3390  
Fax: (215) 707-9100  
e-mail: [irb@temple.edu](mailto:irb@temple.edu)



Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects Research that is Approved as Exempt

Date: 11-Oct-2021

Protocol Number: 28677  
 PI: DAVIS, JAMES  
 Review Type: EXEMPT  
 Approved On: 11-Oct-2021  
 Risk: Minimal risk  
 Committee: A1  
 Sponsor: NO EXTERNAL SPONSOR  
 Project Title: THE INVISIBILITY OF UNDOCUBLACK STUDENTS WITHIN THE  
 UNDOCUMENTED COMMUNITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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 The IRB approved the protocol 28677.

The study was approved under Exempt review. The IRB determined that the research **does not require a continuing review**, consequently there is not an IRB approval period.

As this research was approved as Exempt, the IRB will not stamp the consent or assent form(s).

**Note that all applicable Institutional approvals must also be secured before study implementation.** These approvals include, but are not limited to, Medical Radiation Committee ("MRC"); Radiation Safety Committee ("RSC"); Institutional Biosafety Committee ("IBC"); and Temple University Survey Coordinating Committee ("TUSCC"). Please visit these Committees' websites for further information.

**Finally, in conducting this research, you are obligated to submit the following:**

- **Modifications - Any changes to the research that may change the Exempt status of this study must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.** Examples of such changes are: including new, sensitive questions to a survey or interview, changing data collection such that de-identified data will now be identifiable, including an intervention in the methods, changing variables to be collected from medical charts, decreasing confidentiality measures, including minors or adults lacking capacity to consent as subjects when previously only adults with capacity to consent were to be enrolled, no longer collecting signed HIPAA Authorization, etc. Please reach out to the IRB Staff with any questions about if a change to the study warrants a Modification.
- **Reportable New Information** - Using the Reportable New Information e-form, report new information items such as those described in HRP-071 Policy - Prompt Reporting Requirements to the IRB **within 5 days**.
- **Closure report** - Using a closure e-form, submit when the study is permanently closed to enrollment; all subjects have completed all protocol related interventions and interactions; collection of private identifiable information is complete; and analysis of private identifiable information is complete.

**APPENDIX B.*****RECRUITMENT EMAIL***

Felecia Russell is a doctoral student at Temple University, in the Higher Education Administration program. She is requesting volunteers for her dissertation research study aimed at understanding the experiences of undocuBlack students and their collegiate experiences. Black undocumented students have been an under-researched population as most of the conversations around the experiences of undocumented students have focused mostly on the Latino/a experiences. In order to best support undocumented students, it is important that the narrative and portrait of undocumented students is expanded and includes the stories of this diverse student population. Results of this research will provide higher education professionals with tools and resources they need to support undocuBlack students.

This study will involve one questionnaire and one semi-structured interview. The questionnaire will take about thirty minutes to complete and the interview will be sixty to ninety minutes. Participation is completely voluntary, and all information will be anonymous and confidential. I am asking for you to share the recruitment flyer so that I can get some volunteers for this important study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [felecia.russell@temple.edu](mailto:felecia.russell@temple.edu) or 951-310-0161.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Felecia Russell

## APPENDIX C.

### *RECRUITMENT FLYER*

#### **PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR A RESEARCH STUDY**

Hello! My name is Felecia and I am an undocuBlack doctoral student in the higher education administration program at Temple University. I am working to complete my dissertation in **understanding the experiences of undocuBlack students and their collegiate experiences.**

I am reaching out to ask if you would be willing to participate in my research.

Participants will take part in a 30 minute online questionnaire and a Zoom interview (approximately 60-90 minutes).

#### **PARTICIPANT CRITERIA**

- A. Identify as Black and undocumented
- B. Currently or previously enrolled at a two year college or university

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the experiences of undocuBlack students in higher education and how being Black and undocumented may have shaped their experiences to college access and success.

#### **WHY PARTICIPATE?**

In order to best support undocumented students, it is important that the narrative and portrait of undocumented students is expanded and includes the stories of this diverse student population. Results of this research will provide higher education professionals with tools and resources they need to support undocuBlack students.

**For more information about this study, or to volunteer to participate, please contact Felecia Russell** via email at: [felecia.russell@temple.edu](mailto:felecia.russell@temple.edu) or by phone at: 951-310-0161  
Higher Education Administration, Temple University

Thank you!!

Study's Title: The Invisibility of UndocuBlack Students in the Undocumented Community within Higher Education

## APPENDIX D.

*INFORMED CONSENT FORM*

<b>Title of Research</b>	The Invisibility of UndocuBlack Students within the Undocumented Community in Higher Education
<b>Investigators and Department</b>	Felecia Russell, Doctoral Student, Student Investigator Higher Education Program Policy, Organizational & Leadership Studies College of Education and Human Development Temple University
<b>Why am I being invited to take part in this research?</b>	I invite you to participate in this research because you filled out the invitation interest form, and you met both criteria of this project: a) identified as Black and undocumented b) currently or previously enrolled at a two or year college or university
<b>What should I know about this research?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Someone will explain this study to you.</li> <li>• Whether or not you take part is up to you.</li> <li>• You can choose not to take part.</li> <li>• You can agree to take part and later change your mind.</li> <li>• Your decision will not be held against you.</li> <li>• You can ask all the questions you want before you decide to participate.</li> </ul>
<b>Why is this research being done?</b>	The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the experiences of undocuBlack students in higher education and how being Black and undocumented may have shaped their experiences to college access and success. The results of this study will be shared in my dissertation.
<b>What happens if I agree to participate?</b>	<p>If you agree to participate in this research, initially, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire (30 minutes). Examples of questions include: where did you attend college? Did you apply for scholarships? Age? Gender identification? Then, you will be asked to participate in a 60-90 minute interview. You will be asked questions about your experience as an undocuBlack student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This interview will take place over Zoom and will last approximately 90 minutes. With your permission, your interview will be recorded to aid in transcription and accurate analysis.</li> <li>• Following the interview, the investigator may contact you to confirm or clarify information you provided.</li> <li>• You are not obligated to answer any questions, and you may withdraw from the research project at any time.</li> </ul>

<p><b>What happens to the information collected for this research?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recorded interviews and transcripts and your contact information will be stored in a password protected file accessible only to Felecia Russell.</li> <li>• To protect your identity, a pseudonym will be assigned to you.</li> <li>• Your name, contact information, and other identifying information will only be accessible to the researcher and will not be shared. Your contact information will only be used for follow-up purposes.</li> <li>• To the extent allowed by law, we limit the viewing of your personal information to people who have to review it. We cannot promise complete secrecy. The IRB, Temple University, and other representatives of those organizations may inspect the data you contribute to this research.</li> <li>• Interview recordings and transcripts will be deleted/destroyed once the research is completed.</li> <li>• Risks associated with communicating and sending documents via the internet will be minimized. Email communications with attached documents will be downloaded, saved as a hard copy drive, and immediately deleted upon storage.</li> <li>• Access to contact information and transcriptions will be limited to Felecia Russell.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who can I talk to about this research?</b></p>	<p>If you have questions, concerns, complaints, or think the research has hurt you, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr. James Earl Davis, Principal Investigator     <a href="mailto:james.davis@temple.edu">james.davis@temple.edu</a></p> <p>Felecia Russell, Student Investigator, <a href="mailto:felecia.russell@temple.edu">felecia.russell@temple.edu</a></p> <p>This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or email them at <a href="mailto:irb@temple.edu">irb@temple.edu</a> for any of the following :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.</li> <li>• You cannot reach the research team.</li> <li>• You want to talk to someone besides the research team.</li> <li>• You have questions about your rights as a research subject.</li> <li>• You want to give information or provide input about this research.</li> </ul>

**Signature Block for Adult Subject Capable of Consent**

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research. |

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of subject

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

---

Printed name of subject

---

Signature of person obtaining consent

---

Date

---

Printed name of person obtaining consent

**APPENDIX E.*****QUESTIONNAIRE***

1. Name (use pseudonym if preferred):
2. Email Address:
3. Phone Number:
4. Gender:
5. Age:
6. Nationality:
7. Current Immigration status:
8. Age you came to America:

**B. College Information**

1. Current or Previous name of College you attend or attended:
2. Why did you choose the college that you did?
3. Concentration/Major:
4. Graduation Date:

**C. Overall College Experiences**

1. Did you apply for any scholarships for undocumented students?
2. Were any of the scholarships specifically for Black undocumented students?
3. If none of the scholarships were for Black undocumented students, did that discourage you from applying?
4. Did you participate in any clubs or organizations while in college? If so, what were they?
5. Did you participate in in any clubs or organizations specifically for undocumented students? If so, what were they?
6. Was there a designated safe space on your college campus for undocumented students? If so, did you utilize it or not?
7. Did you participate in any clubs or organizations for Black students?

**APPENDIX F.*****INTERVIEW PROTOCOL*****Face-to-face Interview Consent Language**

As a participant in this study, you have a right to inform me how you want to be identified. This means that you can choose how to reveal your identification. I will be recording all conversations to ensure that we have accurate information. I will also be taking notes as we go.

Do you agree that I can record this conversation? Yes or No

I will then conduct the interview.

**INTERVIEW INFORMATION**

**Date of interview:**                      **Time Interview Started:**                      **Time**                      **Interview**  
**Ended:**

**First Name:**                      **MI:**                      **Last Name:**

The purpose of the interview is to explore the life of the participants, have them detail their experience, and make meaning of their experiences. The goal is gain more insight in to their early experiences as an undocumented person. The following questions will be my guide for the interview.

1. Tell me about how you learned that you were undocumented? Was this prior to or after enrolling at college?
  1. What were your initial experiences like as an undocuBlack person?
  2. Why did you pursue a college education?

1. What was your family's perspective on a college education?
2. Did you have support from family members to pursue a college degree?
3. Did you disclose your status to anyone at your institution? If so, what was that experience like?
4. What did it mean to use or not use support services for undocumented students?
  1. In the questionnaire you mentioned you joined or did not join clubs or organizations on campus for undocumented students, can you tell me more about this experience and what factor race played in your decision?
  2. In the questionnaire you mentioned you joined or did not join clubs or organizations on campus for Black students. Was immigration status ever mentioned? What was that experience like?
5. Can you recreate a day in your life as an undocuBlack college student?
  1. What were your relationships like with faculty, staff, or other students?
  2. Can you tell me how you think being Black and undocumented affected you completing or not completing your coursework?
6. What challenges or obstacles did you face as an undocuBlack college student?
  1. How did you get past those obstacles?
7. Do you think being Black made your immigration status feel more pronounced? If so, in what ways and can you describe that experience for me?
  1. How do you or did you understand your experience as an undocuBlack college student?
8. Do you consider being undocuBlack as being invisible within the undocumented community and in college? Can you detail this experience ?

9. Are there any resources directly for Black undocumented college students that you know of?
10. Is there anything else you want to share about how race and immigration status affected your college experience?

**CLOSING THE INTERVIEW** THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION. I will be transcribing this interview and providing you a summary of the interview, for clarification and/or further input. Would you prefer that I provide your copy: (circle one)

- via e-mail?                      -postal mail?                      -both?

If you have any further thoughts before you receive the summary, please feel free to email me at [felecia.russell@temple.edu](mailto:felecia.russell@temple.edu) or via phone at 951-310-0161.

I will send a follow up to the interview with a hand-written thank you note.

**RESEARCHER'S INTERVIEW NOTES**

A. Comments about the conduct, tone, progression of the interview etc.

-was the participant comfortable, nervous, open?

-were there interruptions or other events that changed the pace or effectiveness of the interview?

-did the interview flow well?

-what are my feelings & perceptions about the person I interviewed and the interview conduct, tone, progression etc.?

-what else occurs/emerges as a result of this interview?

-did the interviewee seem genuine in their responses?

B. Comments on interview protocol

-problems encountered, anything I would possibly change before I use this protocol again