

Lived Experiences of Undocumented Latin@ Students: Phenomenological Research Study

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Ricardo Pacheco

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Ricardo Pacheco

Approved by:

Dissertation Chair: Amanda Jandris, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Krista Allison, Ph.D.

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### Abstract

Undocumented Latin@ students face numerous life experiences. Economic, legal, and social difficulties are just a few examples affecting academic performance and potentially drop out of high school. The labeling as an undocumented Latin@ student increased the probability of nonparticipators in high school education, reducing college entry options, and societal rejection experiences. The qualitative, phenomenological research study explored the lived experiences of 20 undocumented Latin@ students. The aim was to address the connection between lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and the dropout rate in Lincolndale, New York. Latin@ is a term used in contemporary Latin culture to identify diverse Latinos as including gender-neutral members of the Latino community. The semi-structured interviews addressed the research questions of lived experiences and implementations for assisting undocumented Latin@ students. Various themes emerging from the data collection and analysis using MAXQDA are social-economic, sociocultural, family, school environment, religion, policy changes, economics, legal representation, communication, classes to fit goal objectives, bilingual teachers, college aspirations, and a sense of belonging. Collaborative initiatives between educators, support staff, parents/legal guardians can help undocumented Latin@ students achieve academic success. The research confirmed that life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students influence academic performance. No research study is available addressing specifically the undocumented Latin@ student's life experiences. The study will be shared with the Spanish Eastern District Institute and foster more dialogue on assisting undocumented Latin@ students.

## Dedication

I want to dedicate the dissertation to my wife, Marilyn, for the love, patience, support through my ordeal with prostate cancer and encouraging words to continue and finish my doctoral journey. Perseverance and determination are two powerful forces we have employed.

To my lovely daughter Samantha, thank you for assisting me in my recovery process and leaving your place of employment to do so. I am blessed to have a wonderful, beautiful, smart, and hard-working daughter for taking me through my recovery process and assisting me with learning to maneuver my ACE portal. Your contribution to house chores and cooking for daddy was a blessing, and your words of encouragement provided fuel for moving forward.

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Mrs. Bradley instilled in me a good education could open doors for success.

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	xi
List of Figures .....	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction To The Study .....	1
Background of the Problem .....	2
Purpose of the Study .....	6
Significance of the Study .....	7
Research Questions .....	10
Theoretical Framework .....	11
Definitions of Terms .....	13
Assumptions .....	14
Scope and Delimitations .....	15
Limitations .....	17
Summary .....	18
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	20
Literature Search Strategy .....	20
Theoretical Framework .....	21
Research .....	22
Literature Review .....	22
Historic Setup .....	23
Historical Political Context .....	24
Crossing the Border .....	25
Undocumented Latin@ Students in High School .....	27

Law and Public Policy. ....	34
Observation Notes.....	35
Discrimination.....	36
Latino Community .....	37
Policy and Governance. ....	39
Social Media Outlets.....	40
Political. ....	41
Language Barrier. ....	42
Gentrification. ....	43
School Choice. ....	45
Culture and Music.....	46
The Office of Refugee Resettlement Westchester. ....	46
Gap in Literature .....	48
Summary and Conclusions .....	48
Chapter 4: Research Findings And Data Analysis Results.....	67
Data Collection .....	67
Data Analysis .....	70
Central Research Question.....	77
Policy changes. ....	77
Economic influence. ....	77
Legal representation.....	78
Participant 1. ....	79
Participant 2. ....	80



Participant 3. ....	80
Participant 4. ....	81
Participant 5. ....	81
Participant 6. ....	82
Participant 8. ....	83
Participant 9. ....	83
Participant 10. ....	84
Participants 11. ....	84
Participant 13. ....	85
Participant 14. ....	86
Participant 15. ....	86
Participant 16. ....	87
Participant 17. ....	88
Participant 18. ....	89
Participant 19. ....	90
Participant 20. ....	90
Research Subquestion 2 .....	91
Better communication. ....	91
Engaging class lessons. ....	92
Bilingual teachers. ....	93
College aspirations. ....	93
A sense of belonging. ....	94
Reliability and Validity .....	97

Chapter 5: Discussion And Conclusions.....	100
Findings, Interpretation, and Conclusions .....	101
Limitations .....	105
Recommendations.....	106
Families of Undocumented Children .....	106
Local Officials .....	107
State Officials.....	107
National Officials.....	107
Community and Faith Involvement .....	108
Policymaking .....	108
Implications For Leadership .....	108
Conclusion .....	109
References.....	111
Appendix A: Carta De Reclutar .....	140
Appendix B: Recruitment Letter.....	141
Appendix C: Preguntas .....	142
Appendix D: Questions.....	143
Appendix E: Sme Clinician .....	144
Appendix F: Sme Responses From Clinician .....	145
Appendix G: Letter For Permission Request .....	147
Appendix H: Letter of Approval.....	148
Appendix I: Informed Consent Document.....	149

## List of Tables

## Table

1. NUMBER OF IDENTIFIED GENDER PARTICIPANTS AND PLACE OF ORIGIN .....	68
2. PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS.....	69
3. THEMES .....	71
4. RELEVANT QUOTES .....	73
5. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF THE PARTICIPANTS RESPONSES OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS ALIGNED WITH EMERGED THEMES .....	98

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Educational attainment of the population 18 years and over by country of origin (percentage), 2002. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2002). .....	9
Figure 2: Undocumented Latin@ student participants lived experiences responses.....	95

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The research explored undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences enrolled at the Lincolndale Haven, a school dedicated to working with undocumented Latin@ students dropping out from high school (Irvin, Byun, Meece, Reed, & Farmer, 2016). The undocumented Latin@ student population not graduating from high school is approximately 648,000, which is down from 16% in 2016 (Gramlich, 2017). Many of the undocumented Latin@ students are still behind compared to other ethnic groups in academic accomplishment (Crawford & Valle, 2016). For many undocumented Latin@ students' citizenship statuses may serve as a hindrance to obtaining citizenship statuses may hinder obtaining the necessary resources needed to enjoy an educational experience. The usage Latin@ is referenced for the inclusion of diverse Latino students instead of the everyday use Latina/o in mitigating any biases but maintaining inclusivity (Goodwin, 2016).

The Supreme court decision in the 1982 *Plyer v. Doe* afforded undocumented students' access to publicly funded high school education (Jefferies, 2014). Numerous undocumented Latin@ students residing in Lincolndale, New York State, are predominantly from Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. Undocumented Latin@ students from Mexico are 57%, Guatemala, and Honduras are 49% and may face the daunting task of graduating high school (Flores, Lopez, & Radford, 2017). The rate of undocumented Latin@ students completing high school is only 60% between the ages of 16–18 graduate from high school (Jefferies, 2014).

A disclaimer before moving forward, discussing the undocumented Latin@ students in the United States, a note on the usage of language was addressed in the study. The growing political climate is impacting the undocumented Latin@ population in different states around the United States. Undocumented Latin@ students are often hidden and the fastest growing minority

subpopulation demographic group in the United States (Goodwin, 2016). The U.S. Department of Education with states and local professional educators cannot ignore the need to address the segment of the population enrolled at the schools. Many undocumented Latin@ students face barriers from graduating from high school.

### **Background of the Problem**

Many undocumented Latin@ students endured adverse life experiences. Many undocumented Latin@ students crossed the border experienced dehydration and health-related injuries (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2015). Trekking hundreds of miles avoiding wild predators and facing hunger are some of the life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students who enter the United States. For some undocumented Latina@ students are torn between crossing the border in hopes of seeking opportunities and staying home with little recourse (Newell, Gómez, & Guajardo, 2017). Many undocumented Latin@ students crossing the border witness other fellow migrants suffer serious injury receiving no medical attention (Burnett & Greene, 2019). The Urban Institute report many of the labor traffickers overwhelmingly target undocumented Latin@ immigrants (Owen et al., 2014). Having limited command of the English language, undocumented Latin@ students find articulating the life experiences challenging (Mellom, Straubhaar, Balderas, Arial, & Portes, 2018).

Researchers tried to understand the motivating factor of undocumented Latin@ youth willingness to cross a dangerous terrain (Meiklejohn, Barbour, & Palermo, 2017). Undocumented Latin@ students who crossed the border shared horrific experiences about the journey. Some of the motivational factors are supporting family members economically back home. Many undocumented Latin@ students travel the long and dangerous trek in hopes of a better future and rescue family members from the dire living conditions back home. Many

undocumented Latin@ students escape extreme violence back home, crossing with traumatic experiences requiring schools and community members to assist (Caicedo, 2018).

The public forum on higher education for public good argues the necessary need to engage with undocumented Latin@ students and making the efforts to understand lived experiences forcing positive changes in schools (Murillo, 2017). Educational professionals and academic institutions are advocates through educational dialogue for changes to serve a demographic with an equitable education. Educational leaders, principals, and support staff cannot ignore the urgent need to create an environment fostering the opportunity to service undocumented Latin@ students and the life experiences, which may cause academic deficiency and not graduate (Gramlich, 2017). Many undocumented Latin@ students face challenges of life experiences affecting the education and limited resources to access for meeting the needs to cope with life experiences (Hire, 2015).

For the research, the undocumented Latin@ students' adverse life experiences are a contributing factor for some to drop out of high school. For some, overcoming these challenges are rewarded with graduating from high school, which presents both challenges and opportunities including university enrollment (Brown, 2015). Some undocumented Latin@ students may complete high school with a GPA of 2.0 (Diaz-Strong & Ybarra, 2016). Some undocumented Latin@ students may drop out and giving up on the prospect of graduating from high school.

Numerous undocumented Latin@ students from the Lincolnale school district not yet graduated with a 2.0 GPA receive extra academic assistance to maintain the GPA and graduate. However, the same students suffer life experiences, which may cause a lack of concentration and lower GPAs, and many opt-out from staying in school and work as an alternative (Diaz-Strong &

Ybarra, 2016). The GPA was the intended benchmark in determining what might have been a cause for undocumented Latin@ students' academic performance but variables may provide answers to undocumented Latin@ students' adverse life experiences. Educators and support staff at the Lincolndale Haven organization work diligently with each student to minimize stress levels of undocumented Latin@ students seeking to graduate. Various undocumented Latin@ students express missing loved ones back home. Crossing the border is a life experience with emotional, mental, spiritual consequences reflected in the classroom (Shi, Jimenez-Arista, Cruz, McTier, & Koro-Ljungberg, 2018). For many undocumented Latin@ students 18 years old and older, graduating from high school is the last thing the participants worried about because economic sustainability is essential.

Undocumented Latin@ students with enough credits typically graduate and the ceremonial procession is a walk through the hallway of the school receiving the diploma (Ors, 2018). Many of the undocumented Latin@ students are no longer the responsibility of the school once graduation has occurred. The school district has no follow-up with the students, as new and existing undocumented Latin@ students come to the Lincolndale, Haven, and educational professionals with support staff should begin working with the new group. The environment is like a revolving door, with new students enrolling into the 6 to 12 months program interval. The undocumented Latin@ students earning the required credit hours are assigned social workers to provide limited but necessary assistance for undocumented Latin@ students to navigate the process to enroll at Dutchess Community College or obtain employment (Ors, 2018).

With the influx of so many undocumented Latin@ students, professional educators, social services, and support staff are exhausting every possible resource; consequently, numerous



undocumented Latin@ students cope with life experiences alone (Cisneros & Lopez, 2016).

Undocumented Latin@ students is a subpopulation group with diverse Latino background speaking diverse Latino expressions, the common denominator for some undocumented Latin@ students are the lived experiences (Cobb, Meca, Xie, Schwartz, & Moise, 2017). Many of the marginalized undocumented Latin@ students from disproportionately poor communities may have difficulty performing well academically in school (Elliott & Lambert, 2018). Several undocumented Latin@ students face hostilities in classrooms from many students of different ethnic backgrounds (Crawford & Valle, 2016).

The problem explored in this phenomenological study is the role adverse life experiences play in the dropout rates of undocumented Latin@ high school students. Undocumented Latin@ students faced challenges from a young age in the United States, as undocumented youth and the constant reminder of society's status. Professional educators and teachers lack compassion and understanding of Latin@ position as undocumented can enhance the negative life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. Some staff members in Lincolnale anticipate engaging with undocumented Latin@ students a challenging task servicing the students with adequate resources.

The life experiences present a challenge for the undocumented Latin@ students and need exploration for the best possible service to assist the students. Intervention is essential and should address the life experiences essential to the economic, social, political, educational, emotional, and or spiritual dynamics of undocumented Latin@ students (Li et al., 2019). The language barrier is an issue for many of the undocumented Latin@ students, with Spanish being the dominant spoken language. Many of the faculties, educational leaders, and support staff do not speak Spanish (Hilburn, 2014). Many of the universities in Upstate New York offer a

teaching program with a minor in Spanish, as an elective to keep with the demand for teachers to comprehend, speak the language and are on the high order for job placement.

Many undocumented Latin@ students work part-time employment to supplement financially family members back home or here in the United States. Numerous undocumented Latin@ students work part-time for the agricultural industry in Lincolndale, New York, or different counties in Upstate New York, traveling vast distances in the early hours of the day before going to school. During the Spring, Summer, and Autumn season, the industry makes much of the finances, and many farmers hire undocumented Latin@ students (Sexsmith, 2017). Some of the undocumented Latin@ students work in the gardening season months with relatives, and the females work babysitting early hours or late in the evenings when picking up children from the daycare. Working long hours takes a toll on the Latin@ students affecting the academic performance in school.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and the high school dropout rate. Implementation of programs to assist students with the best possible educational experience is vital to the success of the student. Undocumented Latin@ students are no different from diverse students who need services to provide the best possible educational experiences and graduate (Spinney, 2015). Similarly, studies have been conducted on undocumented youth's lived experiences in other areas outside of the education, addressing the phenomenological experiences of undocumented Latin@ students (Gorichanaz, 2017).

Semi-structured interviews were the instrumentation for data collection of undocumented Latin@ student participants. Recording of the semi-structured interviews provided opportunities

to listen with clarity undocumented Latin@ student's responses. Identifying similarities in the life experiences is essential to service undocumented Latin@ students' implementation of programs to enhance the educational experience in a positive format.

Studies on the correlation of undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences to the dropout rate in Lincolndale, New York, for implementation of programs do not exist. Undocumented Latin@ could have programs of implementation to assist with academic assistance, for example tutoring or mentoring, but no program exists to address adverse life experiences. The qualitative study could explore a unique and fresh perspective on undocumented Latin@ life experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018).

Many undocumented Latin@ students living in Upstate New York live with distant relatives separated from parents (Raza, Saravia, & Katsiaficas, 2018). Lovato (2019) suggested separation may cause the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students for many undocumented Latino families to contribute to the dropout rate. Undocumented Latin@ students' life experiences may correlate with the high school dropout rate in Lincolndale, New York (Rangel-Clawson, 2016). The phenomenological approach explored the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and the relation to leaving school. The study can be shared with various members of the community faith-based, civic, and community leaders, including the Lincolndale Haven, to foster dialogue for implementations of services to improve the life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study provides information gained to influence the improved services of undocumented Latin@ students. From a financial perspective, the United States cannot afford to provide financial sustenance to all undocumented Latin@ students residing here,

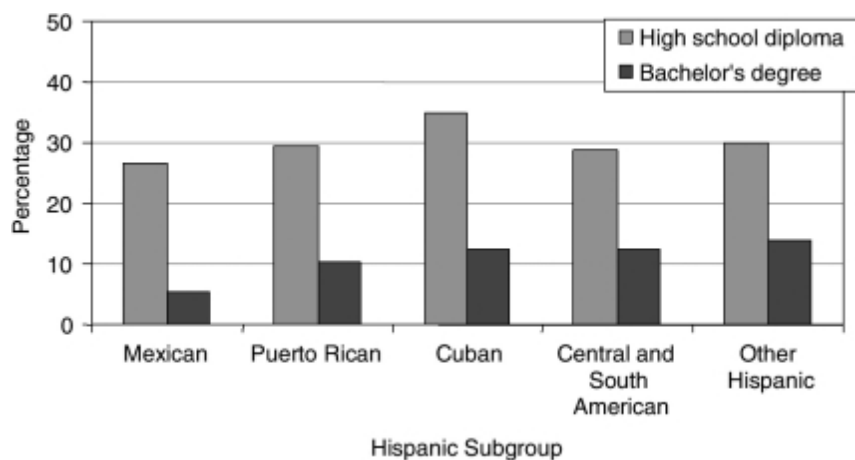
notwithstanding the status of citizenship and many lacking essential skillsets for the good of society and personal financial sustenance (Diaz-Strong & Ybarra, 2016). Learning how undocumented Latin@ students adapt in times of distress can help educators and support staff implement much-needed services for undocumented Latin@ students. For example, educators and support staff can partner with Latino communities to foster opportunities to assist undocumented Latin@ students with coping, overcoming adverse lived experiences, and graduating from high school.

While facilitating the phenomenological approach, semi-structured interviews from undocumented Latin@ students postulated a comprehensive data of the participant's adverse lived experiences. The data was classified into prominent themes, offering the school opportunities for improved services to meet undocumented Latin@ students' needs. The shared experiences of undocumented Latin@ students may be unique to the school, educators, support staff and integrating programs to assist undocumented Latin@ students can benefit all parties invested in helping the students succeed.

Numerous undocumented Latin@ students between the ages of 18–20, 40% have less than a high school education compared to 8% of U.S.-born counterparts (McHugh & Morawski, 2015). The adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students may contribute to the dropout rate (Hernandez, 2017). The opportunity to learn about the undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences may provide opportunities for services available to assist the students.

Undocumented Latin@ students are a significant minority group in the United States (Hsin & Ortega, 2018). Many undocumented Latin@ students do not fare well in school compared to other minorities, therefore, many variables are being researched to determine the

lived experiences (Padilla & Ryan, 2018). Marginalization, discrimination, and racism are just a few of the variables. Undocumented Latin@ students in educational experiences are at a disadvantage without the social and economic means and support (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Educational attainment of the population 18 years and over by country of origin (percentage), 2002. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2002).

Programs in schools can offer undocumented Latin@ students an opportunity for new positive life experiences to graduate (Benuto, Casas, Cummings, & Newlands, 2018). Numerous undocumented Latin@ students must work to help subsidize income to pay bills and to support family members, thus sacrificing time from school (Sexsmith, 2017). Teachers and support staff are essential to bridging relationships with students who are illegal for graduation (Murillo, 2017). For some undocumented Latin@ students graduating from high school and pursuing enrollment at a higher academic institution is a challenge (Crisp et al., 2015).

Fostering engagement with undocumented Latin@ students is essential to understand the demographic group. Some of the undocumented Latin@ students are not able to obtain basic school supplies because of family financial constraints. Budgetary constraints from various

states may present a challenge to support undocumented Latin@ students (Padilla & Ryan, 2018).

The increased enrollment of undocumented Latin@ students in Mid-Hudson Valley has garnered educators' and leaders' attention concerning the provision of practical educational resources. Undocumented Latin@ are part of the community and schools in Mid-Hudson Valley can engage to provide instruction to a diverse group of undocumented Latin@ students. Many educators are concerned and under pressure to provide, under the governor's current policies and controlled democratic senate, to provide satisfactory instruction to undocumented Latin@ students (Safstrom, 2018).

### **Research Questions**

The following qualitative research questions addressed the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. The responses provided in-depth information addressing the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. The participants attentively engaged in the interview process with responses.

Central Research Question: What are the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students who dropout of high school and how do educators, activists, and immigration lawyers respond to these students in the Hudson Valley?

Research Subquestion 1: What are some of the adverse lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and how do they impact the decision to drop out of high school?

Research Subquestion 2: What type of support systems assist undocumented Latin@ students to graduate from high school?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Critical race theory (CRT) indicates racism as socially prevalent in society (Aguilar, Cannella, & Huerta, 2019). Researchers of CRT study constructed social norms from various institutions, particularly racism and discrimination (Kiehne, 2016). The Latino critical theory (LatCrit) is an offset of CRT, researching the legality and educational aspects of social and legal positioning of undocumented Latin@ community in the United States. The theory assists in explaining the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. LatCrit theory includes policy benefits, housing, educational resources, and the social impacts affecting undocumented Latin@ students (Delgado-Romero, Singh, & De Los Santos, 2018).

Educational institutions neglect curriculum and pedagogical design for other ethnic groups and forget undocumented Latin@ students' educational needs and life experiences (Acer & Byrne, 2017). Many undocumented Latin@ students in the mainstream culture are displaced into inferior educational institutions. Undocumented Latin@ students with no accessibility to specialized critical thinking instruction can lead to unpreparedness for academic institutions or opportunities to participate as interns in fellowships (López & Matos, 2018). Under CRT's umbrella, LatCrit serves to address the various erroneous perspectives and fosters scholarly discourse of marginalized undocumented Latin@ students dealing with life experiences.

LatCrit theory addresses the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and is comprise of five similar themes. The themes address the fundamental, research methods, and pedagogical perspectives to understanding undocumented Latin@ students (Han, 2019). Furthermore, LatCrit theorist, address race and racism, within the societal perspectives and acceptance. The LatCrit theorist argued racism is not just a personal belief ideology, but that

societal and institutions contribute to the acceptable norm of racism and discrimination (Acer & Byrne, 2017).

Numerous undocumented Latin@ students are often viewed negatively by society, augmenting the lived experiences (Lindo, Williams, & Gonzalez, 2017). The varied discrimination for undocumented Latin@ students creates a sense of powerlessness with the stigmatization of the label of undocumented or illegal in the United States. For some undocumented Latin@ students, the sense of belonging in a class and acceptance as one of the regular students is without the illegal label and called derogatory names because of the undocumented status (Han, 2019). Several undocumented Latin@ students expressed feeling invisible when the subject of illegal statuses was discussed (Anderson, 2016).

The LatCrit second theme theorist addresses the social justice pedagogical perspective for undocumented Latin@ students (Han, 2019). The moral responsibility and participation for social justice encourage many undocumented Latin@ students feeling marginalized to seek assistance for lived experiences. LatCrit theory addresses the need for the elimination of racial subordination and discrimination of undocumented Latin@ students (Anderson, 2016). Many undocumented Latin@ students may be described as noncontributors and taking opportunities from U.S. citizens benefits.

In the third theme of LatCrit theory, theorists address advocacy for undocumented Latin@ students' lived experiences. The theme addresses undocumented Latin@ students' training to counteract negative perceptions offering positive perspectives of undocumented Latin@ students (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). The theme can foster the necessary discourse with undocumented Latin@ students to address society's perceptive and respond to clear negative perception.



The LatCrit fourth theme is essential to addressing an individual's skin color and ethnicity. Undocumented Latin@ students come from various ethnic and color backgrounds, presenting a challenge among peers with many undocumented Latin@ subgroups having different tastes in food, music, mannerisms, and pronunciation of words in Spanish (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). The theme draws from the perspective of color and experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and understands many of the students' lived experiences of marginalization.

The LatCrit theme addresses the historical contexts dealing with racism and ethnic backgrounds of undocumented Latin@ students in school settings (Rothrock, 2017). Many undocumented Latin@ students experience a sense of no value because of the status augmenting the lived experience. For many undocumented Latin@ students, the theme is an opportunity to respond to critics or share lived experiences to debunk misunderstanding by perceived notions of U.S. citizens.

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following terms are essential for qualitative research study. The definitions provide understanding of undocumented Latin@ students of the research study. The definitions were essential for the scholar during the research.

***Latin@:*** The reference is used to identify diverse but related populations from Latin America and the United States (Lyon, 2014). Also, Latin@ is used as a gender-neutral reference

shorthand for Latino/Latina (Goodwin, 2016). Many millennials and contemporaries began using the term incorporating a more unified approach addressing Latin@ students.

***Latino critical race theory (LatCrit):*** Under the umbrella of CRT, LatCrit addresses the Latin@ population and the multidimensional context of sexism, race, racism, discrimination, legal status, and various themes of oppression (Kiehne, 2016).

***Marginalized:*** Numerous undocumented Latin@ students are treated harshly by many U.S. citizens because of the status in the United States (García, 2017). Undocumented Latin@ students are misrepresented in the media in general, including media programming, usually negative stereotypes drug dealers, maids, or sexual objects used for only pleasure (Patler & Gonzales, 2015). Many educators view many undocumented Latin@ students in schools as students who are incapable of performing academically.

***Undocumented:*** The term is commonly used referencing students or youth born outside of the United States who migrated into the United States without authorization under the age of 18 (Lyon, 2014). Some people may view individuals entering the United States without proper forms of admission are as illegal immigrants. Many undocumented Latin@ students enter the United States for better opportunities from repression, poverty, and violence (Sanders, 2016).

### **Assumptions**

Participation's willingness to respond to interview questions truthfully and forthright is an assumption (Zambrano, Kosoff, & Grayson, 2019). The sample's inclusion criteria ensure suitability, and the participants share the uniform experiences or comparable phenomenon of the study is an assumption (Lehmann, Lindert, Ohlmeier, Schlomann, Pfaff, & Choi, 2020). Another assumption is participants develop a genuine interest in partaking in exploring the research topic

without motivational factors or agendas because of agreeing to participate in the study (Zambrano et al., 2019).

One assumption by many U.S. citizens about undocumented Latin@ students is the lack of intellectual capacity to succeed in schools. Many undocumented Latin@ have the intellectual capacity to succeed in the school settings, and some even outperform academically documented Latin@ students in school settings (Rodriguez, 2019). The belief many undocumented Latin@ students cannot read and write and speak proper English to communicate is an assumption.

The second assumption is the belief many parents of undocumented Latin@ students are not concerned with education but only money. For many parents to sacrifice parenthood of a birth child for a better opportunity for a future in the United States is a deep and emotional experience for the parent and the child (Cardoso, Scott, Faulkner, & Lane, 2018). The staff at Lincolnale are motivated to make a positive impact in the lives of undocumented Latin@ students encouraging many to push through and graduate from high school (Heyler & Martin, 2018).

### **Scope and Delimitations**

A study's scope expounds on the research topic is explored and specifies the considerations within the study are operating (Castillo Goncalves, 2020). A study's delimitations are the factors and variables not included in the investigation (Borim-de-Souza, Travis, Munck, & Galleli, 2020). Additionally, setting boundaries in the study's length, populace size, and type of participants is important for the research (Castillo Goncalves, 2020). A research study's scope and delimitations define the topic and boundaries of the research problem to be investigated (Borim-de-Souza et al., 2020).

The purpose of the phenomenological study is to explore the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and the high school dropout rate. Understanding undocumented Latin@ students' narrative through LatCrit theory may provide insightful information against perceived biases from the dominant culture. With many undocumented Latin@ students dealing anti-immigration sentiments, marginalization many still maintain a sense of hope.

The study is expected to be conducted in Lincolndale, New York, of the Mid-Hudson Valley and involves a clinical social technician, a social worker, and one certified educator. For some of the undocumented Latin@ students, pastoral care is an option, and faith-based clergy, civic and local community leaders provided perspectives into the study (Martínez, 2018). The study focused only on undocumented Latin@ students age 18 and over.

One delimitation of the study involves faith-based interaction with many of the undocumented Latin@ students. The 13 of the 192 undocumented Latin@ students identify as Catholics, and 179 undocumented Latin@ students identify as Protestants. The 13 Catholic students may decline to participate under the advisement of a Catholic priest. The undocumented Latin@ Protestant students have declined to participate in mass services. Religion is a crucial component of many undocumented Latin@ students (Benevento, 2018).

The second delimitation is the study and only includes undocumented Latin@ students from Lincolndale and may skew the data. Many of the undocumented Latin@ students are relocated to other facilities; collecting data on time was crucial and took 1 day for interviews and data collection. Many undocumented Latin@ students age out from the program, and deportation commences if the undocumented Latin@ students do not meet the academic requirement for graduation (Lopez & Krogstad, 2017).

### **Limitations**

Attentiveness of the limitations is important for avoiding unintended influences, delimitations, and certain hindrances of the research study's scope (Creswell, 2019). The faculty addressed ethical issues collaborating with the scholar and sharing information of the undocumented Latin@ students (Loya, Jones, Sun, & Furman, 2017). Research procedures protocols were followed accordingly and ensured a welcoming environment for the undocumented Latin@ student. Social workers tend to be overprotective of undocumented Latin@ students; conversely, collaboration was present and presented no problem for data collection. Educators collaborated to share the undocumented Latin@ students' academic performances providing valuable, pertinent information to the research study (Larson, 2017). The cooperation of the support staff did not affect triangulation.

Time management was essential for interviewing the undocumented Latin@ students, as many of them are transitioning to another facility after 6 months at Lincolndale Haven. The students are moved to another undisclosed location if the academic performance is not within the required standards. Undocumented Latin@ students have a culture of self-imposed anonymity (Lyon, 2014). Undocumented Latin@ students prefer to stick together and protect each other from outside influences. Undocumented Latin@ students often prefer not to divulge the legal status in the United States unless the correspondence is with another undocumented Latin@ student.

Another limitation to the research study were the subgroups of undocumented Latin@ student participants presented a challenge about various meanings of words spoken in Spanish. Students of Mexican origin understand certain words differently from Guatemalan students (Mellom et al., 2018). Many undocumented Latin@ students understand the differences in

words; offense was not a significant concern among undocumented Latin@ students (Arreola, 2015). Using Spanish words, which is a universal understanding concept, was essential for the interviews.

Reflecting on critical thinking to address the research problem correctly and effectively was a challenge. The objective of the phenomenological research paper was to explore and inquire into the meanings of our experiences as lived (Skea, 2016). The research enlightened the understanding of the undocumented Latino@ population's subset and what strategies facilitate persistence despite overwhelming odds (Shi et al., 2018). Voluntary consent did not present a challenge to obtain, as the participants were cooperative, and some eager to share some of the lived experiences accounts. Many encourage classmates to participate in sharing information on lived experiences.

The mentioned limitations explored the transferability of the research study of undocumented Latin@ students in a different environment. Saturation was evident in the research study involving triangulation. Researchers interested in the research study conducting a similar research method can allow for dependability and obtain a different outcome.

### **Summary**

The study was intended to explore undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences enrolled at the Lincoln Dale Haven; a school dedicated to working with students who are contemplating leaving high school. The research questions for the study are aligned and support the study purpose, which is understanding the life experiences of undocumented Latino students (Murillo, 2017). The qualitative research methodology is appropriate for the study and affirms the need for the research (Crawford & Arnold, 2016). Recruitment of participants for interviews and data collection was guided by two professors with doctoral degrees and expertise

in qualitative research. The delimitations, limitations, and assumptions of the research study were addressed. The literature review in Chapter 2 includes the life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Legality issues, poverty, destitution, discrimination, marginalization, bilingual deficiencies, low expectations, and low parental involvement are contributing factors to the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students (Ramberg, 2019). The purpose of the phenomenological study is to explore undocumented Latin@ students' adverse life experiences and the dropout rate. Lovato (2019) suggested family separation, discrimination, and marginalization are various causes for undocumented Latin@ students' life experiences. The author explored undocumented Latin@ students' adverse life experiences and the connections to dropping out of high school.

Approximately 40% of undocumented Latin@ students, ages 18 and over, have less than high school education (Ayón & Philbin, 2017). The author of this qualitative phenomenological study explored the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students at the Lincoln Dale Haven. The literature review contributes to scholarly knowledge on the researched topic, as there is a gap in understanding undocumented Latin@ students' adverse lived experiences.

The chapter is an exploration of undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences, including crossing the border, marginalization, failed immigration policies, and trauma. Gaps in the literature review are presented in the chapter, the study support, furthering the additional study, and the need to build upon prior research. The chapter is an examination of the LatCrit theory, which addresses the life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The research topics were reviewed from the peer-reviewed journals, scholarly articles, and primary sources. Researching began with gathering information using RefWorks available through the American College of Education online digital library, linked to ProQuest, EBSCO,



and Microsoft Academic database for scholarly articles. Articles searched with the subject topic related to undocumented Latin@ students, trauma, border crossing, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), lived experiences, social services, Latino educators, immigration, English deficiencies, models, charts related to undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences, methodologies, and keywords related to the topic using the ACE digital library.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study aligns with Latina and Latino critical theory (Kiehne, 2016). The limited research is gaining interest in the topic of lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students residing in the United States (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018). The LatCrit theoretical framework was used to guide the data for analysis and finalize the collected data interpretation. The author of the study suggested many undocumented Latin@ students' adverse life experiences at Lincolndale were a factor for dropping out of high school. Servant leadership theory addresses the need of an individual or groups, and the need of the individual providing the service is secondary (Eva, Robin, Sendjaya, van Dierendonck, & Liden, 2019).

The Lincolndale Haven staff exhibit the servant leadership model, working with undocumented Latin@ students providing essential emotional and educational support and creating an attempt to improve the academic participation of undocumented Latin@ students (Kiersch & Peters, 2017). An estimated 12 million undocumented Latin@ students live in the United States, with only 65,000 undocumented Latin@ students graduating from high school annually (Strauss, 2019). Many undocumented Latin@ students are victims of racialization and mistreatment, with some maintaining silence for fear of deportation (Chong, Lee, & Victorino, 2014).

Former president of the United States Barack Obama offered undocumented Latin@ students 2 years of work authorization, safety from deportation, and required school enrollment (Hsin & Ortega, 2018). Obama issued an executive action creating the DACA initiative after numerous attempts failed in Congress to pass legislation for undocumented Latin@ students to obtain citizenship. The DACA policy is an uphill battle for many undocumented Latin@ students in Lindale, 18 and over, with no prospect in the present time for a path to citizenship. For many undocumented Latin@ students practicing Catholicism or Evangelicalism, faith is a platform for peace and hope towards a path to citizenship (Pew Research, 2015).

Experiential learning experiences attempt to connect the thoughts and actions of the undocumented Latin@ students (Kuk & Holst, 2018). Experiential learning theory supports undocumented Latin@ students by engaging with leadership, teachers, and support staff and services needed to support Latin@ students learning in school. Many educational professionals at schools with a high enrollment of undocumented Latin@ students are under duress to meet the learning needs of undocumented Latin@ students (Chen & Rhoads, 2016). Through experiential learning, sympathetic migrant educators support undocumented Latin@ students by accessing much-needed supplies, introducing technology, and emotional support (Free, Križ, & Konecnik, 2014).

### **Research Literature Review**

Undocumented Latin@ students have been the most significant minority population in the United States (Hsin & Ortega, 2018). Many undocumented Latin@ students perform academically lower compared to other minorities because of life experiences. Education can offer undocumented Latin@ students an opportunity for new positive life experiences and a brighter future (Benuto et al., 2018). For many undocumented Latin@ students, working

physical labor jobs to provide economic support for family members, often become a priority instead of attending school (Rodríguez, Ramirez, & Rodriguez, 2014). With the assistance of support staff, educators are essential to bridging relationships with undocumented Latin@ students for encouragement and graduate from high school. (Murillo, 2017). Many undocumented Latin@ students graduating from high school would like to enroll and pursue or hopefully earn a college degree from a higher academic institution (Crisp et al., 2015).

### **Historic Setup**

In 1823 the Monroe Doctrine stated the United States would not interfere in Europe's war, and Europeans' attempt to interfere with the western hemisphere would be retaliated as an act of aggression (Rausch, 2018). In 1871, the United States built the first railroad in Costa Rica and established modernization (Rausch, 2018). The Costa Rican government defaulted on the payments in 1882, and the railroad was handed over to Minor C. Keith, owner of the Tropical Trading and Transport (Feinberg, 2018). The company exported large quantities of bananas from the Caribbean to the United States. In 1899 the company merged with the Boston Fruit Company to become the United Fruit Company (Lansing, 2014).

In 1901, the Guatemalan government hired the United Fruit Company to manage the postal service, and in 1913, the company created a radio and telegraph company in Guatemala (Feinberg, 2018). The United Fruit Company is significant, becoming the largest employer in Central America at the time, and U.S. business interests in Central America were strongly protected (Lansing, 2014). The company-controlled transportation routes and charged tariffs on all items in and out of the country, becoming a strong foundation in the American economy. The stronghold leads to the conflict in Central America and Mexico (Stewart, 2018).

## Historical Political Context

The Cold War lasting from 1947 through 1991, resulted in unfortunate events resulting from fear of communism in Central America by the United States (Burrell & Moodie, 2015). In 1950, Jacobo Arbenz was democratically elected in Guatemala, becoming president, and the United States feared his relationship with known communists believing he might become influenced by the ideology of communism (Moulton, 2015). In 1952, the president passed an agrarian reform law redistributing land in the country (Moulton, 2015). The nationalized land was distributed to the impoverished in the country. The United States frowned upon the law, for much of the land redistributed was owned by the United Fruit Company. In the same year, 1952, the United States planned a coup by training former exiled military personnel from Central America to oppose president Arbenz (Overall & Hagedorn, 2016). In 1954, the United States succeeded in overthrowing president Arbenz and repealed the 1952 agrarian law, giving back the United Fruit Company the land owned by the company (Feinberg, 2018). Unfortunately, extreme poverty became a reality for many Central American citizens with no land to cultivate for economic sustenance (Overall & Hagedorn, 2016).

In 1959, President Kennedy began the Alliance for Progress in Latin America to prioritizing anti-Communism endeavors (Dunne, 2016). In 1983, former presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan invested in arming and training government forces in Central America to fight against leftist groups in fear of communist ideology (Weyland, 2018). In the Guatemalan civil war in 1960 through 1996, the United States aided in installing a dictatorship to oppose communist enthusiasts, supporting dictators with arms and military training to protect U.S. economic interest claiming over 200,000 innocent lives during the course (Weyland, 2018). The El Salvadorian Civil War, supported by the United States in support of the Contras, claimed

75,000 lives and displaced thousands of families (Goodfriend, 2018). Approximately 1 million Latina/o from the region migrated to the United States from 1980 through 1991, escaping political repression and economic oppression (Acer & Byrne, 2017).

Many migrants were claiming asylum, filing claims were denied, and many resorted to illegal methods of entry into the United States. The Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 expanded the deportation of individuals with green cards, people who committed a crime, or individuals involved in the gang-related enterprise (Acer & Byrne, 2017). The law helped deport over 50,000 criminals from U.S. jails, former civil war victims, and fighters were sent back to Central America (Bruneau, 2014). Many jailed in Central America without any reformation programs have grown to become a formidable criminal enterprise with thousands of innocent lives killed each year and control over many governmental elected and appointed officials (Cone & Bonacasa, 2018). The crisis led many undocumented Latin@ students to flee, taking the long road to the border.

### **Crossing the Border**

Many undocumented Latin@ students crossing the border experienced dehydration and health-related injuries, causing long emotional trauma experiences carrying over to the classroom (Crisp et al., 2015). Trekking hundreds of miles, avoiding wild predators, and endured hunger are some of the life experiences triggering emotional trauma affecting many undocumented Latin@ students from concentrating in the classroom. Many undocumented Latin@ students have been processed before allowing entry into the United States and questioned for a justifiable cause to enter the United States. The Urban Institute reports numerous labor traffickers overwhelmingly target undocumented Latin@ immigrants (Lind, 2015). Many undocumented

Latin@ students with limited English language command have a challenging task in articulating life experiences (Smith & Salgado, 2018).

Some undocumented Latin@ students shared life experiences detailing the horrific journey, thinking about supporting family members back home, and academic study is the last thing on the students' minds. The primary factor for crossing and gaining entry is supporting family members economically back home (Clark-Ibáñez, 2015). Numerous undocumented Latin@ students escaped extreme violence back home, crossing with traumatic experiences, requiring schools and community members to assist the students in providing available resources to help the students cope with the life experience (Cardoso, 2018).

Surprisingly, for many undocumented Latin@ students, staying in the United States was not the intended goal. For some undocumented Latin@ students, staying in school is an alternative for gainful employment after graduation and supporting family back home. Since the 1960s, Latin@ youth have entered the United States due to the demand for labor supply by the U.S. job market and cheap labor (Massey, Durand, & Pren, 2016). The 1,265-mile travel route to the border is dangerous, with many unexpected happenings. Once arriving at the border, Latin@ students face difficult challenges.

Drug traffickers apprehend many undocumented Latin@ young people and threaten to work as trafficking mules or risk injury or death (Junck, 2015). Many undocumented Latin@ students avoided becoming victims of drug trafficking, human trafficking, and becoming slave workers. Undocumented Latin@ students often experience significant psychological distress, but many do not receive the necessary services (Morrison et al., 2016). The experiences faced by undocumented Latin@ students cause marginalization in the high school experience.

## **Undocumented Latin@ Students in High School**

The experiences of marginalized undocumented Latin@ students are not an isolated issue. For some, obtaining a diploma is vital to move forward and potentially attend college and gain employment. Many of the challenges begin early in the student's elementary life experiences and continue to high school and even college (Hsin & Ortega, 2018). Authors of studies suggest many undocumented Latin@ students suffer in silence, internalizing the marginalization daily in school, community, and work (O'Reilly, 2019).

Many undocumented Latin@ students' concerns are the immigration processes under the government's guidance and care is causing conflicts contributing to many students' position (Hsin & Ortega, 2018). Authors suggest undocumented Latin@ students' educational marginalization connects to financial deficiency and minimal relationships with educators in school because of the language barrier (Punti, 2018). The lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students crossing the border intensify the traumatic episodes and affect the academic performances in school and dropout rate (Stringer, 2018). The undocumented Latin@ students would like the opportunity to be considered Americans and have a sense of belonging in the community of Lincolnale.

Furthermore, authors suggest many undocumented Latin@ students develop relationships at a distance, avoiding emotional attachment (Chong et al., 2014). The sense of not belonging to a community because of the legal status is ever-present even when friendships with diverse ethnic groups are developed. The friendships are often superficial because of the fear of individuals becoming aware of the students' legal status (Brady & Stevens, 2019). Some undocumented Latin@ students discover honest friendships and a support system of professional educators, support staff, and even the church.

Immigration is a contested topic in the political arena. The undocumented Latin@ students residing in the Lincolndale community face significant challenges in the experience of achieving an academic education. Education is one of the significant avenues for undocumented students to achieve the hope of citizenship and contribute to American society (Punti, 2018). The Lincolndale school district should create a sense of belonging for Latin@ students enrolled in a welcoming environment while in compliance with U.S. immigration policy (Caicedo, 2018).

Research findings indicate academically successful undocumented Latin@ students are eager to obtain economic security and are highly motivated to give back to their communities (Borjian, 2018). For many undocumented Latin@ students at Lincolndale, the journey is daunting, and the life experiences are a cause of hindrances in graduating. Undocumented Latin@ students need school educators and administrators to assist with necessary resources and support, creating opportunities for academic success to graduate (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017).

Many undocumented Latin@ students are wary of both political parties talking about change; however, legislation has not shown any action for change of undocumented students' status (Enriquez, 2017). Education is a significant component of the economic, occupational, and social mobility of young undocumented Latin@ students, but policies and practices can hinder or open their access to education (Crawford & Arnold, 2016). Several undocumented Latin@ students at Lincolndale face policies causing a stalemate in the quest to achieve an education. Time limit is a factor for the students to finish enough courses to graduate or face transfer to another undisclosed school facility. If academic failure continues, it may result in deportation (Gandara, 2017). For some undocumented Latin@ students at Lincolndale, the sense of hopelessness and achieving an education is not worth the effort (Ayón & Philbin, 2017). The



emotional roller coaster makes the undocumented Latin@ students distracted from performing well academically and graduate (Chong et al., 2014).

Many undocumented Latin@ students quit the high school program, escaping and affiliating themselves with gangs, especially the infamous MS-13 gang (Motlagh, 2019). Minimal inquiry findings focused on professional educators across all levels, including support staff, to collaborate to address various ways to support illegal students (Chang, 2018). Many educators and stakeholders at the Lincolndale program support undocumented Latin@ students academically, morally, and emotionally. Supporting undocumented Latin@ students is essential for achieving academic success.

The need for qualitative phenomenological research to identify factors associated with illegal students' academic struggles is essential (Crisp et al., 2015). Qualitative data research is vital as a data research method to address undocumented Latin@ students (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018). Without the human experience, data could involve just numerical interpretation limiting the participants' human experience (Togun-Butler, 2018). Undocumented Latin@ students at Lincolndale are not just statistical data of individuals with social agendas for political, social, and economic gains. The students are human beings with genuinely traumatic experiences, and many professional educators are doing the work of social workers (Dabach, Fones, Merchant, & Adekile, 2018).

For many undocumented Latin@ students, graduating from high school is an important and significant point of transition (Gonzales, 2015). New York State passed legislation offering free tuition for all students where the annual family income is below \$100,000, including undocumented Latin@ students (Gravelle, 2018). The bill passed is the Excelsior Scholarship offering undocumented Latin@ students the opportunity to enroll and attend a state-funded 4-

year college, understanding the scholarship requires students to commit to working in the state for 5 years or risk paying back the tuition cost (Sims, 2017). For some undocumented Latin@ students at Lincolndale, the incentive does not address many of the life experiences still active in the students' lives (Salinas, Malavé, Torrens, & Swingle, 2019). With the demand from family members back home needing financial assistance, undocumented Latin@ students often leave the prospect of attending college to work. In the Upstate area of New York, many find jobs in the agricultural, construction, food, and cleaning industries.

Many educational professionals have a sincere heart to instruct undocumented students but face an ethical dilemma when an undocumented Latin@ student might get in trouble and warrant the deportation process (Storlie, 2016). For some undocumented Latin@ students, intimidation can be an issue with an instructor's approach during instruction. The experiences could be related to academic achievement outcomes (e.g., grades, test scores, high school completion) (Crisp et al., 2015).

The Latino population is the largest minority group (Flores, 2017). The increase of undocumented Latin@ students enrolling in schools presents educational administrators with challenges to service the students fairly and adequately (Hernandez, 2017). Parents of undocumented Latin@ students' political maneuvering is exhausting for many parents to try to obtain services for the students attending the schools. High school and university counselors play a vital role in assisting undocumented Latin@ students to enroll in higher academic institutions (Kam, Gasiorek, Pines, & Fazio, 2018). Through education, many undocumented Latin@ students can begin a life offering an opportunity to contribute to the country politically, socially, and economically (Guo et al., 2019). While debates about immigration are an ongoing

issue of undocumented Latin@ students entering the country through other means, the primary school objective is to assist the students in graduating from the school.

The unfair treatment of undocumented Latin@ students is a civil rights human-related issue and should be investigated by federal, state, and local officials (Christensen & Charles, 2015). Numerous parents of undocumented Latin@ students may find obtaining services for the students. Many parents and guardians supporting undocumented Latin@ students face political, economic, educational, and social status challenges (Hire, 2015). Many parents of the undocumented Latin@ students facing barriers believe the opportunity afforded to the students in school could lead to a better life (Hire, 2015).

The high school counselors in Lincolndale are more discretionary with undocumented Latin@ students (Howard, 2017). Many counselors engage with undocumented Latin@ students with a high risk of deportation. University admissions counselors involved at the Lincolndale school are cautious about advising potential undocumented Latin@ students desiring to enroll in college, notably Dutchess Community College, a 2-year school. For counselors, assisting undocumented Latin@ students was challenging because of the process of obtaining funding for college to cover the tuition cost until the Excelsior scholarship became available for all students attending college in New York State (Kam et al., 2018).

The undocumented Latino population is growing in the United States and is a *de facto* to American society (Tienda & Fuentes, 2014). The growth of undocumented Latin@ students presents a challenge for educational resources for effective instruction to teach undocumented Latin@ students. The lack of resources places undocumented Latin@ students in an unpleasant position, with parents fighting for resources to be made available. Educators, support staff, and

the community at Lindale play a vital role in undocumented Latin@ students receiving equitable education to graduate (Kam et al., 2018).

**LatCrit Theory.** LatCrit addresses immigration theory and policy and influences undocumented Latin@ students' legal status to face regarding academic performance in the classroom (Kiehne, 2016). In LatCrit's theory, the reality of life experiences and living in impoverished communities with the fear of deportation is continuously in the minds of undocumented Latin@ students (Aguilar, Cannella, & Huerta, 2019). LatCrit is an examination of other pillars, such as gender, language rights, and discrimination against undocumented Latin@ students in school.

Undocumented Latin@ students face barriers in obtaining academic success as a marginalized group in school and often are confronted with difficult challenges to overcome. Some examples include the pillars of LatCrit, highlighting the areas affecting undocumented Latin@ students' life experiences, languages, the pronunciation of words, nationality, social and economic status, and gender (Aguilar et al., 2019). Undocumented Latin@ students are from underserved communities and schools with a high poverty rate (Kiehne, 2016).

The background impacts academic success for undocumented Latin@ students with life experiences, limited academic resources, and preparedness for success to graduate. A few of the LatCrit pillars include undocumented Latin@ students and parents who are not familiar with higher education and have little or no knowledge of academic requirements and procedures (Aguilar et al., 2019). The undocumented Latin@ students typically lack adequate academic preparation and enroll in academic courses or college preparatory courses at lower rates than White and Black students (López & Matos, 2018). Many undocumented Latin@ students have a

limited facility with English, instruction, and tutoring usually delivered in English (Hernandez, 2017).

Language and gender are present in the pilot study as essential elements impacting the life experiences in connection with dropping out. Nevertheless, the two elements are not the literature's driving factors (Flores et al., 2019). LatCrit highlights the importance of undocumented Latin@ students' experiences for the current literature (López & Matos, 2018). LatCrit addresses gender as a crucial element in Latin@ culture, including undocumented Latin@ students from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) community, but not a central theme in the current literature (Aguilar et al., 2019). Learning about undocumented Latin@ experiences can provide insight to address specific issues undocumented Latin@ students deal with daily. The information could be used to determine the best options and policy in the Mid-Hudson Valley, serving many undocumented Latin@ students. Academic institutions can become more informed about undocumented Latin@ students' life experiences to assist future generations more adequately, well beyond schooling years and into the adult stage (Little & Mitchell, 2018).

Many undocumented Latin@ students face a disadvantage, even before setting foot in class, with academic and economic deficiencies (Pivovarova & Vagi, 2019). Although the Obama administration allocated resources and funding ideal for assisting many undocumented Latin@ students to achieve academic success with graduating and pursuing a college career, the concerns of educators for undocumented Latin@ students are many may not have the sufficient academic skillsets to obtain college entry even after graduation from high school (Campbell, 2018). Unfortunately, for many undocumented Latin@ students facing severe personal conditions, the success of advancing up the educational pipeline is a challenge due to the real-life

experience. Many undocumented Latin@ students view immigration policies as unfair and harsh, lacking understanding of life experiences (Cervantes, Ullrich, & Matthews, 2018).

**Law and Public Policy.** Researchers suggest law and public policy are never definite to suggest an interwoven relationship (Kim, 2014). The process involves social justice and evolving ideologies and can change through generations. The public's view or belief may not coincide with elected officials' views, but officials act on behalf of the people even when the action may not align with the people (Birkland, 2016). Undocumented Latin@ students are caught in the middle of the political gamut and impact the pros and cons of undocumented Latin@ students' status. To assume members of the Lincolnale community are fully accepting of undocumented Latin@ students is misleading.

Law and policy at the Lincolnale community are essential with the State passing legislation allowing undocumented Latin@ students to obtain driving licenses even at the general public's opposing with over 50% opposing such move (Wang, 2019). Law and public policy are essential to fully comprehend the complexities required to maneuver and obtain the best possible advocacy for undocumented Latin@ students. Immigration is a contested top between various educational professionals and mitigating possible existing educational system biases is vital (Christensen & Charles, 2015). Many leaders in favor of immigration reform are forging alliances with professional educators, school staff, and civic leaders, fostering respectful dialogue about undocumented Latin@ students. Educational professionals and policymakers at the K–12 level should create an environment for welcoming undocumented Latin@ students mitigating fears of deportation (Martínez, 2018). Whatever the motivating factors or political agendas, the Lincolnale school district should respond to immigrant students' psychological,

social, and academic needs for the population to encourage positive educational outcomes (Rodriguez, Rhodes, & Aguirre, 2015).

**Observation Notes.** Many undocumented Latin@ students crossing the border are interviewed by the educational leaders, human services, and clinicians from Lincolndale for assessment to validate the justification for entering the United States. Observing firsthand the process used for undocumented Latin@ students to enter under stringent conditions and one of the crucial requirements is to complete courses to graduate from high school. Contrary to the media reports, many undocumented Latin@ students entered by legal means, while others travel through dangerous routes, in danger of kidnapping or coyotes (smugglers) (Safstrom, 2018). The undocumented Latin@ students' arrival to the Lincolndale Haven school district are assigned to the program where the educational leaders, teachers, and clinicians begin providing education and services. Each undocumented Latin@ student has unique challenges with life experiences, discouraging many from dropping out. Undocumented Latin@ students' life experiences accompany the struggles, motivations, failures, and successes, leading to dropout (Enriquez, 2017).

Many of the accounts of shared life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students' journeys and the effects on academic performance require sensitivity by the educators and support staff (Hunter, 2018). Many undocumented Latin@ views attending school at Lincolndale as a waste of time and prefer to work. The Lincolndale Haven makes a conscious effort to provide the students' necessary curriculum instruction to graduate and eventually obtain the diplomas. The conversation over the undocumented Latin@ students at Lincolndale and whether the programs making a difference is over long-term is ongoing (Howard, 2017). The educators and support staff work hard to provide an equitable education to help undocumented

Latin@ students accomplish graduation (Dabach et al., 2018). With undocumented Latin@ students facing various challenges, educators have a daunting task ensuring undocumented Latin@ students obtain necessary academic assistance for success.

**Discrimination.** Many undocumented Latin@ students face daily discrimination due to the undocumented status at the Lincolnale school district. The discrimination presents a challenge for the faculty to ensure that discrimination issues are addressed appropriately for undocumented students and faculty (Loya et al., 2017). Providing a welcoming climate for undocumented Latin@ students in schools could help alleviate many of the life experiences (Caicedo, 2018). The welcoming environment for undocumented Latin@ students by staff members could assist in students' school progression. Many undocumented Latin@ students face discrimination adding to the trauma from an already painful humanistic experience. Authors suggested undocumented Latin@ students are socioemotionally scarred, affecting school academic studies (Morrison et al., 2016). Undocumented Latin@ students face enormous challenges on a personal level in trying to achieve an academic education.

Undocumented Latin@ students usually avoid the lure of gang affiliation but are regularly charged unfairly with gang membership (Hlass, 2018). The emotional roller coaster could make the students distracted from performing well academically and graduate. Studies have not been conducted on educators, social workers, and support staff who support illegal students with life experiences (Chang, 2018).

Under the Obama administration, Central and South American youth were processed, released, and appeared before immigration authorities while Mexican youth were deported expeditiously (Barrera & Krogstad, 2014). The administration acknowledged a humanitarian crisis for Central and South American youth entering the United States illegally. The elected



government knew about undocumented Latin@ students' horrific experiences crossing the border (Barrera & Krogstad, 2014). Many undocumented Latin@ students did not report to authorities and are unaccounted for (Barrera & Krogstad, 2014). The life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and vulnerability may be exploited by individuals causing harm. Many undocumented Latin@ students may end up living homeless and resorting to prostitution (Martínez, 2014). Local community leaders can play a crucial role in supporting undocumented Latin@ students.

**Latino Community.** Local leaders from the Latin@ community foster collaboration to service undocumented Latin@ students. Gathering information and hosting presentations for DACA students sharing information methods could assist with creating a welcoming environment for undocumented Latin@ students (Hsin & Ortega, 2018). A community relationship is essential for collaboration in assisting undocumented Latin@ students to succeed in school (Botelho, 2017). Navigate is a Latino community effort between faith-based Latino clergy, Latino entrepreneurs, and Latino educators, fostering discourse to help undocumented Latin@ students succeed (Morales-Gaytan, 2016).

Many undocumented Latin@ students endure hardships in the United States because of life experiences, with many considering quitting school (Loya et al., 2017). The mobilization of some Latino communities has taken action to address the legal status of undocumented Latin@ students in the United States (Crawford & Arnold, 2016). Many Latino leaders and entrepreneurs joined DACA students supporting the cause for new legislation (Reed-Sandoval, 2014).

Navigates includes sessions to assist undocumented latin@ students who graduate from high school with information and assistance to apply and pay for college. Also, assists with

providing food, clothing, and essential needs for undocumented Latin@ students (Reed-Sandoval, 2014). Many undocumented Latin@ students at Lincolnale are eligible to obtain legal counsel for representation in matters about the status and preventing deporting. Obtaining legal representation presents challenge as shortage of legal counsel qualified to tackle such vast volumes of the caseload is limited.

Undocumented Latin@ students' life experiences could provide valuable information for legal counsel representation (Corral, 2018). For many undocumented Latin@ students living in the United States, coping with life experiences presents a challenge the students and family members (Kim, 2014). Numerous undocumented Latin@ students try to maintain cultural identity while living in the United States as a reminder of back home and the reasons for coming into the United States.

Some undocumented Latin@ students do not speak English, and speaking Spanish is the only form of communication with understanding. Many educators working with undocumented Latin@ students try to assist students in the classrooms while at the same time addressing life experiences could be a daunting task when attempting to speak about the subject (Murillo, 2017). For many undocumented Latin@ students achieving some form of success in the United States can make life experiences worth the sacrifices many have made, leaving loved ones behind (Roschelle, Greaney, Allan, & Porras, 2018).

Latinos are the most significant minority subpopulation in the United States (Hsin & Ortega, 2018). Many undocumented Latin@ students do not do well in school compared to other minorities because of life experiences. Education can offer undocumented Latin@ students an opportunity for new positive life experiences (Benuto et al., 2018). Many undocumented Latin@ students work for manual labor jobs providing economic support for family members sacrificing

time from school (Cheney, Newkirk, Rodriguez, & Montez, 2018). Teachers and support staff are essential to bridging relationships with undocumented Latin@ students for graduation (Murillo, 2017). Many undocumented Latin@ students graduating from high school would like to enroll and pursue a higher academic institution a college degree (Crisp et al., 2015).

**Policy and Governance.** Many elected officials and educational leaders have different perspectives on the best possible educational implementation for undocumented Latin@ students. All parties involved should understand the social responsibility to market and adopt moral action to create a positive experience for teachers to teach, community involvement, stakeholders, and, most importantly, serve undocumented Latin@ students (Jenkins & Henry, 2016). Leaders in education should create a welcoming environment for all students, including undocumented Latin@ students in the schools. School personnel should avoid undermining the capabilities of undocumented Latin@ students. Many can contribute positively to the educational experience in school (Murillo, 2017).

Educators at the Lincolnale district should address cultural sensitivities without violating anti-discrimination laws. The school district should involve professional educators in governance & ethical practice training programs to foster a culture of equitable education for undocumented Latin@ students to experience academic success (Chang, 2018). The faculty and support staff should consider internal reflection and personal evaluation when addressing undocumented Latin@ students (Crawford & Arnold, 2016). The objective is the students' success in the classrooms and apply the learned material to real-life situations. When students succeed, all parties involved from top to bottom in the educational hierarchy are the benefactors. Undocumented Latin@ students face a daunting task because of federal immigration policies (Nunez & Holthaus, 2017). The threat of deportation is a reality once many of the

undocumented students age out of the K–12 school system. Secondly, no federal financial eligibility to pay for college further enhances the odds for a better future. Although various states have taken measures to assist undocumented students with financial help in attending universities, budgetary constraints can be a problem (Nunez & Holthaus, 2017).

**Social Media Outlets.** Many undocumented Latin@ students are portrayed through various social and media outlets in different images and with each forum having an agenda for the audience's perspective of undocumented students (Bowyer, Kahne, & Middaugh, 2017). The negative portrayals and perceptions of undocumented Latin@ students across print, radio, and broadcasting networks with quality coverage are not uniform (Patler & Gonzales, 2015). Immigration has become a highly contested discussion with various groups against and for immigration eager to debate respectfully.

Social media has provided a platform for immigration advocacy and reform. While there is still an uphill battle for many undocumented Latin@ students, the Internet has become a voice for the unheard, and elective officials are taking notice (Patler & Gonzales, 2015). The Internet is a medium many undocumented Latin@ students understand is an essential instrument capable of addressing the topic in an open forum. Many undocumented Latin@ students engage with social media tools to gain the attention of leaders in hopes of enacting positive changes for undocumented Latin@ student's lived experiences (Wong & Valdivia, 2014). Social media is becoming the primary source of communication platform undocumented Latin@ students are using with intensity (Zimmerman, 2016). Social media is a platform for undocumented Latin@ students to share many of the lived experiences and feeling a sense of hopelessness (Cobb et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the social media outlet enables undocumented Latin@ students to communicate with Latin@ students from around the country, engaging in a discussion concerning similar life experiences and bringing the Latino community issue (Zimmerman, 2016). Many Latino communities in influential positions should help undocumented Latin@ students' voice concerns using communication technology supporting undocumented Latin@ students fear of deportation for speaking up. Many online social activists supporting undocumented Latin@ students offer information for legal services with attorneys providing pro bono services (Perez, 2018). The political rhetoric for immigration reform has not solved the current status of undocumented Latin@ students.

**Political.** The political climate and debate of undocumented Latin@ students and immigration reform have become a contested topic (Corral, 2018). The staff at Lincolndale servicing undocumented Latin@ students are aware of the political implications aimed to politicize the students serviced under educators and clinicians' watchful care. One of the school's issues is the lack of teachers not fully prepared to meet the challenges of undocumented Latin@ students (Dabach et al., 2018). Assisting undocumented Latin@ students requires compassion, patience, and avoiding biases (Hunter, 2018). Authors suggest undocumented Latin@ students are socioemotionally scarred, affecting school academic studies (Morrison et al., 2016). Undocumented Latin@ students face enormous challenges on a personal level in trying to achieve an academic education.

Under the Obama administration, Central and South American youth were processed, released, and appeared before immigration authorities while Mexican youth were deported expeditiously (Barrera & Krogstad, 2014). The administration acknowledged a humanitarian crisis for Central and South American youth entering the United States illegally. The elected

government knew about undocumented Latin@ students' awful experiences crossing the border (Bowyer et al., 2017). Many undocumented Latin@ students did not report to authorities and are unaccounted for (Barrera & Krogstad, 2014). The life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and vulnerability are exploited by individuals with bad intentions to cause harm.

The former President Barack Obama spoke on hope and achieved the dream of citizenship for undocumented Latin@ students. The message helped Obama's presidential election and becoming the first African American President of the United States. The book *The Audacity of Hope* was a new times bestseller (Whitaker, 2014). The message resounded across social and economic barriers, and many undocumented Latin@ students welcomed his message and inspired in faith, becoming citizens of the United States was achievable. The former President announced support for passing comprehensive immigration reform in 2013 (Murillo, 2015). The announcement was great news for undocumented students and the Latino community.

The excitement and prospect for immigration reform only lasted for a brief and hopeless moment. The failed proposed immigration policy and promise for immigration reform did not come to fruition, and Obama's message once again became all talk in the ears of the Latino community (Murillo, 2015). The Latino community felt betrayed by Obama's commitment to immigration reform (Cruz, 2016). Under former President Obama, deportations reached record levels of nearly 400,000 in 2009, 30% higher than the previous Bush administration (Barrera & Krogstad, 2014). For non-English-speaking undocumented Latin@ students, the language barrier is a problem to communicate for immigration reform.

**Language Barrier.** The language barrier is another challenge facing undocumented students and educational professionals (Ambler, Aycinena, & Yang, 2015). The data suggest a

shortage of educators who can communicate in Spanish and create an unwelcome environment for undocumented Latin@ students (Cone & Bonacasa, 2018). Many universities offer courses for educators who may want to learn Spanish basics to assist undocumented Latin@ students in schools. Many undocumented Latin@ students faced challenging economic conditions in the United States, resulting in poor academic performance in schools (Dibble, 2018). Learning English becomes an essential skill for undocumented Latin@ students for employment (Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014). Another critical topic besides the language barrier is the gentrification of undocumented Latin@ communities.

**Gentrification.** The school district is concerned about the economic gap of undocumented Latin@ students and family members living in Lincolndale, New York. The local school district and the state board of education are promoting diversity as essential for undocumented Latin@ students (Cheney et al., 2018). One of the efforts to address Lincolndale, New York, particularly within the local community, is recruiting diverse educators with Spanish training and understanding Latin@ culture (Hagerman, 2018).

The gentrification of neighborhoods once populated by Africans and Latinos is a cause for significant concern for the Lincolndale school district (Drapkin & Czajka, 2017). Lincolndale has a diminished population of undocumented Latin@ students and families, down from 17% to 11% in the last 2 years (Drapkin & Czajka, 2017). The decrease in number affects some undocumented Latin@ students from the assistance and limits clinicians, educators, and support staff to measure service effectiveness in number affects some undocumented Latin@ students from the assistance and limits clinicians, educators, and support staff to measure services' effectiveness because of gentrification.

One cause affecting the sudden change is the population growth of White families moving to Lincolndale, New York, growing to almost 60% (Hagerman, 2018). The community in Lincolndale has become a premier town for easy access to the Metro-North, shops, restaurants, the Día Museum, and other attractions. The housing market has tripled in the last six years; houses once valued at \$180,000 now are up to the mid \$500,000 range (Purcell, 2015). The economic revitalization affects the rental market, and many African and Latino families may no longer afford to live in Lincolndale.

The educators at the Lincolndale Haven school district are concerned if the trend continues, the number of undocumented Latin@ students can continue to decrease as more White students enroll at the school (Baver, Falcón, & Haslip-Viera, 2017). Community members, clergy, civic leaders, and the mayor of Lincolndale facilitated town hall meetings to address gentrification. The Lincolndale town board may be proposing current real estate developers to separate units for rent stabilization; the measure does not hold developers to an obligation but as an extended courtesy to maintain the spirit of Lincolndale as one of the only few diverse communities in Croton-Harmon. Many developers agreed potential low-income families might meet specific rigid criteria and participate in a lottery pick for the newly developed units completed by the fall of 2019 (New York State News Service, 2018). The Lincolndale school district has integrated technology to foster a discussion with students concerning gentrification through partnering pedagogy.

Educators have engaged in the discussion about gentrification and how new ideas might help maintain undocumented Latin@ students. The dialogue partnership can help create a welcoming environment for all students, no matter the students' economic and social status (Walker, Ince, Rippenburg-Reese, & Littman, 2018). Gentrification is unavoidable in all



communities around the country. However, students should be protected at all costs, especially when enrolled in school in the community the students reside. The community of Lincolndale, teachers, and school staff can collectively support undocumented Latin@ students by addressing gentrification (Pineda, 2017) and engaging with each student no matter the wealth gap with all students, including White students from low-income families from gentrification affecting the students academically. Gentrification has forced Latino families to consider school choice for undocumented Latin@ students.

**School Choice.** The school district of Lincolndale, New York, has a low rating of undocumented Latin@ students graduating from high school. The district presented a school voucher bill with educational reformers' support to provide an alternative for undocumented Latin@ students, offering another option for parents (McShane, 2015). The school district adopted the inter-district public school choice program. The program provides parents with the option to enroll undocumented Latin@ students in schools outside of the home school district at no cost to the parents (Hernandez, 2017).

The Interdistrict Public School Choice Program offers undocumented Latin@ students the opportunity to enroll at neighboring school districts like Westchester, Chappaqua, and Mount Kisco. Many of the affluent and wealthy communities in Upstate New York do not welcome the program (Mallet, Calvo, & Waters, 2017). Some community members suggest, with New York State having one of the highest tax rates in the nation, Lincolndale should have adequate programs for the undocumented Latin@ students living in Lincolndale (Gigliotti & Sorensen, 2018). Legal guardians and parents of undocumented Latin@ students at Lincolndale welcome the program, offering undocumented Latin@ students an opportunity to graduate at another

school if unsuccessful at Lincolndale. The office of Refugee Resettlement in Westchester is addressing the gentrification concerns.

**Culture and Music.** Scores of undocumented Latin@ students engage in joint fellowship within the community many reside in for recreational purposes (Douglass & Umaña-Taylor, 2015). Undocumented Latin@ students are mindful of each other's culture, language, customs, and traditions, creating a sense of infused subculture of understanding and respect (Matthews & López, 2019). Collaboration is vital within the construct of ideologies for undocumented Latin@ students for moral and spiritual support. spacing

One of the most potent cultural infusion is music. Many undocumented Latin@ students have various styles and genres mixing sound bites and lyrics addressing the status and conditions of undocumented Latin@ students, usually through reggaeton, bachata, cumbia, and mex-hop with raunchy and vulgar lyrics in the form of rap (Marshall & Naumann, 2018). For many undocumented Latin@ students, music is a soothing experience to release tension and quell worrying concerning the legal status (Neel, 2017).

**The Office of Refugee Resettlement Westchester.** Many organizations are engaging in advocacy for undocumented Latin@ students (Reed-Sandoval, 2014). The Office of Refugee Resettlement Westchester involves advocacy for many DACA students living in Lincolndale, New York. The organization hosts conferences on various topics affecting the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. The social workers, lawyers, medical professionals, and psychologists cover topics for awareness of undocumented students' condition (Baily, Henderson, & Tayler, 2016).

Many undocumented Latin@ students' experiences are a worthy cause for advocacy and initiating policies to aid the students with a fair and justified outcome to graduate and pursue

either college enrollment or enter the workforce (Crawford & Arnold, 2016). The students experience trauma from the journey when entering the United States and suffer posttraumatic stress. The Office of Refugee Resettlement Westchester Boys Shelter addresses the trauma by offering counsel and providing needed social services to help the students cope with the experiences (Baily et al., 2016). Another organization involved in advocacy for undocumented Latin@ students is the Dutchess Human Relations Commission.

The Dutchess Human Relations Commission. The Dutchess Human Relations Commission is a group of diverse professionals advocating for the safety and welcoming of undocumented Latin@ students in the Mid-Hudson Valley. The social, emotional, and economic needs of undocumented Latin@ students under the DACA program involve understanding racial biases (Baily et al., 2016). Many of the undocumented Latin@ students walk fearfully due to deportation from ICE (Safstrom, 2018).

The Dutchess Human Relations Commission and New York City Chancellor Richard Carranza implemented the Dreamers Initiative in Houston, Texas. As the new chancellor of New York City, his efforts and collaboration with the Dutchess Human Relations Commission ensure undocumented Latin@ students have a welcoming environment, particularly in the Mid-Hudson Valley (Nienhusser, 2015). The commission engages in conversations with undocumented Latin@ students to understand Albany's experiences and lobby to implement sanctuary cities or protect undocumented Latin@ students crossing the border.

New York State advocates for undocumented families support legislation to assist undocumented students with legal representation and resources to assist with the process for U.S. citizenship (Hayduk, Hackett, & Folla, 2017). However, the recognition is for illegal students already enrolled and living in the United States. Many undocumented Latin@ students have

adapted to living in the United States, and returning home can be devastating, causing emotional trauma. The literature review examined undocumented Latin@ students' lived experiences, notwithstanding a gap in the literature.

### **Gap in Literature**

Immigration reform has become a stalemate drastically in recent years and may continue until elected officials decide collectively to improve undocumented Latin@ students (Ayón & Philbin, 2017). Despite efforts to immigration policy, the barriers for the Latin@ students are consistently the same without any hope of positive changes shortly. Research exists on barriers, immigration, and marginalization of undocumented Latin@ in educational institutions, yet little research topic specifically on adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. The challenges with communicating in Spanish while studying a mostly hidden population can contribute to the lack of study. Researchers conclude the inadequate immigration policies and language barriers contribute to undocumented Latin@ students to seek help with lived experiences (Sahay, Thatcher, Nunez, & Lightfoot, 2016).

Further research is essential to better understand undocumented students' emotional and life experiences (Gorichanaz, 2017). Conducting the research can be challenging to achieve because of the margin of trust between undocumented students and educational professionals, genuinely care for the students' well-being. Qualitative research methodology may help understand the experiences and better serve undocumented students for academic success (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The literature review chapter examined undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences through historical and political implications, crossing the border, law, and policy and

discrimination. Using keywords and supporting sentences, the literature review addressed the subject matter with supporting peer-review articles, American College of Education online digital library, linked to ProQuest and EBSCO, and Microsoft Academic. Key phrases were used to address undocumented Latin@ students residing in the Mid-Hudson Valley was used to search for peer review scholarly articles, books, and dissertation samples.

The present study addressed gap in the literature and extend knowledge on the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. Various studies are address domestic violence, homelessness, abandonment, and poor living conditions. Nevertheless, the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students an identified gap in literature.

LatCrit is the theoretical framework supporting the study of undocumented Latin@ students. Various themes were explored in the literature review study, language barriers, negative media perceptions, discrimination, and Gentrification of undocumented Latin@ students creating biases against many undocumented Latin@ students (Free et al., 2014).

In the following chapter 3, details for methodology for qualitative method approach is addressed. The research design makes a comprehensive collection of data, analyzes the qualitative data, and interprets undocumented Latin@ students' lived experiences. The research approach and impartial review of the qualitative and phenomenological approach of undocumented Latin@ students from the samples collected provide vital information into the life experiences. With the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA 2020 version the collected data of the semi-structured interviews were essential for coding and deciphering Spanish and English key words.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

A qualitative, phenomenological study addressed the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ enrolled at the Lincolndale Haven. The phenomenological methodology's approach is an exploration of the adverse life experiences of human beings (Stuart-Carruthers, 2014). Meaningful data related to the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students was collected and interpreted to provide insight into potential services to prevent high school dropout (Lovato, 2019). The problem of the phenomenological study was the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students could have had a connection to the high school dropout rate of the students. The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and the high school dropout rate.

#### **Research Questions**

The following qualitative research questions addressed the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. The responses provided in-depth information addressing the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. The participants attentively engaged in the interview process with responses.

Central Research Question: What are the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students who dropout of high school and how do educators, activists, and immigration lawyers respond to these students in the Hudson Valley?

Research Subquestion 1: What are some of the adverse lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and how do they impact the decision to drop out of high school?

Research Subquestion 2: What type of support systems assist undocumented Latin@ students to graduate from high school?

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The phenomenological approach addressed the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. The phenomenological approach did not address numerical statistical data for interpretation, instead of revealing the students' emotional, spiritual, and life experiences (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018). The data analysis reaffirmed in verbatim many of the participants' direct quotes and was essential to the research and understanding of the undocumented Latin@ student's life experiences. The adverse lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students included a hostile environment at the school from various students and staff members (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018). The approach focused on an individual's human condition and how the reaction to those conditions is a cause for decision-making (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa, & Varpio, 2015).

Conducting an interview can help make revisions of the interview questions and hold a debriefing session for feedback to validate the items (Oltmann, 2016). The participants were handed semi-structured interview questions written in English and Spanish. The interviews were conducted in English with each participant, except one responded in English. Request for participation was via invites and school e-mail assigned to undocumented Latin@ students with the minimum age of 18 and older.

The data collected through interviews are to be kept confidential to protect the participants' identities (Bretschneider, Cirilli, Jones, Lynch, & Wilson, 2017). The undocumented Latin@ students attend a high school in Lincolndale, New York. The participants were Latin@ students, male, female, and LGBT participants with a minimum age of 18. For

parental and guardianship with Spanish as the dominant language, a consent form was written in Spanish. Many undocumented Latin@ students preferred a Spanish faculty to discuss and share many of the lived experiences (Loya et al., 2017).

Many researchers preferring the phenomenological approach for a research study use the term phenomenologists (Englander, 2019). The study explores undocumented Latin@ students' cognitive experiences with collected data and interpretation (Teherani et al., 2015). The research provided an in-depth data of undocumented Latin@ students' past, present, and future related to life experiences.

The phenomenological approach in contemporary culture addresses a pre-philosophical approach to life, which is the truth of the individual's experiences only (Smith & Llanera, 2019). The interview and response disclosed a better understanding of the realities of life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). Many researchers lack understanding of the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students (Vaughn, Jacquez, & Suarez-Cano, 2019). The qualitative approach uses data nonnumerical to address the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students.

Many undocumented Latin@ students preferred to find employment and supporting family members back home (Benuto et al., 2018). Some Latin@ students preferred to work supporting family members economically. Crossing the border for many undocumented Latin@ students is not necessarily for educational opportunities but economic means and sending money back home (Benuto et al., 2018). For some undocumented Latin@ students attending school, the experience crossing the border may have impacted the student's life, resulting in low academic performance (Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education, 2016).



LatCrit theorists use stories, counter-stories, and narratives addressing the life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students (Kiehne, 2016). Giving a voice to undocumented Latin@ students to share the reality of life experience is crucial for a population marginalized for being undocumented. For many undocumented Latin@ students, serving as an opportunity to describe lived experiences may build confidence, someone is listening. Some undocumented students preferring to communicate in Spanish may offer positive responses during the interview (Hire, 2015). The objective was to allow each participant voluntarily to share lived experiences without hindrances and listened intently to the responses.

### **Restatement of the Purpose**

Implementation of programs to assist undocumented Latin@ students with the best possible educational experience is vital for the participants' success. Undocumented Latin@ students are no different from diverse students who need services to provide the best possible educational experiences and graduate (Spinney, 2015). Similarly, studies have been conducted on undocumented Latin@ students' lived experiences externally from the education addressing the phenomenological experiences (Gorichanaz, 2017). Studies on the correlation of the life experiences of Latin@ to the dropout rate in Lincolndale, New York, for implementation of programs do not exist. Undocumented Latin@ could have programs of implementation to assist with academic assistance like tutoring or mentoring, but no program exists to address adverse life experiences. The research identified commonalities to service undocumented Latin@ students with the possible implementation of services to meet the participants' vital needs.

The phenomenological study was an exploration of undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences and the dropout rate. Many undocumented Latin@ students living in Lincolndale, New York, live separately from parents and live with distant relatives (Raza et al.,

2018). Lovato (2019) suggested, forced family separation is a cause of undocumented Latin@ students' lived experiences contributing to the dropout rate. Undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences correlate with the high school dropout rate in Lincolndale, New York (Rangel-Clawson, 2016). The study is to be shared with various community members, faith-based, civic, and community leaders, including the Lincolndale Haven, to foster dialogue for implementations of services to improve the life experiences of Latin@ students.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The research study explored the qualitative research method approach and addressed the research questions. Reviewing the semi-structured interview questions, recording equipment, sitting arrangements, lighting, and comfort level for data collection of undocumented Latin@ students' life experiences was vital. The research study avoided preconceived notions of the participants during the research method. The semi-structured interviews prepared for undocumented Latin@ students have facilitated eliminating biases essential to the research study (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). The research maintained a level of professionalism, respect, confidentiality, and trust crucial for undocumented Latin@ students in the research study duration.

Avoiding any coerciveness and leading the undocumented Latin@ students to answer the interview questions and participating was essential to prevent unethical persuasion (Largent & Lynch, 2017). When facilitating the research, avoiding any prior connections or direct supervisory role was vital, and mitigating hindrances to the research study's reliability and validity avoiding any biases was recommended (Largent & Lynch, 2017). Once the research proposal was submitted for IRB approval and granted permission, research commenced at the Lincolndale, New York site. When conducting the research, thoughtfulness and consideration

was fundamental when conducting the research, treating undocumented Latin@ students with dignity and respect at all research phases (Bracken-Roche, Bell, Macdonald, & Racine, 2017). Following all necessary and proper protocols when engaging with participants, fostering a welcoming environment for undocumented Latin@ students was indispensable (Newington & Metcalfe, 2014). The participants were allowed equal time for the interview process, minimizing potential biases or signs of favoritism.

When collecting the data, reliability and validity was continually present during the research study (Taherdoost, 2016). Undocumented Latin@ students were provided with a safe and welcoming environment and no sense of pressure to participate. The undocumented Latin@ students willingly and were given explicit knowledge of the information provided and used for data collection addressing the life experiences. Throughout the process, the candidate-maintained objectivity asked questions consistent with the research study and limited any biases in the process of data collection (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

### **Research Procedures**

The population of undocumented Latin@ students enrolled in Lincoln Dale Haven School is 6% of the overall study body or 196 undocumented Latin@ students. The research sample included 20 undocumented Latin@ student participants above 18 years of age, both female, male, LGBTQ, and gender-neutral students. The willing participants shared life experiences, feeling comfortable and engaged in the interview process.

When conducting the research and informing potential recruits of the research study's objective, resulted in an adequate number of able participants (Purvis et al., 2017). The chair and committee member's guidance following the interview, was essential for successful data collection (Purvis et al., 2017). One method for sampling considered was homogenous

sampling; participants sharing similar traits were preferable for the study. Time management was vital to foster a productive dialogue with the participants avoiding unnecessary and exhausting questions (Nasrullah, Khan, & Khan, 2016). The interviews included recording the responses of undocumented Latin@ participants when asked a semi-structured question.

For some undocumented Latin@ students enrolled at Lincolndale, New York, communicating in Spanish with faculty and support staff who cannot speak the language was not problematic (Sahay et al., 2016). A copy of the recruitment and participation form was submitted to parents and guardianship and distributed in Spanish and English (Ginsburg et al., 2017; Appendices A & B). Many of the 196 undocumented Latin@ students enrolled at the Lincolndale school district preferred staff members or teachers with a Spanish language command.

Conducting a pilot interview helped make revisions of the interview questions and hold a debriefing session for feedback to validate the items (Christenbery, 2017). The participants were presented with the option to respond in English or Spanish. One of the participants preferred to respond in Spanish, and the data collected was translated into English. The software transcribing wreally.com offered an audio player integrated with a text editor capable of recording and typing simultaneously from Spanish to English. Request for participation was conducted via school e-mail assigned to undocumented Latin@ students. The data collected through interviews are kept confidential to protect the identities of the students. Facilitating the interview process for the sole purpose of collecting data for analysis and interpretation was vital.

The 20 undocumented Latin@ student participants opted to participate in the interview, and each answered the semi-structured questions. Misdirection was avoided at all costs during the interview process, and the participants' responses were strictly respected (Brayda & Boyce,

2014). During conducting the research, all participants were calm and fostering a welcoming environment for all parties involved in a positive manner (Kolar, Ahmad, Chan, & Erickson, 2015). Avoiding all possible biases was essential while engaging in research with the participants and strictly maintained semi-structured questions without deviation (Moss, Uluğ, & Acar, 2019). Maintaining the research rigors should not mean avoiding any enjoyment during the research process (Moss et al., 2019).

### **Instrumentation**

The data collection of the interviews is kept confidential to protect the identities of the students. The data is stored in a safe, locked file and will be kept for 3 years. The process included interview questions and was handed to the undocumented Latin@ student participants to review before the interview addressing the lived experiences. During the interview, the participants were provided with a copy of semi-structured questions before the interview. The semi-structured interview questions prepared in Spanish can prepare the participants for the interview process and explore the life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students (Appendix C).

The semi-structured questions prepared in verbatim in English provide the option for participants who prefer to respond in English (Appendix D). The questions were thoughtfully compiled to explore the data phenomenon for scholarly interpretation. The semi-structured questions are simplistic and short to avoid lengthy and unnecessary responses. The semi-structured questions prepared provided efficient responses for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The semi-structured questions were asked not in the order the questions were placed, preferable in the Q&A; the participants answered some of the questions without being asked, allowing a flow of information.

A panel of experts reviewed the semi-structured interview questions in the field, provided expert responses and feedback. Provided an example from a social worker clinician responding to three of the questions (Appendix E). The responses addressed the field-testing subject matter expertise and the research questions for data analysis and interpretation (Appendix F). The study can assist school administrators, educators, and support staff with data to better understand Latin@ students. Request for access to facilities and conduct research study at the Spanish Eastern District Institute was submitted and approved (Appendix G).

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## **Recruitment**

The superintendent committed and granted access to the school for conducting research. When the research study permission was given, space for creating a comfortable environment was available to conduct research. The superintendent submitted a letter of approval granting access to the facilities and requested full cooperation from staff and teachers (Appendix H). An informed consent form was provided to undocumented Latin@ student participants (Appendix I). Collaborating with various stakeholders assisting with recruitment efforts for willing participants to engage in the interview was vital (García, 2017). Maintaining integrity was imperative for the to maintain confidentiality, consent forms, and the research study's location. Facilitating the interview process was for the sole purpose of collecting data for analysis and interpretation. The

participants are enrolled at the Spanish Eastern District and recruited from the Lincoln Dale, Haven school program.

### **Data Collection**

Traveling to the research site location with approval was essential to collect the research data of the semi-structured interviews. The research study explored and facilitated the use of e-mails with Google features, ensuring a secure link with educators' assistance to help undocumented Latin@ students review semi-structured questions before the interview was an option (Nebeker et al., 2017). Record keeping was essential for maintaining a comprehensive data collection of the interview.

The interview was recorded using the latest in audio technology for clarity. The questions were clear and understandable for the undocumented Latin@ students responding comfortably with a reflection on each question (Heath, Williamson, Williams, & Harcourt, 2018). According to the literature, reviewing the materials from the semi-structured interviews following the qualitative research method is vital using available technology availability, Google docs, forms, and spreadsheets, to collect the necessary information of undocumented Latin@ students, which are essential aspects and followed for proper analysis (Nebeker et al., 2017).

Reviewing the collected data and all material was essential to ensure the information is appropriately cataloged (Driscoll & Perdue, 2014). Digital sound recorders were useful and delivered more clarity over magnetic tape-recording devices (Nebeker et al., 2017). The external microphones provided clarity for the interviews and easily transferred to voice-activated software on the computer for transcribing. According to the literature, consideration for a time frame not exhaustive to the participants is recommended (Kolar et al., 2015). The time frame was honored, avoiding any possible overextension of the interview process. Maintaining the



qualitative phenomenological integrity was fundamental in keeping with the collected data without violating undocumented Latin@ students' experiences (Hernandez, 2017).

Furthermore, the responses were vital to the semi-structured questions addressed to the undocumented Latin@ student participants. The welcoming environment permitted the interviewees to speak from within the emotional and spiritual context of life experiences with minimal disruptions as possible (Del Vecchio et al., 2017). The data was collected in the school environment conducive for the research, and settings were in place for such a task (Creswell, 2019). During data collection, time management was essential to avoid exhausting the participants, and the recommended time should be within a reasonable time frame (Kolar et al., 2015). The interview was conducted in the morning when the students felt refresh and not tired from a long day. Orange juice, bagels, coffee, hot chocolate, donuts, small water bottles, and little chocolate candy was offered to the participants.

According to the literature, the facilitator's obligation to inform the participants of the confidentiality consent forms protecting personal information from being used in the research findings is vital (Heath et al., 2018). Reviewing the collected data once the interview was concluded for accuracy avoided any possible follow-ups with the undocumented Latin@ students (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). Securing the collected data via locked file cabinets or electronically is recommended to ensure the participants' confidentiality and protection (Alter & Gonzalez, 2018). Only consent granted via a written request and authorized form by a confirmed member of the scholar community conducting legal research is acceptable (Alter & Gonzalez, 2018).

### **Data Analysis**

The collected data analyzed from the interviews were from undocumented Latin@ students' life experiences and were placed in specific categories (Mattick, Johnston, & de la Croix, 2018). The transcribed text was analyzed to identify similar themes from the interviews (Creswell, 2019). The qualitative data with inductive analysis provided various possible themes for interpretation and conclusions. Exploring coding for the data interpretation answering the research questions is essential for a viable sample (Vaughn & Turner, 2016).

MAXQDA's new version 2020, qualitative data analysis software offered feasibility for coding data collected from the interviews deciphering keys words in Spanish and English revealed in-depth emotional and lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students (Nebeker et al., 2017). Codes provided commonalities between undocumented Latin@ student's life experiences. Scaffolding or spreadsheets was an excellent method to review the data evidence-based themes related to the life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students (Sarker, Xiao, Beaulieu, & Lee, 2018).

Feedback was essential for the qualitative coding analysis of the data (Kuckartz, 2014). The data was gathered in one place for formatting for the scholar to discern the best possible analysis. Kuckartz (2014) recommends coding the comments by making an accurate decision for categorizing by discerning relational themes using a coding legend. Once the coding was formulated, using queries was essential for data analysis (Kuckartz, 2014). The data analysis provided the necessary responses to the semi-structured research questions. Biases or manipulation of the procedure is mitigated when reviewing the data analyzed and reporting the final findings (Bansal, Smith, & Vaara, 2018).

When consulting with the chair about possible limitations on the findings, the chair made recommendations for further research on the topic (Black, 2017). Nevertheless, the outcome of the analyzed data did not reach an affirmative conclusion to the students' life experiences connected to leaving school. The qualitative research design explicitly focused on the phenomenological experience, but the outcome is known because research has been conducted (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Exploring the phenomenon with the analyzed data afforded valuable information and assisted possible methods in which the students can get much-needed services to increase graduation success.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Some researchers understand that phenomenology is a method providing an understanding of the human element experiences involving emotions versus the numerical statistical data, which is cold and unmoving (Lehnert, Craft, Singh, & Park, 2016). According to the literature, the research study explored the data collected to ensure the study is reliable and reaffirms validity (Ginsburg et al., 2017). The phenomenological research method does address the phenomenon from a statistical interpretation of participants (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014). A panel reviewed the questions to ensure validity and remove any bias some may perceive from the dissertation chair to ensure consistent research study alignment (Mattick et al., 2018).

### **Internal Validity**

Internal validity addressed the efficiency of the research results. Phenomenological analysis detailed the participants' adverse lived experiences and interpreted the data to understand better undocumented Latin@ students (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The samples of the collected semi structured interview question responses provided the necessary internal

validity by avoiding confounding variables, avoiding biases essential for a high internal validity (Flores et al., 2019). In collaboration with the chair, the research study tackled the concerns using instruments to ensure validity.

### **Member Checks**

Member checks were essential after the interviews and data collection (Madill & Sullivan, 2018). Member checks were conducted to corroborate the accuracy of the outcomes stemming from the data and interpretation analysis. The method included evaluating the data, analyzing, proper interpretation, and summarizing the interviews reaffirming accuracy and validity. Member checking involved various topics and numerous quotes from the data collection determining the participants' real lived experiences.

### **Triangulation**

Qualitative research is often accused of being unreliable but required to validate and maintain data reliability (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). Triangulation mitigated the potential of using unreliable sources by triangulating various data resources from various perspectives. Triangulation reaffirmed the research topic's reliability addressing the phenomenological experiences of undocumented students (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Triangulation revealed the collected data from multiple perspectives to validate the findings (Rooshenas, Paramasivan, Jepson, & Donovan, 2019). Adapting interobserver benefited the research study of undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences reaffirming the reliability (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical considerations were essential to follow and were maintained to protect the undocumented Latin@ students' information. No ethical issues occurred during the qualitative

research, resulting in no data needing to be discarded. Researchers using the qualitative research method often have different perspectives and relationships with participants, which did not materialize (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & de Lacey, 2016). The ethical considerations in qualitative research are the participation of human subjects. Consulting with the dissertation chair and community members was essential before conducting the research (Black, 2017). Voluntary participation and informed consent were essential to foster respect and trust between the participants and the researcher.

Sensitive information is kept confidential unless consent is authorized in written or oral form. According to the literature, the facilitator, for qualitative research purposes, maintains confidentiality and anonymity of the undocumented Latin@ students (Lancaster, 2017). The explored member-checking technique to validate, capture undocumented Latin@ student participants state alleviated concerns for proper interpretations, and mitigating biases. According to the literature, accurately collecting, analyzing, and reporting the data is essential for interpretation (Alase, 2017). Furthermore, mitigating errors by using a recording device throughout the entire interview; member checking to ensure accuracy (Alase, 2017); employing triangulation techniques (Alase, 2017), and relying on coding software (Allen, 2017).

### **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of the phenomenological study examined the adverse lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and the dropout rate. Avoiding any preconceived notion of the participants when conducting interviews was achieved (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). When conducting the research, accurately informing the participants of the research study's objective, resulted in an adequate number of able participants (Purvis et al., 2017). The interviews' data collection is to be maintained confidential to protect the identities of the undocumented Latin@

students (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). Reviewing the collected data and all material was essential to ensure the information was adequately cataloged (Driscoll & Perdue, 2014). The analyzed collected data from the interviews, considering the themes of undocumented Latin@ students' life experiences and placed themes in specific categories, was crucial (Mattick et al., 2018).

According to the literature, examining the data collected to ensure the study is reliable and reaffirm validity was critical (Ginsburg et al., 2017). Ethical considerations are essential and honored for conviction and respect for the participant's ethical beliefs. The research fostered dialogue with educators and professional stakeholders, understanding the adverse lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. Chapter 4 describes the findings of the research study on the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students.

## **Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results**

The study's research phenomenological methodology approach provided a comprehensive depiction of the undocumented Latin@ student participant's adverse experiences. Latin@ is a term used in contemporary Latin culture to identify diverse Latinos/a, including gender-neutral members of the Latino community. The participant's interview afforded valuable information results and themes from the data collection. The problem of the phenomenological study was the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students could have had a connection to the high school dropout rate of the students. The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and the high school dropout rate.

### **Data Collection**

The Spanish Eastern District granted an approval letter to interview potential undocumented Latin@ students. The District granted access to a conference room for face-to-face recruitment. The conference room was in a prime location and visible for the recruitment of undocumented Latin@ students. The participants are all from Latin America and attend the same school.

The recruitment effort began at 8:30 a.m. Potential participants walked into the conference room, were told about the research, and given a quick oral presentation describing the research. The twenty undocumented Latin@ students with the minimum age of 18 and older were given voluntary consent forms in English along with a copy of the interview questions. The research did not put any participants at risk, and the participants welcomed the opportunity to participate.

Each of the 20 participants shared personal adverse lived experiences during the interview and data collection. To ensure the protection of the identification of the participants used a selected pseudonym for the study. The undocumented Latin@ student participants answered the interview questions seamlessly and without hesitation. The interview took approximately 15 minutes for each participant. The total number of minutes for the collection of data was 300 minutes. The participant's place of origin is from Central America (see below Table 1).

Table 1

*Number of Identified Gender Participants and Place of Origin (N = 20)*

Demographic	<i>n</i>
Gender	
Female	7
Male	8
Gender-neutral	5
Place of origin	
Honduras	5
El Salvador	8
Guatemala	7

All undocumented Latin@ student participants began the United States' journey from the northern triangle of South America (Acer & Byrne, 2017). The adverse life experiences of the students from migrating to the U.S is connected to many of the academic deficiencies. The Lincolndale, Haven program is one of the leading programs specifically designed to assist undocumented Latin@ students with an academic support system to graduate from high school. The collected data was facilitated using semi-structured interviews and member checking.

The 20 undocumented Latin@ students participated in the interview willingly. Various undocumented Latin@ students expressed eagerness to share the lived experiences in the



interviews. The participants responded to the questions at a classroom located in the school building's first-floor end, providing minimal interruption for collecting data. Outside of the classroom, a table was set up with donuts, coffee, hot chocolate, Spanish baked bread, orange juice, and water bottles. The makeshift breakfast was for the participants and creating a level of comfort and a relaxed atmosphere. Responding to the interviews averaged approximately 15 minutes.

After the interview session, the participants expressed gratitude and shared kind words not recorded in the interview process. Afterward, various undocumented Latin@ students stood behind, requesting prayers. The prayer transitioned to discussing sports, mainly soccer, and discussing the favorite home team. Each participant presented a unique perspective of lived experiences (see below Table 2).

Table 2

*Profile of Participants*

Participant	Age arrival to the U.S.	Age	Grade level	Expected to graduate	Goal
1	11	18	Senior	2020	Work
2	5	19	Senior	2020	Nurse
3	7	18	Senior	Not sure	Not sure
4	9	18	Junior	Not sure	Construction
5	11	18	Junior	2021	Engineer
6	11	19	Senior	2020	Teacher
7	10	20	Senior	Not sure	Carpenter
8	12	19	Junior	Not sure	Cosmopolitan
9	6	18	Junior	2021	Army

10	5	19	Senior	2020	Police officer
11	3	18	Junior	2021	Painter
12	8	19	Senior	Not sure	Entrepreneur
13	4	18	Senior	Not sure	Real estate agent
14	12	18	Senior	2020	Seminary
15	9	19	Junior	2021	Not sure
16	10	18	Senior	2020	Surgeon
17	6	18	Junior	2021	Nurse
18	10	19	Senior	2020	Police officer
19	7	18	Senior	Not sure	Sports
20	8	19	Senior	Not sure	Musician

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### Data Analysis

The data analysis process allowed for exploring the interviews for developing themes of undocumented Latin@ student's experiences. The process was lengthy to evaluate and obtain a profound understanding of the collected data during the analysis phase to interpret the themes correctly. The multimedia iRig Mic Cast podcasting mic connected to the iPad tablet permitted precise voice recording technology without disturbing the background sounds. The transcribed data from the audio-recorded interviews was then reviewed, comparing notes from the interviews with the transcripts to ensure accurate collection of the data was achieved.

The semi-structured questions served as a guide enabling the participant's autonomy of responses and expression. Data analysis began with an analysis of participants' reactions, vocabulary and emergent themes. This analysis was followed by categorization in themes and review for proper interpretation of connotation. The interview transcripts showed considerable

similar experiences of the participants and these were grouped as emerging themes. The objective was to avoid redundancy and identify significant themes assisting with comprehension of the problem by ensuring each participant was given equitable responses.

The collected interview data was analyzed for the themes of undocumented Latin@ students' life experiences. The qualitative data was analyzed using an inductive process resulting in various themes for the interpretation and connection to the research questions. Coding, exploring, and interpreting themes to answer each research question is an essential component for the viable sample (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). The new MAXQDA 2020, qualitative data analysis software, delivered feasibility for coding data collected from the interviews. New features include improved memo manager, ability to research, filter, and create memos with ease using a unique style for data collection and come up with concepts and themes. Max maps offer six new models and interfaces, providing a preview before creating a concept map.

Undocumented Latin@ students responded to the semi-structured questions individually. The responses address social concerns of undocumented Latin@ students. The software was efficient for creating codes and themes addressing the participants' lived experiences (see below Table 3).

Table 3

*Themes*

Themes	Final themes	Thematic clusters	Emergent thematic codes
Social-economic	Better opportunities	Help the future generation Achieve goals parents could not achieve	Social beliefs Growing push
	Awareness of potential	Appreciative of potential	Generational accomplishment
Sociocultural	Appreciating the chance	Focus on the present	Education of parents

		Learn from past mistakes Acknowledging opportunism Optimism/all will work out for the best	Paternal encouragement Social modification  Shunning work vocations
Sociocultural	Obtaining future success	The insecurity of the future Uncovering your strengths Appreciating family member's sacrifice	Educational possibility  Attaining purposes  Classes to fit goal objectives
The influence of family	Moving forward for yourself	Improving one's living condition Grateful for the encouragement of love ones and friends Contributing information and help others	Stop with excuses  Eluding drawbacks  Proximate strategies
School environment	The resource to help others  Thankfulness	Be an example to family members and friends Serving others in need	Traversing obstacles  Chance Being equipped Policy changes DACA influence Hopefulness Short-range formation Civil discourse Imminent preparation Individual motivation Attention to self Household expense Adaptation Arrival Protection Fiscal well-being

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The MAXQDA software managed the data, inductively coded the data, and assisted with identifying themes. The software-assisted with creating nodes to detect suggestive conceptions from interviews. Accounts of school support were placed in a node. The collected data was reviewed numerous times, carefully adding codes through software. The collected data is

secured in a locked cabinet in the private office and password-protected technology, including biometrics ensuring confidentiality.

The scaffolding was an excellent method for reviewing the data evidence-based themes related to the adverse life experiences of Latin@ students. The outcome of the analyzed data affirms the conclusion, undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences have a connection for numerous students leaving school. Exploring the phenomenon with the analyzed data should provide valuable information that could help how the students can get much-needed services to increase the graduation success. The undocumented Latin@ student participant's experiences present uniformity from the interview responses.

The responses from semi-structured interviews were intended to explore the description and adverse life experiences of the participant's perspective. The responses were straight forward and without hesitation. The undocumented Latin@ participants' quote is an indicator of the lived experiences (see below Table 4).

Table 4

*Relevant Quotes*

Participant	Quote
Participant 1	"I wondered if I was able to make it and come into the U.S. . . . Most times I wonder if I did the right thing leaving family members behind."
Participant 2	"Human beings have the capacity to lose the sense of humanity and become vultures in dire situations."
Participant 3	"I was always fearful of immigration because my parents instilled fear in me and my siblings."
Participant 4	"Nosotros trabajamos fuerte y somos parte integrante aquí en nuestra comunidad [We work hard and vital members of our community]."

Participant 5	“Extreme poverty forced us to come to the U.S.”
Participant 6	“Loneliness can have a negative effect on me, when I think about my family back home.”
Participant 7	“I left because the safety of my family and myself caused a tough decision to leave.”
Participant 8	“We risked our lives to come to this country for a chance at a better life.”
Participant 9	“Many times, I felt overwhelmed and maybe too, should quit school to work full-time.”
Participant 10	“We do not have enough financial resources to pay for an attorney.”
Participant 11	“It was hard to sleep in a room with five people, but we did it for survival.”
Participant 12	“I cry every day, hoping to one day heal from my pain.”
Participant 13	“My parents pay taxes and for many to perceive we leave for free is ridiculous.”
Participant 14	“When I am at the Newburgh galleria mall, many of our people are employees or own businesses.”
Participant 15	“Politicians talk trash from both parties; neither is having a real concern for us.”
Participant 16	“Living under such stressful conditions and treated badly, I felt it was better for me to return to my native country.”
Participant 17	“I had no choice but to survive.”
Participant 18	“I would love to become a police New York police officer; the requirement is a least two years of college.”
Participant 19	“I miss my father”
Participant 20	“As an undocumented Latin@ student living in the United States is difficult.”

**Socioeconomic Considerations.** The common themes identified from the analyzed data included four subthemes: costs, limited resources, school supplies, and supplementary training. These themes support the LatCrit theory and undocumented Latin@ students. Various undocumented Latin@ students attending the program maintain caution and often avoid speaking with support staff and educators concerning lived experiences. Some undocumented Latin@ students revealing information of locations and routes might be used to search for fellow undocumented Latin@ students. The research suggests some undocumented Latin@ students

stay in school when trust and cooperation are achieved. The undocumented Latin@ student participants' socioeconomic status limits availability for school supplies.

**Sociocultural.** Social-cultural is the second theme of the data collection. Numerous undocumented Latin@ students discussed taking care of siblings while parents worked. While education is a priority for many family members, the family is often the priority, especially when taking care of the house involving cleaning, cooking, and laundry. Schoolwork usually takes a backseat, and many of the students expressed are the last item on the list to do. Numerous stakeholders have taken matters to assist undocumented Latin@ students' concentration in school and advising with alternatives from overworking. Some of the participants assist with domestic chores while parents are working long hours.

**The Influence of Family.** Participants relocated for reasons many parents felt the need to move into the United States. Many participants were informed without giving proper time allotment to offer farewells to friends and loved ones, notwithstanding protesting, the participants had little to no choice to move. Various reasons for the parent's decision to relocate, economic sustainability, the safety of loved ones, living conditions, and connections to family members living in the United States.

The participants mentioned the parent's endeavors to find employment in the United States to escape severe poverty back home. Each participant expressed how hard parents work, and often many of the parents sacrificed education and personal endeavors to provide. Family influence for the participants is a motivator for coming into the United States.

**School Environment.** Educational leadership, educators, and support staff collaborate assiduously with undocumented Latin@ students in a welcoming school environment. Each undocumented Latin@ student participant expressed, the school could provide a more

welcoming environment, and many teachers can become unsympathetic. The participants did not express negative connotations towards the school and instructors. Many undocumented Latin@ student participants expressed gratitude for the many efforts the school attempts to provide the best possible learning experience. The one issue the undocumented Latin@ student participants are concerned with is employment after graduation. For the undocumented Latin@ student participants, the school environment.

**Religion.** Christianity is essential to many of the undocumented Latin@ students. Contemporary Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism, and Catholicism are three of the sub-branches of Christianity many students practice with family members. The belief in the God of Christianity is a motivating factor for seeking better opportunities with coming into the United States. A few of the undocumented Latin@ student participants are affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. The number of undocumented Latin@ students joining the evangelical or Pentecostal movement increases (Reynolds & Reynolds, 2018). Religion is vital for many of the undocumented Latin@ students' participants.

## **Results**

The following qualitative research questions addressed the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latino students. Data were gathered from all participants in three succinct phases, including a demographic questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The pre-observation questionnaire was first collected from participants to amass necessary demographic information. Participants in the study were primarily undocumented Latin@ students.



### Central Research Question

What are the adverse life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students who dropout of high school and how do educators, activists, and immigration lawyers respond to these students in the Hudson Valley?

**Policy changes.** For many of the undocumented Latin@ students, access to education is vital because of legalization concomitant with educational achievement. Participant 15 stated, “Politicians talk trash from both parties; neither is having a real concern for us.” College is essential for Participant 15, and her situation at home is not going well to consider attending college. Participant 15 is not sure what to do and questioned if graduating from high school is a possibility.

Participant 18 wants to become an officer but laments all biases against undocumented Latin@ students. Participant 18 said, “I would love to become a police New York police officer, the requirement is a least two years of college.” Participant 18 understands her status might prevent her from becoming a police officer and is not sure what to do if her dream does not come to fruition. Participant 18 is aware many undocumented cannot serve as law enforcement personnel in most states and joining the military may become a viable option. Elected officials, civic leaders, and members of the clergy in Mid-Hudson Valley are collaborating to institute policies to assist undocumented Latin@ students.

**Economic influence.** The false assumption undocumented Latin@ students do not contribute to the economy or pay taxes is a false narrative (Rodriguez & Dawkins, 2017). Participant 13 said, “My parents pay taxes and for many to perceive we leave for free is ridiculous.” For Participant 13, families of undocumented Latin@ students contribute to the economy and work just as hard. Participant 4 works part-time in the construction industry and

would like to build affordable housing for undocumented families living in New York State.

Participant 4 noted, “Nosotros trabajamos fuerte y somos parte integrante aquí en nuestra comunidad [We work hard and vital members of our community].” Participant 4 resents the false assumption family members are freeloading and not contributing to the community.

Participant 11 resents the assumption all undocumented Latin@ students are recipients of public assistance. “When I am at the Newburgh galleria mall, many of our people are employees or own businesses.” Participant 11 has various undocumented Latino friends owning restaurants and department stores, contributing to the local economy. Roma Nova is a restaurant owned by one of her undocumented friends and is one of the best rated in Beacon, New York. Economic sustenance for the undocumented Latin@ student participant and family members is essential for moving forward for a better future.

**Legal representation.** For many attorneys providing pro bono or paid legal immigration representation, resources are not enough to go around. Participant 10 said, “We do not have enough financial resources to pay for an attorney.” Participant 10’s family had a dialogue with congresswomen Nydia Velazquez of New York concerning pro bono representation. Unfortunately, the waiting list for pro bono representation is extensive and a long process to obtain an attorney. Participant 10 is optimistic about the opportunity of obtaining an attorney either through paid or pro bono services.

Participant 3 commented, “Many undocumented families, including my family, are concern with possible deportation if the situation with immigration reform is not fixed.” For Participant 3, family members are constantly in her mind. Leaving with family members in an apartment, the housing management is not aware of causes her to have anxiety. Participant 3 would not call maintenance for fear of the management finding out she is living with family

members according to the lease; only a set number of occupants can live in the apartment. New York State offers legal representation for undocumented Latin@ students; nonetheless, the demand is daunting with minimal recourse (Hayduk et al., 2017). The state of New York has allocated funding for the New York State Bar Association for legal representation of undocumented Latin@ students.

The responses of each participants reflective of LatCrit and ultimately aim to do. To provide a voice and story of undocumented Latin@ students. Many of the undocumented Latin@ students expressed emotions in connection with missing family members from their native countries. Sharing responses as part of the research study was a welcoming opportunity for undocumented Latin@ students.

The responses allowed a glimpse at the lived experiences shaping the lives of undocumented Latin@ students. Each of the participant's unique experiences has played a key role in the way these undocumented Latin@ students view the world.

### **Research Subquestion 1**

What are some of the adverse lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and how do they impact the decision to drop out of high school?

**Participant 1.** Participant 1 faced constant threats from individuals along the trek to the border. Sleeping many nights on the floor with limited food and water. Participant 1 often spend long hours without sleeping because of robbers and travelers searching for opportunities to cause harm. He witnessed a group beat a young man badly, and a young girl who was molested. "I wondered if I was able to make it and come into the U.S. . . . Most times I wonder if I did the right thing leaving family members behind." Participant 1 refers to the lived experiences as one walking through the desert and reaching the promise land.

**Participant 2.** Participant 2 recalled being surrounded by adults and never leaving the group because her mother feared of disappearing or becoming a victim to kidnappers. When needed to use the bathroom, the mother of Participant 2 waited until a safe and secure place to relieve usually behind a bush tree with older females around for any possible risk. Many times, her mother would carry her on the back because of fatigue.

At times my mother and I would stay close to our people in groups to avoid from getting seen alone and probably be taken... We would take a quick bath within the river to at least wash off the dirt and mosquitos in our bodies. (Participant 2)

Participant 2 recalled crying at night and scared because of the darkness and praying for the safety. Participant 2 said “human beings have the capacity to lose the sense of humanity and become vultures in dire situations.”

**Participant 3.** Participant 3 learned from a young age to avoid revealing her identity. Participant 3 instructed by her father and mother to avoid discussing with individuals her birthplace and entry into the United States. Participant 3’s parents many times discouraged her from attending school, stay home for fear of getting caught and deported by immigration authorities. “I was always fearful of immigration because my parents instilled fear in me and my siblings.”

“Going to school is a difficult thing to do because I visualize men in uniforms coming into my classroom unexpected and hand cuff me for deportation. . . . My parents rarely invited our neighbors to visit our home.” Participant 3 was instructed to never open the door to strangers for fear of the entire family getting arrested and deported. Participant 3 was constantly reminded to avoid referencing the word undocumented with friends and any possible conversations on the topic. Participant 3 would soak in sadness when many of her friends unknowingly of her status

made unflattering remarks about undocumented immigrants, as good runners, jumping over walls and crossing the border.

**Participant 4.** Participant 4's older brother was incarcerated for committing a crime in the United States and once is released he is to be detained by immigration to begin the process of deportation. Participant 4 does not condone his brother's behavior, only fears his brother may not be able to survive back home in the native country. "My older brother was involved in gang related activity. I looked up to him because he fought anyone who challenged him and many of the people in the hood did not bother me." He was a member of the FTW gang; he was caught in a criminal act and went to jail. "I love my brother and hope he can stay but understandably he is responsible for his actions." "He will probably become worse and join a gang and may end up in jail or get killed." The family have green cards and work long hours. Participant 4 likes to work in construction and would like to own a business.

**Participant 5.** Participant 5's parents unfortunately were unable to provide proper parenting. Unfortunately, both Participant 5's parents fell victims to drug abuse and the grandparents were awarded custody. His grandparents work extensive long hours and difficult days in upholstery industry and providing Participant 5 with opportunities for a better future. Coming into the country with only 30 pesos, and a small duffle bag was the only items Participant 5 carried from home. The prospect of attending school in the United States with an opportunity to achieve an education and becoming an engineer is worth the sacrifice.

"Extreme poverty forced us to come to the U.S." Participant 5 misses his parents and understands reconnection may never occur if participant remains in the United States. Having a speech impairment assisted with is difficult to learn English and was embarrassed to speak with many of his friends. Participant 5 hopes, one day, as an engineer return to his native country and

build sustainable housing for impoverished communities. The participant's grandparents constantly remind to appreciate life in the United States and to concentrate in school. The participant honors his grandparents for making his life better and considers himself American without his papers.

**Participant 6.** Participant 6's father was acting for the best interest and good intentions of his family. He convinced a man with deep roots in faith to take his son Participant 6 with him to the United States. The gentleman treated him with respect and like a son. Participant 6 can communicate with his father at least twice a month and hopes one day to have his father with him in the United States.

Unfortunately, Participant 6's mother passed away and was unable to attend her funeral. "Loneliness can have a negative effect on me, when I think about my family back home." The feeling of sadness was unbearable, and his deep religious background sustains him with coping with the loss. Participant 6 works cleaning homes and mowing the lawn and appreciates his father's commitment to provide a better opportunity even though his father stayed behind.

**Participant 7.** Participant 7 was excited to enter the United States and entered the country with an approved visa and many of his family members cried when he relocated. Leaving family members behind was filled with emotion and with limited odds to succeed. One gang member from his native country beat him badly for refusing to work as a look out for the authorities.

Participant 7 has scars in his face as evidence of his ordeal at back home. "I left because the safety of my family and myself caused a tough decision to leave." Each year the situation with his family back home becomes worse with crime and lack of food resources. Although Participant 7's visa expired going back to his native country is not an ideal situation

and dangerous him. During class session Participant 7 family members are constantly in his mind and causing a distraction with getting assignments done in class.

**Participant 8.** The father of Participant 8 was abusive with her mother and drinking made him more dangerous often exhibiting rage and beat her as well. The father works in the agricultural industry, particularly harvesting bananas. Participant 8's father wasted money drinking with his buddies and arrive home extremely late. "We risked our lives to come to this country for a chance at a better life."

Father's Day is a holiday Participant 8 dislikes to celebrate and recognize as a holiday. Participant 8 considers her brother a father figure and at time her brother could at times be overprotective. Participant 8 understands her brother is responsible for her well-being and felt obligated to fulfill the role of a father. Moving to Upstate New York for jobs opportunities in the heating and cooling industry and her brother became an apprentice and after a few years opened his own business. Participant 8 likes working with makeup and desires to one day open her own boutique and working with high clientele.

**Participant 9.** Participant 9 recalls having only one dress to wear when crossing the border and her mother having to wash her dress three days a week until her mother was able to buy another clothing item. Members of various religious charitable organization provided to the town with food and clothing for the children and family members. Participant 9's younger sister is autistic and unfortunately the small town does not have the means to provide her sister the services needed. Participant 9 believes working hard undocumented Latin@ students deserve an opportunity for a better life in the United States.

"Many times, I felt overwhelmed and maybe should quit school to work full-time."

Participant 9 is not ignorant many undocumented Latin@ students do not embrace the

opportunity and abuse the system put in place to assist with basic needs. Participant 9 has not seen her sister since leaving and crossing the border. Participant 9 communicates with her and sends money with the minute income selling ice cream summer and empanadas. Participant 9 would like to join the Army and serve the country is a way to give back for her opportunities in the United States.

**Participant 10.** Participant 10 along with his brother was 2½ years old when entered the United States. Participant 10's sister is U.S. born and enjoys the privilege as a citizen of the United States. Participant 10 is happy his younger sister is an American citizen and if he is deported at least one of the siblings has a better chance to make it and achieve success. Participant 10 has refused to see a doctor for a physical since the young age of 8 years old because of the illegal status.

Participant 10 recalls when he learned of his illegal status, tears flowed numerous times. "I will protect my sister and work hard to give her what she needs to make it in this country." Participant's sister can apply for college and begin to application for FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Participant 10 would like to become a police officer, and his status may become an issue. Pedro's sense of helplessness and baffled perceiving the limited availability and options to attend college is not worth coming to the United States. Participant 10 sometimes contemplates why his parents even decided to come into the United States.

**Participants 11.** Participant 11's father was already working in the United States at the time and hired a lawyer to represent the family obtain the necessary papers to enter into the United States. Participant 11's mother gave birth to him without his father's presence. Participant 11 recalls living in a bedroom with his older brothers and parents. His mom prepared dinner from a portal mini camp stove and would prepare soup and tortillas each day.



Participant 11's father worked long hours to make enough money to pay the lawyer and rental. The owner of the house was an African older woman. "It was hard to sleep in a room with five people, but we did it for survival." Sharing one bathroom was comfortable and sometimes unhealthy. Participant 11 was almost caught by immigration authorities when some of his friends including him decided to stand in the construction district in Lincolndale, New York.

The area is known for many undocumented workers standing in various corners and contractors and subcontractors hire many. Participant 11 loves to paint murals and hopes to one travel to France and learn more about the craft. Participant understands the risk factors as an undocumented Latin@ student and attracted to the same sex becomes more complicated.

**Participant 12.** Participant 12 discover about her status at the age of 12 because her parents avoided disclosing her status. Participant 12 expressed her parents should have told her sooner and understood her parents' good intentions to protect her. "I cry every day, hoping to one day heal from my pain." When Participant 12 discovered not getting normal employment, getting her first vehicle, or attending certain school the situation enhanced the life experience.

Participant 12 was a victim of sexual abuse and did not report because of her status. The participant's parents did not know about the incident after 2 years later during a discussion. Participant 12 endeavors to becoming an entrepreneur and help undocumented Latin@ with scholarships. Participant 12 perceives life in the United States is just as hard and faces an uphill battle to move ahead with her goals.

**Participant 13.** Participant 13 expressed not having a father made her fell in love with her boyfriend at the time. For Participant 13 giving birth was a concern because of her status and feared giving birth in a hospital because of immigration authorities. Participant 13 wants her

daughter to get to know her family from her native country but fears not having the ability to enter back into the United States and immigration authorities might take her baby and allowing custody to the father. “My daughter is everything to me and will fight tooth and nail for her future.”

**Participant 14.** Participant 14 arrived legally on a tourist visa visiting her aunt and applied for an asylum four months after. Participant 14’s pastor was a victim of a crime back home and advised the participant not to return because of the crime increase. Participant 14’s parents agreed and are making plans to cross the border. Attacks on religious institutions has increased because of the clergy community speaking against the violence.

Many members of the faith community are threatened with rape, and abduction of the members of the clergy. One pastor was fatally killed while preaching by an assassin in his congregation in front of the church members. Participant 14 hopes to get through the process and granted citizenship. Participant 14 is conflicted with having the knowledge many of her fellow brothers and sisters are terrorized by the cartel. “I feel for my country and I love my country, but the situation is bad, I do not know if I will ever go back.”

Participant 14 understands faith is mightier and dying for the Lord is a privilege even when speaking against injustices. Participant 14 loves to sing, play piano and identify her devotions as worship an expression of singing and playing to God. Participant 14 is interested in ministry and would like to attend Gordon Conwell Seminary. Participant 14 is drawn to the calling of preaching and teaching hope to people. Participant 14 agrees within herself to return to her native home and preach hope even if her life is taken.

**Participant 15.** Participant 15 is the product of her mother’s pregnancy at a young age. Participant 15’s mother was kicked out of her home by her father and struggled to find a place to

sleep. One of her friends provided refuge and a place to sleep temporarily. Still, the bedroom was small and filled with bugs.

The participant did her best to get rid of the bugs and at times when asleep bugs crawled on her. The participant's mother was a 15-year-old teenager with a newborn child, living in a bug infested room. The participant's cousin convinced her mom to come to the United States. "My cousin convinced me to come to the U.S." With help from various friends and family members her mom raised enough money to travel to the border and entry to the United States. Participant 15 explained briefly her mother resorted to sex as payment to enter the United States illegally.

The participant's mom told her to be quiet or her life would be in danger as well. Her mom worked hard making little cleaning homes. Living with her mom's cousin was not all roses and often arguments ensued over the participant's. Upstate New York became a better option and earned more money to rent a decent apartment. The participant met a young man believing to be a gentleman.

The participant's boyfriend was no good and a thug and feared for her life. Her boyfriend mistreated her and threat her with calling immigration if for not compliance and with him sexually and at one point having her sleep with one of his friends. The participant was able to get out of the situation when mentioning to her mother. The participant's mother called the authorities and pressed charges. The participant and her family have moved to another location and is working as a cashier determined to make the best of her situation with getting her GED.

**Participant 16.** Participant 16's mother was apprehended trafficking drugs. The Participant's mother is doing time in jail and is unsure when the expected release date. Her

mother was heading to work when Drug Enforcement Agency and immigration authorities was waiting for her. Someone gave information leading to her arrest.

Her dad was not part of the family and authorities placed the participant in undisclosed location identified as a Sanctuary city. “Living under such stressful conditions and treated badly, I felt it was better for me to return to my native country.” The participant is related to a family member and was granted custody. The participant attended private school in her native country and questioned how her mother paid for authorities' tuition. The Participant 16 learned to speak English fluently and her fellow classmates never bothered her.

Participant 16 assumes many of her friends knew the truth about her mother occupation. The participant later discovered her oldest brother was shot and killed during a random shooting and her mother kept the information from her. The participant believed her brother left to join the army's special unit division in her native country. The participant wants to be a surgeon and offer her services to poor families with no medical insurance. The participant sometimes fears for her life for what her mother did for a living.

Participant 16 is convinced fear cannot be part of her life and faith is a driving factor to her resolve. The participant believes when “your time is come; your time is up.” The participant interest in pursuing a career as a surgeon to serve under privileged communities is giving back and serving members not able to afford the services. The participant can relate to Griselda's son who discovered his mother was the infamous drug queen in Miami responsible for numerous murders, arrested, sentenced, and then deported to Columbia and assassinated by the Colombian cartel.

**Participant 17.** Participant 17's father entered into the United States and was able to acquire a rental apartment in Washington Heights. Washington Heights is a famous Dominican

community with numerous Central American groups living in the community. The participant's parents work hard to provide for her and her siblings with opening a small smoothie and juice bar renting from a grocery store.

The participant agrees the country is far from perfect, and grateful for her family coming to a beautiful country and giving her a better quality of life. The deferred action initiated by former President Obama, provided an avenue for the participant to attend a good college and with New York State passing a bill for undocumented Latin@ students for free college enrollment under the Excelsior scholarship her dream became a nurse can become a reality. The participant can additionally obtain a driver license under a New York State bill.

**Participant 18.** Participant 17's father worked as a ranchero and her mother was a waitress for a local small restaurant. The participant is the oldest of her siblings and was given the responsibility of taking care of her younger siblings. The participant was told by her parents the responsibility and the protector of her siblings rested on her shoulders while her parents worked. One tragic evening as the participant arrived home from playing with some of her friends only to find discover her father had been killed.

The town is known for the dangerous crime spree and the participant's mother while mourning decided the time had come to find a way into the United States. Gathering enough financial resources by selling the ranch the family made the journey to the United States. The journey was dangerous, conversely staying was a bigger risk for the participant's mom was not willing to take for the sake of the kids. The family found a small rental unit in New York and with the money from the sale of the ranch the asking price for the unit was reasonable. The participant's mother began to work again waiting tables with long hours and when not working at the restaurant, sold *bacalaitos* (fried codfish fritters).

Participant 18 wants to pursue a career in law enforcement and would like to honor her father. The participant may perhaps never find out the perpetrators her father was murdered and with a corrupt town find out may never occur. The participant wants to solve homicides, reading books, watching programs about homicide victims, and detective work motivates her to achieve her goal.

**Participant 19.** Participant 19's mother believed the United States offered better opportunities, especially when jobs are scarce, and food is hard to come by each day. The participant is still waiting for papers and is struggling with keeping up with his grades. The participant wants to attend college on a scholarship, playing football at Southeastern University. The participant would like to make the parents proud and hopefully attend Southeastern University graduate and play professional baseball and support family members financially.

The participant's father was deported, when caught in a raid by immigration authorities and sent back. The participant's mother received a phone call from the border, explaining what had transpired. He did not give up his family and was deported not able to see his family for almost four years. The participant was upset and disappointed with not seeing his father for the duration of the time. The participant is fearful of law enforcement and constantly on the lookout for raids and does not remember much from his native country.

**Participant 20.** Participant 20 "As an undocumented Latin@ student living in the United States is difficult." Employment is hard to find because numerous undocumented Latin@ students looking for employment to help with economic sustenance for family members back home are challenging. Participant 20 is a teenage father and is engaged with his girlfriend who gave birth last year to a girl. Participant 20 lives in constant fear of deportation and has not been able to fully provide for his girlfriend and the baby's needs.

Participant 20 wants to pursue a career as a musician and is a good player with the guitar. Conversely, with the baby the participant is pressured by his girlfriend's parents to consider an occupation to provide for his family. The participant perceives everything around him is moving fast and finds himself stuck with no clear vision for his future. Participant 20 contemplates on his immigration status and going back to his native country is a better option for him and his daughter maybe better off without him around. Participant 20's father left his mother after a few years in the United States.

Participant 20's father left the family for a White woman and moved to California with limited communication. Participant 20's expectation is graduating high school and encouraged even though his journey to the United States was difficult. Participant 20's daughter keeps him optimistic, and many times reminds himself to push forward for his daughter and girlfriend.

Undocumented Latin@ students hope for a better future and for many DACA is a platform to obtain opportunities for success. Educational institutions and organizations can provide support for undocumented Latin@ students. The responses by undocumented Latin@ students are some of the implementation support systems participants consider essential in addressing lived experiences.

## **Research Subquestion 2**

What type of support systems assist undocumented Latin@ students to graduate from high school?

**Better communication.** Participant 1 said, "Better communication is important for me as an undocumented Latin@ student." Participant 1 considers bilingual educators are essential and are better equipped to communicate with undocumented Latin@ students more effectively. Participant 12 said, "I sometimes think the school does not care for me because communication

can sometimes be nonexistent” Participant 12 would like to witness the school and her teachers be more mindful of undocumented Latin@ students, treated as equal as all the students and to communicate in all aspect of the education experience.

Participant 14 mentioned, “I would like to learn about digital technology application and participate in drama class behind the scenes, however communication is limited because the teachers are so busy.” Participant 14 is sympathetic many of the teachers are busy because of the many students at the school. Participant 14 considers communication very essential to know how to pursue with his academic goals. Communication is important to foster a good working relationship between educators and the participants.

**Engaging class lessons.** Participant 5 said, “I often get bored in the classroom because I cannot understand many of the lessons the teacher is teaching.” The participant revealed writing is not one of the most persuasive skills. Participant 6, “I appreciate collaborating with other students, but my limited understanding of the English Language scares me to speak with English-speaking students.” For Participant 6, having a teacher’s assistance with a command of the Spanish language can assist the undocumented Latin@ students with engaging in the classroom. Many undocumented Latin@ students understand and speak English, although not the level of standard required in the classroom.

Participant 8 noted, “My family cannot afford many of the modern technology the students in my class have.” For Participant 8, the modem in residence does not support the number of work assignments required to get done via the Internet. Many times, Participant 8 had to stay after school, losing time from work resulting in lost wages. For undocumented Latin@ student participants, the relevant curriculum is critical to engage in-class participation.



**Bilingual teachers.** Participant 13 added, “The need for bilingual teachers is important.” Participant 5, “We need bilingual teachers because bilingual teachers are more relatable to undocumented Latin@ students.” Participant 5 considers bilingual teachers an essential resource for fellow undocumented Latin@ students. The consensus by many of the participant's is bilingual educators are vital to communicating and engaging in class. Participant 5 prefers a teacher with a similar ethnic background as undocumented Latin@ students.

Participant 17 said, “As a bilingual student, it will serve to my benefit as a future nurse practitioner.” Participant 17 understands English is vital for success in the workplace; nonetheless, as a future nurse, Spanish is becoming the preferred second language for nurses to speak because of the undocumented Latino community.

Participant 19 responded, “Some of the Caucasian bilingual teachers have difficulty pronouncing Spanish words.” Participant 19 has seen the school hire bilingual teachers from Teach for American program without proper training because of the need for undocumented Latin@ students. Participant 19 added, “Many of the new teachers quit after a year.” Bilingual instructors provide a valuable service for the participants in the classroom.

**College aspirations.** Participant 16 would like to attend college to pursue a medical profession. “I would like to become a surgeon, and I am grateful in New York has approved undocumented Latin@ students can attend the universities in Upstate New York.” A recently approved state legislature undocumented Latin@ students can apply for the Excelsior scholarship and, if approved, can attend State University of New York state colleges tuition-free with the understanding there is a five-year commitment to work in New York State (Nguyen, 2019). Students deciding to relocate and work at another state are to pay back the excelsior state tuition.

For Participant 9, attending college is ideal, and with the excelsior scholarship is an incentive. Participant 9 said, “I am not sure what to study if I attend college; at least the opportunity is there for me.” Participant 11 responded, “College is a must for me. I want to major in educational art and travel to France as an exchange student to learn more about art.” Participant 11 would like to own a boutique with a collection of prominent works of art and as well as his own. Various participants aspire to obtain entry to college or university.

**A sense of belonging.** Participant 7 said, “I wake up every day to work and come to school.” Participant 7, believes students should respect and appreciate undocumented Latin@ students because, as expressed, “Somos igual al los demás estudiantes [we are alike as all the students].” Participant 7 does not need to be reminded of his status or treated with disrespect because he does not have the papers. Participant 2 added, “If American students where is my shoes and flee to my native country for a better life, we would not treat American students harshly.” Participant 2 looks forward to graduating as a senior equal to her fellow senior classmates in school.

Participant 20 mentioned, “I understand many parts of the country is indifference to undocumented Latin@ students, but in the school, environment statuses should not matter.” Participant 20 wants to become a professional musician because he believes music does not discriminate and crosses all borders of ethnicities. His message of acceptance and respect is better heard through his music endeavors.

Participant 15 said, “I am here in the United States because I did not have a choice.” Participant 15 would like school staff and teachers to understand her position. Participant 15 is not looking for a free ride only an opportunity and become part of a welcoming environment for

undocumented Latin@ students. For undocumented Latin@ student participants, acceptance is essential.

The themes were developed by analysis of the 20 undocumented Latin@ student's participation in the semi-structured interviews. The research semi-structured questions were instrumental for the responses in addressing each participant had adverse lived experiences. After the coding process, twelve themes materialized. The influence of family members provided a higher response by undocumented Latin@ students. Policy changes provided fewer responses by undocumented Latin@ students. The participants' response to family influences yielded a higher and consistent response during the semi-structured interviews (see below Figure 2).

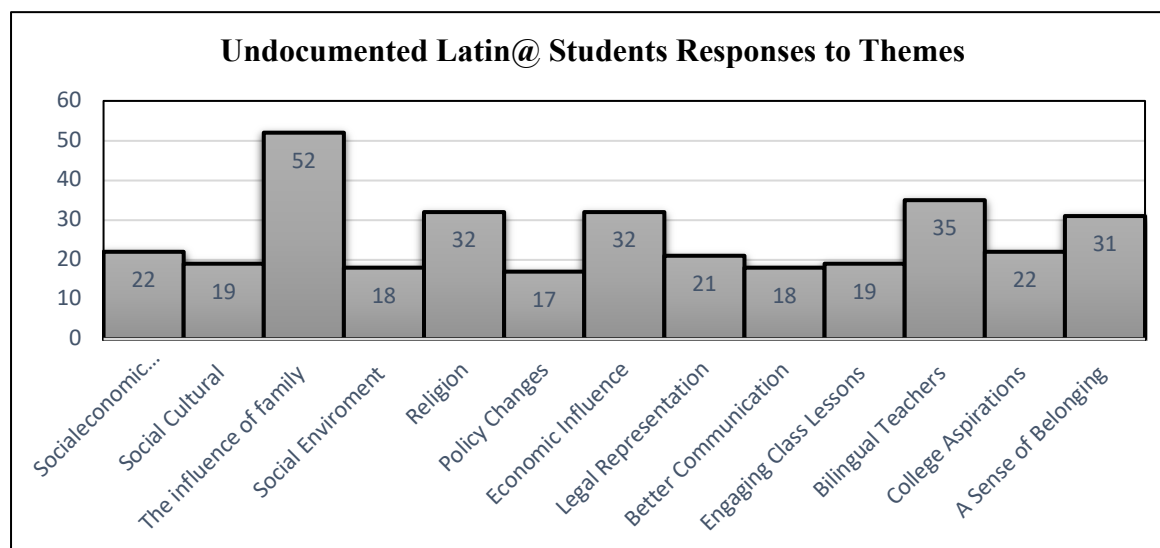


Figure 2: Undocumented Latin@ student participants lived experiences responses.

Five of the participants identified as gender-neutral refused to address gender-neutral undocumented Latin@ students' issues except Participant 12. Participant 12 was not afraid and expressed concerns because of the biases existing against gender-neutral Latino students in a culture often not accepting her community's lifestyle. Participant 12 was adamant that the sexual

identity bias is traumatic; nevertheless, it is not enough to dissuade the students from dropping out of high school.

The seven female participants each expressed adverse lived experiences as undocumented students coming into the United States under horrid conditions and working to support family members back home financially. The conditions are not enough for dissuasion to leave school, and with some of the undocumented Latin@ student, participants determined to graduate despite the lived experiences. For the eight male participants having the opportunity to attend college or study to learn a trade is ideal. The eight-male undocumented Latin@ student participants work with pressing concern to support family members with economic-financial support. In various Latino cultures, males' expectations for family members are cultural phenomena (Walters & Valenzuela, 2019).

Participant 1 traveled from Guatemala and entered the United States. Participants 1 faced constant threats from individuals along the trek to the border. Participant 2 arrived at the border with her mother, granted asylum for entry into the United States. Participant's 2 mother took items to carry and make the United States trip, risking her life. Participant 3 crossing the border on a bus at age seven and remembering fake aliases to conceal the identity. Participant 4 was nine years old when arriving in the United States. Participant 4 described living conditions as challenging and working as a child in the fields for food to eat.

Participant 5's grandparents were refugees, seeking asylum and entry into the United States. The parents, unfortunately, were unable to provide proper parenting. Participant 6's father was a bracero and suffered to support his family. Participant 7's family stayed near the border for numerous days with little food. Participant 8 was a domestic abuse victim and fled

her native home with her older brother to the United States. Participant 9 lived in a small town with a limited food source and no access to necessities.

Participant 10 moved to the United States with his family at age 5. Participant 11 came into the United States at the age of 3 with two older siblings and his mother. Participant 12 works long hours and realizes her status holds her back from many activities' citizens can do in the United States. Participant 13 is a young mother who met the child's father in New York City. Participant 14 entered the United States right after turning 12.

Participant 15's mother was forced to have sexual intercourse at the young age of 15. Participant 16 came into the country with connections to the underworld. Participant 17 was brought into the United States illegally at 6 years of age. Participant 18's parents and two siblings lived in a small and impoverished town. Participant 19 was seven years old when he entered the United States with his parents and older siblings. Participant 20 came into the United States at 8 years old as an undocumented Latin@ student living in the United States is challenging.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The participants included are undocumented Latin@, including students identified as gender- neutral. Saturation of the collected data was evident, and the participants specified similarities in the responses throughout the interviews. Participants' responses to the research questions were consistent with the emerging themes (see below Table 5).

Table 5

*The Total Number of the Participants Responses of the Research Questions Aligned with Emerged Themes*

Question	Themes	<i>n</i>
Central Research Question: What are some of the responses by undocumented Latin@ students in terms of educators, activists, and immigration lawyers to deal with life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students and the dropping out of high school?	Policy changes	17
	Economic influences	32
	Legal representation	21
	Total	70
Research Subquestion 1: What are some of the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students?	Social-economic	22
	Social-cultural	19
	The influence of family	52
	School environment	18
	Religion	32
	Total	143
Research Subquestion 2: What type of implementation support system can assist undocumented Latin@ students to graduate from high school?	Better communication	18
	Engaging class lessons	19
	Bilingual teachers	35
	College aspirations	22
	A sense of belonging	31
	Total	125

The data collection was conducted professionally and safely. Reviewing, rereading the responses, and rereading the notes in a safe and uninterrupted personal office environment. Two qualified colleagues with earned doctoral degrees reaffirmed the validity and reliability of the researched study. Member-checking and feedback by two qualified professors evaded other biases, allowing for a dependable and trustworthy data collection.

### **Internal Validity**

Concerns for reliability and validity were reduced from the data collection and analysis with safeguarding credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was ensured using member checking as a strategy. Member checking was conducted corroborating the accuracy of the outcomes stemming from the data analysis and the interpretation of undocumented Latin@ students' adverse lived experiences. Member checking involved participants to check for accuracy and resonance with lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students.

### **Summary**

The research study was centered on the lived experiences of 20 undocumented Latin@ student participants responding to semi-structured interview questions. Chapter 4 detailed the findings based on the semi-structured and interview questions of the participant's responses to undocumented Latin@ participants' lived experiences. Each participant responded to quotations illustrating the personal perspectives as such to the best of the participant's ability.

The individual participants gave perspectives on personal lived experiences and shared concerns about services not readily available. The interview produced various themes to the research questions: social-economic conditions, sociocultural, the influence of the family, school environment, religion, policy changes, economic influence, legal representation, better communication, classes to fit goal objectives, bilingual teachers, college aspirations, and a sense of belonging. The interview ensured credibility utilizing member checking. The discussion and conclusion in Chapter 5 addressed the results, inference, and recommendations for future potential research of the study.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions**

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore undocumented Latin@ student's adverse life experiences and the high school dropout rate. The participants' interviews afforded valuable information and themes from the data collection. Previously, studies have been conducted on undocumented youth's lived experiences in other areas outside of education addressing the phenomenological experiences of undocumented Latin@ students (Gorichanaz, 2017). Studies on the issues related to undocumented Latin@ high school student's adverse lived experiences and the dropout rate do not exist.

For Research sub-question 1, a desire for policy changes was the commonality expressed by the participants concerning educators, activists, and immigration lawyers and how to deal with undocumented Latin@ students' adverse life experiences. For research subquestion 1, many undocumented Latin@ student participants said threats, lack of resources, hardships, and living conditions were some of the lived experiences. Better living conditions, college aspirations, effective bilingual and welcoming environment in school were some of the commonalities the participants responded to research sub-question 2.

The research study included personal and moving responses of the 20 undocumented Latin@ students. A thematic approach was used in the analysis to explore each participant's experiences, values, and the authenticity of emotions expressed by each undocumented Latin@ student's accounts. The chapter includes a discussion summarizing the research findings, interpretations, conclusions, limitations, recommendations, and leadership involvement implications.



### **Findings, Interpretation, and Conclusions**

The Plyler v. Doe (457 U.S. 202) decision permits undocumented Latin@ students to receive lawful education access. Many undocumented Latin@ students are disadvantaged without an education because of lived experiences, poverty, deficiency of English-speaking ability, racial biases, and become perpetually locked into the lowest socio-economic class. Furthermore, the study revealed undocumented Latin@ student's adverse phenomenological experiences impacted undocumented Latin@ students' academic performances, with each participant addressed various concerns as described in Chapter 4. Additionally, poverty, destitution, discrimination, low expectation, and marginalization have contributed to undocumented Latin@ students' lived experiences.

As discussed in Chapter I, the research study aligned with Latina and Latino critical theory in addressing lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students (Kiehne, 2016). The circumstances many undocumented Latin@ students face in the Mid-Hudson Valley present a daunting task for many activists. Many undocumented Latin@ students deal with lived experiences at high levels and impede on their concentration in the class.

Undocumented Latin@ students face huge challenges in the experience of achieving an academic education. Education is a major avenue for undocumented Latin@ students achieving the hope of becoming productive citizens and contribute to the American society of inclusion. For many undocumented Latin@ students the hope in becoming a U.S citizen is an aspiration experience.

Latinos are the largest subgroup cultural population in the U.S. and the largest undocumented population (Crawford et al., 2019). Nearly 11.5 million undocumented individuals live in the U.S., with 69% being undocumented Latino members (Passel & Cohn,

2018). Furthermore, the number of undocumented Latino populations living in the U.S. in the last two decades doubled. The undocumented Latin@ students population remains comparatively youthful, with 4.1million under 30 (Passel & Cohn, 2018). Many of the undocumented Latin@ students share a commonality of achieving a better life.

Many of the undocumented Latin@ student participants are intimidated by instructors and maintain a code of silence instead of asking for assistance with academic studies. These experiences could be related to academic achievement outcomes. Undocumented Latin@ students are human beings with traumatic adverse lived experiences.

The undocumented Latin@ student participant's internal lived experiences are supported by the literature research articles. Each undocumented Latin@ participant expressed mistreatment from classmates and support from close friends aware of the participants' statuses. One concern is deep-rooted in the discrimination for some of the undocumented Latin@ student participants.

Many of the undocumented Latin@ students traveled extensively, hungry, and simultaneously avoiding capture reaching the border. For some undocumented Latin@ students, the lived experience is constant in the minds and often affects class performance. Studies suggest many undocumented Latin@ students suffer in silence, internalizing the marginalization daily in school, community, and work (O'Reilly, 2019). For some undocumented Latin@ students, the participants are treated as insignificant by many school officials, community members, and the work environment does occur daily because of the status.

Despite the research and data analysis of undocumented Latin@ student participants' lived experiences, data does not support the connection to dropping out of school.

Socioeconomic consideration for some undocumented Latin@ student participants has been an

attempt to leave school to support family members and opt not to and stay for some to graduate. Nearly half of the undocumented Latin@ students have a social-cultural priority to assist the parents with babysitting and cleaning house duty, while completing school assignments often is the last priority.

Family influence was the number one reason for the undocumented Latin@ student participants to travel into the United States. The opportunity to search for a better life and opportunities in the United States with family members' support is a motivation for the undocumented Latin@ students. The undocumented Latin@ students expressed appreciativeness for the school's welcoming environment; nevertheless, assimilating has been challenging. For some undocumented Latin@ students, obtaining employment is vital to support family members financially.

Religion provides spiritual sustainability for many of the undocumented Latin@ students. Three central faith streams, Evangelicalism, Catholicism, and Contemporary Pentecostalism are instrumental for many undocumented Latina@ students dealing with many of the adverse lived experiences. Distrusts of elected officials making promises for the legalization of undocumented Latin@ students was evident during the interview. For some undocumented Latin@ students, politics is a subject not particularly worth mentioning during the interview. Many undocumented Latin@ student participants are aware, the topic of immigration is a contested subject, with opposing political parties not working together collectively to find a solution.

The undocumented Latin@ student participants dislike the false narrative from various students without knowing the facts; many of the participants work and are not freeloaders. Some of the undocumented Latin@ participants are paid below the required minimum wage. Furthermore, some of the participants would like to afford legal representation to assist with

obtaining citizenship. Supporting family members with rent and food money often is the number one priority.

Each undocumented Latin@ student participant expressed communication is vital to achieving academic success. Communication with educators with a command of the Spanish language can assist the participants with many of the assignments. Although undocumented Latin@ students can speak English, the complexity is manifested when having long conversations. Many of the undocumented Latin@ students are not many ignorant students, and staff members are nonfriendly. The undocumented Latin@ student participants have experienced being ignored by fellow students and staff.

Engaging in class participation for some of the undocumented Latin@ student participants is a challenge. The participant's distraction in class results from the many of the lived experiences frequently in the minds as a reminder of various ordeals. For some undocumented Latin@ student participants, gender-neutral identity is an issue and a distraction in class. The parents of the gender-neutral participants are not knowledgeable of the identity of the students. One undocumented Latin@ student participant contemplated committing suicide because of fear of revealing the parents' preferred gender identity.

A college education is not in the mind of some of the undocumented Latin@ student participants. Many undocumented Latin@ student participants expressed interest in attending college with the excelsior scholarship available for all students meeting the requirements. Coming into the United States for some undocumented Latin@ student participants was not the first choice. Negative lived experiences contribute to some of the undocumented Latin@ student participants' participation in school.

The research examined the life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. The qualitative research methodology is appropriate for the study, affirming the need to research undocumented Latin@ students' lived experiences (Crawford & Arnold, 2016). The collection of data through interviews and analysis concludes the undocumented Latin@ student participants do not leave school because of the adverse lived experiences. Factors requiring further research may contribute to some of the undocumented Latin@ students leaving school. Evidence of emotional, psychological, spiritual trauma exists in the lives of the undocumented Latin@ students. For the undocumented Latin@ student participants' lived experiences, there is a constant reminder of the horrid conditions many endured coming into the United States, an internal wound festering within and limited available resources to cope.

### **Limitations**

The research study's cultural and social characteristics are conveyable for educators assisting undocumented Latin@ students from various school districts in the United States. Nonthreatening ethical issues with educators, staff collaboration, and sharing information of the undocumented Latin@ student participants was existent. One social worker believed to be overprotective of the undocumented Latin@ student participants presented a minute problem for obtaining information. Once the academic, theological credentials, and clergy penitent privilege credentials were presented, everything was fine to continue with the research.

Time management was essential for interviewing the undocumented Latin@ student participants. The students are moved to another undisclosed location if the academic performance is not met within the required allotted academic calendar year. Some of the undocumented Latin@ student participants have a culture of self-imposed anonymity (Lyon, 2014). The small sample is limited to oversimplify the results not applicable to undocumented

Latin@ students varied in sizes at another school within the geographical location is not possible. Individual undocumented Latin@ students have diverse lived experiences and are not necessarily connected to single or multiple experiences connected to academic performance or leaving school.

### **Recommendations**

Educational leaders, educators, and support staff should collaborate to provide necessary assistance for undocumented Latin@ students. Awareness of many undocumented Latin@ students' lived experiences is vital for providing a welcoming learning experience in the classroom. Educators and support staff should foster dialogue and suggestions for identifying possible resources for undocumented Latin@ students (Murillo, 2017). Failure to address the needs of the undocumented Latin@ students can cause an augment in increased trauma. Communicating and collaborating with parents/guardians of undocumented Latin@ students is essential for fostering a working relationship and addressing the participants' lived experiences.

Financial resources and investments are necessary for commitment and time, enabling undocumented Latin@ students with purchased equipment such as laptops and various school resources to concentrate in the classroom. Partnership with various nonprofit programs and faith-based institutions can serve undocumented Latin@ students and family members with resources not regularly available by the school. The undocumented Latin@ student participants should have a period during the schedule designated to discuss certified and trained counselors and social workers willingly.

### **Families of Undocumented Children**

The Dutchess County Commission on Human Relations provides legal representation and advocacy for presentation to aid families of undocumented children. Families can request such

services, and personal information is kept confidential. The commission also offers resources for health and mental services for families of undocumented children available from state and local funding.

### **Local Officials**

Addressing the insecurity and emotional instability of undocumented Latin@ students residing in the Mid-Hudson Valley is essential for providing needed services. Creating an immigration right and service manual is recommended to provide a resource guide and distribute to local officials, businesses, and organizations. The manual should include emergency contact, legal representation, service providers, and resources relevant to undocumented Latin@ students.

### **State Officials**

The defining and clarifying of available services are essential for families of undocumented children to obtain state-approved services. Available services and how to obtain state-funded services often create confusion. Many families of undocumented children do not know how to navigate and obtain much-needed services. delete extra spacing

### **National Officials**

Many immigration policies are implemented at the national level, limiting state and local governments' immigration policies. Federal officials must ensure families of undocumented children living in the United States are welcomed, safe, and provided with the opportunity to achieve legal status. With support of national, and state, local communities can provide basic resources for undocumented Latin@ students.

While many elected officials, educators, and leaders debate and counterarguments are presented, undocumented Latin@ students suffer. Action, rather than continual debates leading to fruitless outcomes, is vital for assisting undocumented children. Advocacy and

implementation are essential to achieve positive outcomes and ensure undocumented children have equitable opportunities.

### **Community and Faith Involvement**

The surrounding community and faith-based institutions of the undocumented Latin@ student participant's residence place can mitigate biased opinions and engage in constructive suggestions for identifying possible resources to serve the participants' needs better. Serving the undocumented Latin@ students should foster stakeholders to grow, evolve, and allow for failures along the way, which serves for growth experiences (Tucci, Tong, Chia, & DiVall, 2019). Community members possess local social, economic, and ideological settings providing valuable resources for the undocumented Latin@ student participants.

### **Policymaking**

Many educational leaders, educators, and support staff working with the undocumented Latin@ students can engage with elected officials in Albany for policy implementation to improve services. Working together can present a challenge with politicians and educators. Often, there are differences of opinions on providing the best academic experiences for undocumented Latin@ students. Serving undocumented Latin@ student participants, present and future undocumented Latin@ students should begin with a common denominator, undocumented Latin@ students' well-being.

### **Implications for Leadership**

One flaw with power and educational policy is that many leaders with positions of power have little or no expertise in pedagogy (Ion, Iftimescu, Proteasa, & Marin, 2019). Often appointed or elected officials engage in decision making without comprehending the education profession's complexity, providing a positive learning experience for students, and achieving



academic success. Ideologies by political parties controlling most governments often transfer to in the classrooms (Curry, Kinder, Benoiton, & Noonan, 2018).

Educational professionals should be provided with adequate resources, including financial services for much-needed supplies and specialized training to serve students with academic excellence. Policy and governance involve accountability for making the best possible decision for the success of students. Effective policy and governance foster teambuilding for educational professionals, creating an accountability environment, and allowing teachers to educate undocumented Latin@ students.

Stakeholder's understanding of technology and resource management is vital for school district development. Supportive school districts should involve stakeholders for initial programs, budgeting, time, and vital resources to provide and maintain a focus on student academic achievements (Shadidullina et al., 2015). Partnerships and technology combined can increase stakeholder's involvement and gain attainable success for students.

### **Conclusion**

Working with undocumented Latin@ students presents a challenge with limited resources for teachers and support staff. Educators engage in creativity and innovative be approaches assisting undocumented Latin@ students and providing the best possible quality education. Determining undocumented Latin@ students' needs is vital not only in the classrooms, at home to provide with efficiency the needs to cope with the adverse phenomenological experience. Educational leadership should partner with organizations and the community to allocate vital resources to service undocumented Latin@ students offsetting some of the cost.

Outreach and educational activities should begin once the identified goals and objectives are established. Communicating and marketing to various organizations with information with

fact sheets, news articles, PowerPoint, and social media outlets is crucial to recruit potential stakeholders and meet undocumented Latin@ students (Liu & Reid, 2019). Undocumented Latin@ students should be afforded the opportunity for services needed to overcome many of the phenomenological experiences. Undocumented Latin@ students' academic success depends on educational professionals, support staff, and community-related organizations working collectively to provide the necessary assistance for success.

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## Appendix A: Carta de Reclutar

## American College of Education

March 18, 2019

John Doe

483 Main St.

Lincolndale, NY

Dear John Doe,

Le escribo para informarle sobre la oportunidad de participar en un estudio de investigación de tesis sobre las experiencias de vida de estudiantes ilegales. Soy un estudiante de doctorado en el Colegio Americano de Educación. Muchos estudiantes ilegales que viven en Upstate, Nueva York pueden abandonar la escuela secundaria debido a las experiencias de la vida. La separación de los miembros de la familia, especialmente de los padres, puede tener un impacto significativo en el rendimiento académico en la escuela. Las experiencias vividas de estudiantes ilegales, estrés, trauma, miedos y hallazgos pueden contribuir a la tasa de abandono. Fuiste recomendado por la facultad como posible participante. El estudio se compartirá con el Distrito Hispano del Este y fomentará un mayor diálogo sobre cómo ayudar a los estudiantes ilegales con servicios para hacer frente a la experiencia de la vida y graduarse.

El propósito del estudio de investigación es examinar las experiencias de vida de los estudiantes ilegales que viven en el estado de Nueva York y la tasa de deserción. Muchos estudiantes ilegales que viven en Upstate, Nueva York, viven separados de sus padres. Los estudiantes ilegales que viven en el estado de Nueva York pueden abandonar la escuela secundaria debido a las experiencias de la vida. La separación familiar forzada y las experiencias de vida de los estudiantes ilegales continuarán contribuyendo a la tasa de deserción (Lovato, 2019). La investigación puede fomentar el diálogo con educadores y profesionales de servicios humanos, entendiendo las experiencias de vida de estudiantes ilegales. El estudio se compartirá con el Distrito Hispano del Este y esperamos hacer los cambios necesarios para apoyar a los estudiantes ilegales y graduarse.

Como lo mencioné, usted ha sido identificado como un posible participante para este estudio. El acuerdo para ser contactado para obtener más información no lo obliga a participar en este estudio. Su participación en el estudio es voluntaria. Si no desea participar, puede retirarse en cualquier momento.

Puedo publicar los resultados de este estudio; sin embargo, no usaré su nombre ni compartiré ninguna información que haya proporcionado. Su información se mantendrá confidencial. Si desea información adicional sobre el estudio, llame al (845-831-4656). Gracias de nuevo por considerar esta oportunidad de investigación de tesis.

Sinceramente,

Ricardo Pacheco

Candidato a Doctorado



## Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

## American College of Education

March 18, 2019  
John Doe  
483 Main St.  
Lincolndale, NY  
Dear John Doe,

I am writing to inform you about the opportunity to participate in a thesis research study about the life experiences of illegal students. I am a doctoral candidate student at the American College of Education. Many illegal students who live in Lincolndale, New York, can drop out of high school because of life experiences. The separation of family members, especially parents, can have a significant impact on academic performance at school. The lived experiences of illegal students, stress, trauma, fears, and findings can contribute to the dropout rate. The faculty recommended you as a possible participant. The study will be shared with the Eastern Hispanic District and encourage more excellent dialogue on how to help illegal students with services to cope with the life experience and graduate.

The purpose of the research study is to examine the life experiences of illegal students living in the state of New York and the dropout rate. Many illegal students who live in Upstate, New York, live apart from their parents. Illegal students living in the state of New York can drop out of high school due to life experiences. Forced family separation and life experiences of illegal students will continue to contribute to the dropout rate (Lovato, 2019). The research can foster dialogue with educators and human services professionals, understanding the life experiences of illegal students. The study will be shared with the Eastern Hispanic District, and we hope to make the necessary changes to support illegal students and graduate.

As I mentioned, you have been identified as a possible participant for this study. Your participation in the study is voluntary. If you do not want to participate, you can withdraw at any time.

I can publish the results of this study; however, I will not use your name or share any information you provide. Your information will be kept confidential. Feel free to contact If you would like additional information about the study, at (845-831-4656). Thanks again for considering this thesis research opportunity.

Sincerely,

Ricardo Pacheco  
Doctoral candidate

## Appendix C: Preguntas

### American College of Education

1. ¿Puedes empezar por contarme acerca de ti?
2. ¿Dónde naciste?
3. ¿Cuántos años tienes?
4. ¿Es esta la primera escuela que asistes?
5. ¿A dónde asististe antes? (Si es aplicable)
6. ¿En qué año estás en la escuela?
7. ¿Estás trabajando? Si es así, ¿trabajas a tiempo parcial?
8. ¿Qué tipo de trabajos tienen? (Si corresponde).
9. ¿Podría describir tus conexiones con familiares y amigos?
10. ¿Puede por favor describir tu educación en los Estados Unidos?
11. ¿Por favor, dime lo que recuerdas de tu primer año asistiendo a la escuela en los Estados Unidos?
12. ¿Alguna vez te colocaron en clases de ESL o bilingües en los Estados Unidos?
13. ¿Qué efecto crees que el hecho de haber sido colocado en estas clases tuvo en ti?
14. ¿Cuéntame sobre tus expectativas educativas personales?
15. ¿Hay algo más sobre lo que quisiera decirme que no le pregunté hoy?

### Clausura

Me gustaría darle las gracias por tomarse el tiempo para reunirse conmigo hoy y por compartir esta información. Aprecio su honestidad y franqueza sobre su vida.

## Appendix D: Questions

### American College of Education

1. Can you start by telling me about yourself?
2. Where were you born?
3. How old are you?
4. Is this the first school you attend?
5. Where did you go before? (If it is applicable)
6. In what year are you in school?
7. Are you working? If so, do you work part time?
8. What kind of job you have? (If appropriate).
9. Could you describe your connections with family and friends?
10. Can you please describe your education in the United States?
11. Have you ever been placed in ESL or bilingual classes in the United States?
12. What effect do you think the fact of being placed in these classes had on you?
13. Tell me about your personal educational expectations?
14. What support system if any is in place to assist you in school?
15. Does the support system assist you with school work afterschool and or at home?
16. Do you see a clinician or school counselor to discuss your lived experiences which might affect your academic performance in school? (Yes or No answer will suffice).
17. Is there a support service you feel is needed to better assist you with your lived experiences and your academics at school?
15. Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I did not ask you today?

### Conclusion

I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today and for sharing this information. I appreciate your honesty and frankness about your life.

## Appendix E: SME Clinician

## American College of Education

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

**From:** Ricardo Pacheco <pastorrick73@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, May 21, 2019 10:26:43 PM

**To:** Judy Galarza-Rodriguez

**Subject:** Re: Hi Judy

Good afternoon Judy.

Here are the three questions.

1. Do life experiences affect the academic performance of Latino boys in your program?
2. What are some of the lived experiences of Latino students which might affect academic performance?
2. What type of implementation and support system assist your program initiates in assisting the boys?

On May 21, 2019, at 9:49 PM, Judy Galarza-Rodriguez <[jgalarza-rodriguez@lincolnhall.org](mailto:jgalarza-rodriguez@lincolnhall.org)>

## Appendix F: SME Responses from Clinician

### American College of Education

From: Judy Galarza-Rodriguez <jgalarza-rodriguez@lincolnhall.org>

Subject: Re: Hi Judy

Date: May 21, 2019 at 11:25:33 PM EDT

To: Ricardo Pacheco <pastorrick73@gmail.com>

1. Absolutely life experience places a huge factor in with the academic of the Latin@ we service. Due to the economic struggle at least 75% are below grade level and some don't know how to read or write their own name. A majority have had interruptive schooling and therefore are academically behind. And most importantly since these young men are coming to the U.S. with zero transferring academic credits some may never be able to graduate without accumulating the state mandated credits needed for graduation.

2. Many of the young men we service have had interruptive or no schooling due to some reasons below.

Fear of walking to school due to the abundance of MS 13 and MS 18 gang presents surrounding the school. These gangs begin recruitment as early as 9 y/o. Many boys are forced to join due to fear of harm to themselves or to their family.

Economic hardship. Education is only free up to 6th grade. After 6th grade families are forced to pay to educate their child. In many impoverished areas of Guatemala, the schools are over 2 hours walking distances and children can't attend.

Many boys are forced to work to help provide for their family are can't attend school. Boys as young as 9 y/o are harvesting crops such as corn, beans, coffee and wheat in order to sell on the street to help feed their families.

At an early age some boys are forced to be the head of the household due to being in a single parent home. These minors become parentified at an early age and are not able to understand that their childhood has been lost due to the distortion of the parent / child role.

Guatemala has 27 different dialects which make it very difficult for these children to obtain a proper education. There have been times that the minor needs to learn how to speak Spanish before he can even begin an ESL class.

Living with Abuse and neglect in a home is very traumatic. Many of my boys have been victims of physically abuse, sexually abuse and have witness domestic violence in the home. This

traumatic childhood effects the child's learning, concentration as well as his self-esteem. Mental health disorders such as ADHD, PTSD, depression, anxiety and many more have been identified in children with traumatic childhood.

3. In order to assist in the transition to the U.S. school system we have education course such as ESL, basic core classes such as math and science. We also provide carpentry class, cooking classes, media arts, computer classes and 4 hours of recreation sports daily. We have a team of 11 clinicians that provide individual counseling as well as group psych education on a weekly basis. We also allow the boys to work in the garden which allows them to teach the staff how to harvest the land as well as providing the minor a great leadership opportunity and instill responsibility in themselves.

These services assist the boys in acclimating to the U.S as well as providing them with a safe, nurturing structured environment where they can learn to be children again.

I hope this was helpful. Let me know if you need additional assistance

Respectfully,  
Judy

## Appendix G: Letter for Permission Request

## American College of Education

March 2019

Elly Marroquin  
Director of Education  
Spanish Eastern District  
213 Old Tappan Road  
Old Tappan, NJ 07657

Dear Mrs. Marroquin:

As a doctoral candidate of American College of Education, I am conducting a research study on the life experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. The title of my research study is Undocumented students and the dropout rate in Upstate, NY. The purpose of my research is the purpose of the proposed qualitative study will be to examine the life experiences of illegal students living in Lincolndale, New York.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct the research study at the Spanish Eastern District Institute.

The potential participants may be asked to use internet technology as a webpage with a link to click with access to questions for review and schedule an interview for the collection of data. A consent form will first be presented to the participants to obtain permission before conducting the interviews. Each participant may discontinue the interview process willingly at any time.

I express my gratitude in advance for considering my request. If I am granted permission, please provide an official letterhead granting permission for the research study. You may send it via email to my dissertation chair and my email at [Pastorrick73@gmail.com](mailto:Pastorrick73@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Ricardo Pacheco  
Doctoral candidate

## Appendix H: Letter of Approval



## Spanish Eastern District

*Assemblies of God*

213 Old Tappan Road. Old Tappan, New Jersey 07675-7063

(201) 358-8610. Fax: (201) 358-9295

[www.spanisheasterndistrictag.com](http://www.spanisheasterndistrictag.com)Executive Positions

Rev. Manuel Alvarez  
*Superintendent*  
Rev. Dr. Nicanor Gonzalez  
*Asst. Superintendent*  
Rev. Sergio A. Martinez  
*Secretary/Treasurer*  
Rev. Elly Marroquin  
*Director of Education*

September 9, 2019

To support staff and Institute Teachers of the Spanish Eastern District:

The bearer of this letter, Rev. Ricardo Pacheco, a fellow educator, and a chaplain in good standing of our district and senior pastor of Christ Tabernacle in Beacon, New York, is working on a research study addressing the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students. The American College of Education is the university of record, and Dr. Erick Aguilar is the acting dissertation chair of Rev. Pacheco. Mr. Pacheco enjoys full support from our District for the research topic, the research will involve interviews related to the study. We ask if you would please, collaborate with Rev. Pacheco as he develops his research study. We appreciate your cooperation and courtesy to Mr. Pacheco.

Thank you very much,



Rev. Manuel A. Alvarez  
Superintendent



## Appendix I: Informed Consent Document

### Dear Prospective Research Participant:

Please read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

### Project Information

**Project Title:** Lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students.

**Principal Investigator:**

Ricardo Pacheco

**Organization:**

Spanish Eastern District Lincolndale Haven

**Email:**

Ricardo Pacheco@ace.edu

**Telephone:**

845.831.4656

**Principal Investigators Chairperson:**

Dr. Erick Aguilar

**Organization:**

American College of Education

**Chairperson Email:**

Erick.Aguilar@ace.edu

**Organization Telephone:**

800.280.0307

### Introduction

You are invited to participate in a study examining “Lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students.” This study is being conducted by Ricardo Pacheco, Director of Education at the Spanish Eastern District Beacon, NY, and a doctoral candidate in the Education Leadership doctoral program at the American College of Education, under the supervision of Dr. Erick Aguilar his dissertation committee chair.

### Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the lived experiences of undocumented Latin@ students in the Mid-Hudson Valley.

### Research Design and Procedures

The study will use a qualitative methodology and phenomenological research design. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview lasting between 15-20 minutes. As a participant interview questions will be submitted for you to review before the interview. With your permission, the interviews will be audio recorded to ensure the accuracy of the collected information and all interviews will be transcribed into a written record. You would be able to ask the interviewer to turn off the audio recording equipment at any time during the interview.

### **Participant selection**

The extended invitation to participate in the research because you are a participant of the Lincolnale Haven Program which services undocumented Latin@ students. The participation criteria are undocumented Latin@ students with the age of 18 and older.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this research or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or the Spanish Eastern District Lincolnale Haven Program. If you choose not to participate, there will be no punitive repercussions. If you select to participate in this study, you may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

### **Duration**

The interview portion of the research study will require approximately 15 minutes to complete. If you are selected to participate in the interview, the time expected will be a maximum of 15 minutes. If you are chosen to be interviewed, the time allotted for interview will be 25 minutes at the school.

### **Risks**

The researcher will ask you to share personal and confidential information, and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion if you don't wish to do so. You do not have to give any reason for not responding to any question. Your name will not appear in the research study, only by a pseudo name. No risk or discomforts will be involved with participating.

### **Benefits**

While there will be no direct financial benefit to you, there are several expected benefits from participating in this study. They are: 1) exploring undocumented Latin@ students lived experiences. 2) Explore alternative services to assist undocumented Latin@ students dealing lived experiences and 3) the ability for the researcher to participate in a qualitative study.

### **Confidentiality**

I will not share information about you or anything you say to anyone outside of the researcher. During the defense of the doctoral dissertation, data collected will be presented to the dissertation committee. The data collected will be kept in a locked file cabinet or encrypted computer file. Any information about you will be coded and will not have a direct correlation, which directly identifies you as the participant. Only I will know what your number is, and I will secure your information.

### **Sharing the Results**

At the end of the research study, the results will be available for each participant. It is anticipated to publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

Participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this research or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or the Spanish Eastern District.

**Questions About the Study**

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact Ricardo Pacheco at (845) 831-5646 (office) or (917) 660-5500 (cell) or via email at Ricardp.Pacheco@ace.edu. This research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to ask questions of this group, email DR. Erick Aguilar @ace.edu or by calling the American College of Education at (800) 280-0307.

**Certificate of Content**

I have read the information about this study, or it has been read to me. I acknowledge why I have been asked to be a participant in the research study. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I certify I am at least 18 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

---

Printed Name of Participant

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

---

Printed Name of Principal Investigator

---

Signature of Principal Investigator

---

Date

**KEEP THIS INFORMED CONSENT COVER LETTER FOR YOUR RECORDS.**