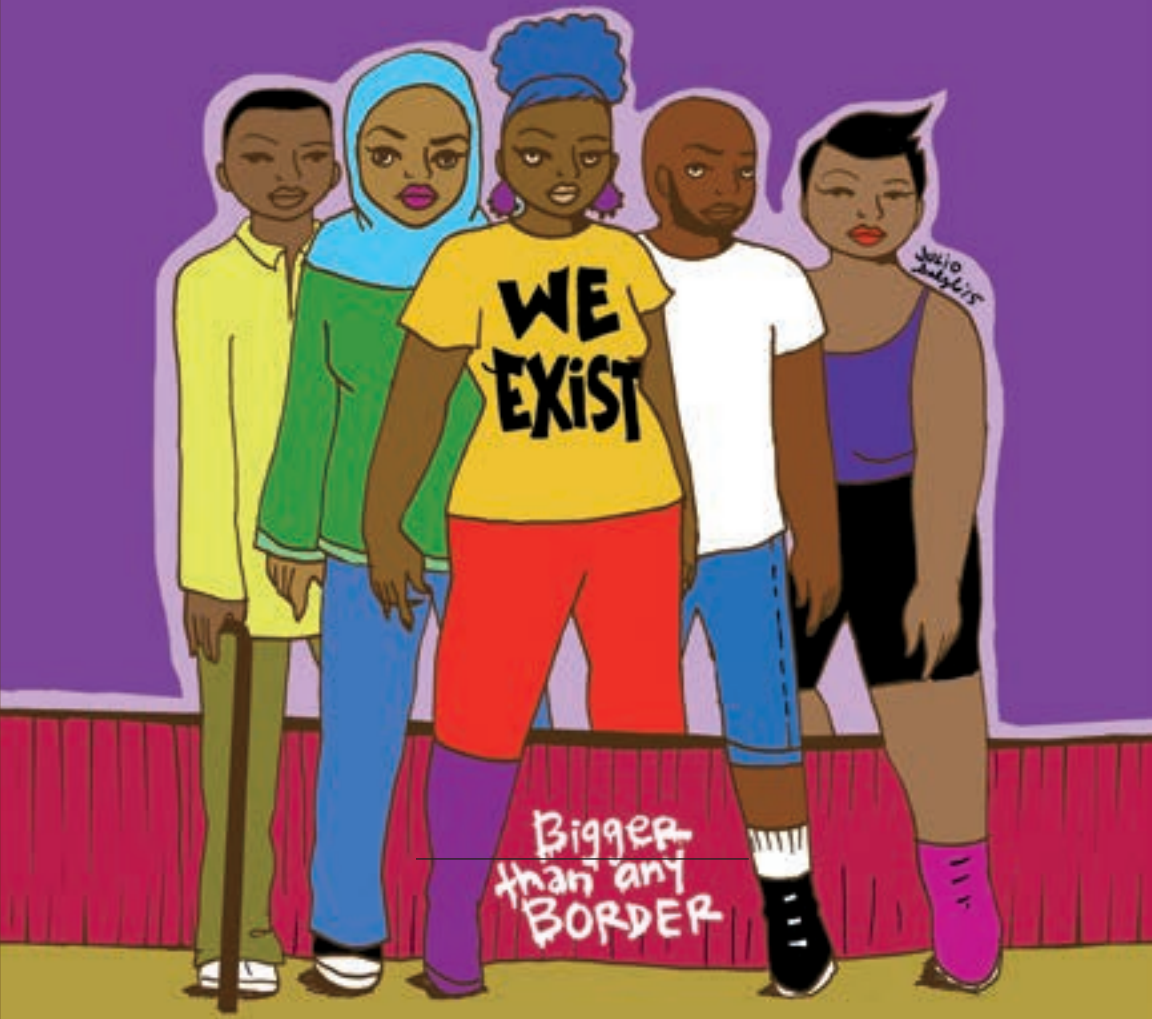
WE ARE NOT DREAMERS

Undocumented Scholars Theorize Undocumented Life in the United States



Leisy J. Abrego and Genevieve Negrón-Gonzales, editors

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To the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States and to all those who have been displaced from their homes by wars, foreign intervention, and the consequences of neoliberal policies around the world.

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Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all the authors who contributed to this volume. We appreciate their insightful research, as well as the trust and patience they gifted us through this process. Each author came to this project with an initial draft of their work, having already benefited from feedback from professors, mentors, and community advisors. We would like to acknowledge the labor of those who supported the authors in earlier versions of the chapters.

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Introduction

Undocumented students' access to higher education has taken many turns over the last thirty years. A series of legislative and policy fights in California stretch back to the *Leticia A* case in 1985 and culminate, in many ways, in the passage of the California Dream Act in 2011.[1] These wins—secured through the daring activism of undocumented young people and their allies—have not only made possible undocumented students' greater access to higher education, but have also remade the political landscape of the state as a whole (Negrón-Gonzales 2015). And in this remaking, there is another transformation underway that is perhaps less visible, but nonetheless deeply meaningful. As undocumented students enter and graduate from college, and in some cases even pursue an advanced degree, they have begun to speak back to the burgeoning body of literature that has grown alongside this process of increased access. The undocumented young people who have been the "objects" of study are increasingly present in the places, sites, and spaces within which this knowledge is produced. Their work theorizing illegality, citizenship, education, and belonging has the potential to grow the field, shift understandings, and remake the bodies of literature that speak to their experiences. This intervention is profound—both deeply personal and intimately political.

As two Latina professors in California—Salvadoreña and Chicana—we have witnessed these developments and had the honor of working with many of these students. This book emerged from our shared experiences not only of mentoring undocumented students in their research investigating

and theorizing different aspects of undocumented life in this country, but also through a shared insight into how uniquely challenging this process can be for them. These are often students we know not just because of their academic lives, but because we have encountered them at protests, rallies, and meetings; they are the leaders who motivate others to fight for change. We have listened to their political analysis and strategic vision from behind the megaphone and recognized their quiet courage in acts of civil disobedience when they make our news feeds. In their everyday lives, they refuse to be defined by the arbitrary and unjust immigration policies of the United States, motivated by an understanding of the global forces that pushed them and their families out of their countries of birth and the knowledge that the United States benefits from their labor and civic contributions. They are, in short, uniquely positioned during a specific historical moment, to think and write about the complexities and nuances of what it means to be undocumented in this country right now.

When they seek our guidance through the research process, it is clear that they envision this research as their chance to talk back to all of the scholarship that has been produced *about* their experiences. Familiar with the discourses and fields of inquiry that theorize their lives and experiences, they demand to be knowledge-producers in that sphere. Many are not only tired of being what they describe at times as the guinea pigs of academia, but are ready to intervene in these scholarly conversations. As undocumented students embark on the process of designing research projects, however, they often hit a roadblock.

We have experienced a dynamic whereby undocumented students begin the writing process—to capture the complexity and complication of the undocumented experience—and find themselves paralyzed when they realize through their writing that they must name the things they work so hard to resist; the laws they deemphasize to be able to navigate and create paths for themselves in higher education stand powerfully on the page, too difficult to ignore. In and through writing, they must come face to face with the institutionalized, legal challenges that have the very real potential to derail them. They are forced to confront the fear that punctuates undocumented life, oftentimes a fear they struggle to quiet.

A 2013 interview Abrego conducted with a college graduate named Sam (pseudonym) exemplifies this dynamic:

> I remember first being depressed [at various moments] and then again in my last year [in college] when I was graduating and thinking about my senior research and then just thinking about being undocumented

every single day. Like, what should I write? What is relevant? . . . I think I was really hard on myself as well, because I felt like there weren't a lot of undocumented folks producing work about undocumented people and so I felt like it had to be right. I got myself in this frame of thinking of like, right or wrong, or like, how would I combat arguments that go against this, and things like that. But that last year thinking about being undocumented every day—which is something that if you're undocumented you know you're undocumented and it impacts all aspects of your life in one way or another—but it's also the thing you try to not think about the most or try to have it not hinder you as much, so you kind of ignore it. But intentionally and actively thinking about it was very heavy . . . just thinking about it every day was a lot.

Of course, there are other barriers. The structural barriers they face may force undocumented students to spend their days working long hours, or commuting long distances daily on inefficient public transportation. Some deal with the emotional weight of the consequences of immigration enforcement in their communities, or are left to pick up the pieces after the deportation of a loved one. They may be unable to focus due to financial worries, or absent from school while searching for care options for ailing parents without health insurance. The structural inequalities created by immigration policies affect all aspects of their lives. In the face of poverty and legal violence (Menjívar and Abrego 2012), many undocumented students come to consider research and writing as luxuries that are out of their reach. Once again, Sam was able to capture these challenges as they affected the research process during the final year of college.

You're thinking, what's going to happen after college? Because being in school does offer a level of security for undocumented folks . . . I know if I'm going to go into work, it's going to be minimum wage . . . I'm going to be exploited on various levels, and there are things that you have to accept in one way or another, or that are at least more difficult to challenge and advocate for [outside of the context of school]. And so there's just so much uncertainty.

As mentors and advisors, we work to support these students through the writing process—a navigation that inevitably involves grappling with their own legal status. Many have published brilliant research. Some, though, even with exceptional research projects, have struggled with putting their work and their words out into the world, deeply hindered by the emotional challenges

required by the process to document the complicated web of (il)legality, educational opportunity, the carceral state, and the deportation regime.

Understanding these unique challenges, we have recruited ten undocumented, DACAmented, or recently formerly undocumented students in California, to build this volume that clearly demonstrates that not only is their scholarship not a luxury, but also that it is incredibly important for the continued growth of this academic field. This project grew out of a set of relationships built through the academy and the activist/advocacy work on the ground. The final product is a collection of chapters by a cross-section of authors—some of whom we have long-standing relationships with, and some who we met through this process. We solicited contributions by reaching out to current and former students, scholars whose work we came into contact with online, and scholars whose advisors we know. As curators and editors of the volume, we solicited contributions from these authors, and built the volume around the themes and issues their research prioritized. This work is their own. Each chapter was solo-authored and born of the authors' scholarly engagement with the topic of illegality and undocumented status within and outside of the academy. It is important to note that some authors regularized their status during the production of this volume. Thus, while there are some variations in terms of the precise status of the contributors, each author shares the experience of living as an undocumented immigrant in the United States for many years into their young adult lives and draws on this experience in intimate ways to theorize citizenship, illegality, and undocumented life more broadly. This, we believe, is a profoundly important contribution.

How We Came to This Work

Our own political and academic work as scholars and allies of and advocates for undocumented young people began at a time when undocumented youth had very little access to higher education. Most of those we met through community organizations were only barely coming to understand that they were undocumented, and felt great shame and fear to disclose their status (Abrego 2006; Negrón-Gonzales 2014). Educators, mostly not yet aware that some of their students may be undocumented, were often unhelpful, even when the students gathered the courage to share their status with them. In such a context, undocumented young people often gave up hope of attending college. Those who were unaware of their status or who ignored it to earn college admission found that they were ineligible for any kind of financial aid. Most often, this meant that the best they could do was attend the least expensive

option of community college, despite having been admitted to prestigious universities. As more people became aware of these structural barriers and missed opportunities for students, supportive educators, grassroots organizations, and young organizers worked together to change the educational policies that impeded their chances. In California, this took place in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

It was during this period that, driven by a commitment to young people, education, and immigrant rights, we each began to research and write about undocumented students, the structural barriers that thwarted their educational aspirations, and their political consciousness. As part of our attempt to accompany them in their advocacy work, our own research theorized their experiences. Very limited scholarship existed on undocumented students because it was a phenomenon that scholars were only beginning to notice. The last mass legalization program in the United States took place in 1986 through the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). As De Genova (2004) reminds us, however, every legalization is also an illegalization and just as IRCA moved to incorporate a large group of migrants, it also further reinforced the marginalization and subjugation of those who did not meet the policy's stringent criteria: migrants young and old who arrived after the dates of eligibility faced much stricter policies and blocked access to legalization.

In the early 2000s, therefore, those who arrived as children were starting to come of age and beginning to learn that their undocumented status had potentially devastating consequences for their lives. They had grown up in a country that, thanks to the Supreme Court decision of *Plyler v. Doe* in 1982, legally allowed them to attend public school from kindergarten through high school graduation. But, as they approached the end of high school and were required to supply a social security number to apply for jobs or to college, many were forced to confront the reality of what the lack of a social security number meant for their future. This stark contradiction between full participation in school on the one hand, but inability to be legally present in the country, on the other hand, framed their lives and their uneven access to institutions that determined their life chances. It was the deep unfairness of this transition that compelled students to collectively demand changes to the system.

Access to higher education, however, is only one notable facet in a greater landscape of inequality and injustice. Indeed, this book emerged from our shared experience of teaching, mentoring, and supporting incredible undocumented students who were making nuanced, thoughtful, original arguments that speak to the field, but who were also continually stymied in the process of writing. Given the legal challenges and exclusions that undocumented

students and their families face, they often grow up in limited socioeconomic conditions with unsatisfactory training to attend college (Abrego and Gonzales 2010). Those who are admitted to four-year universities often struggle financially to cover tuition and other related costs. Even when they manage to gather the necessary resources, the opportunity to reflect on their experiences can be painful because they have had to overcome countless barriers to simply be present in a college classroom. Significantly, during a historical moment of heightened policing of immigrants and record numbers of deportations, even when they attend school, they worry constantly about their safety and the safety of their family members (Menjívar and Abrego 2012). Being an undocumented scholar, therefore, raises empirical, methodological, and theoretical challenges that these scholars are navigating in unique and meaningful ways.

As practices and policies have changed nationally, and especially in California, thanks in large part to these youths' activism, almost two decades after we embarked on this research we have been heartened to see increasing numbers of undocumented and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient students thriving in undergraduate and graduate programs. Many have been theorizing experiences within their community, yet have struggled with the research process. We have witnessed the pain that frequently accompanies the process of writing in an analytical way about the indignities and suffering of undocumented life in a racist, cruel system. We have witnessed undocumented scholars develop skillful analyses and we feel strongly that they have unique contributions to make. This book was born from the frustration of seeing these bright young people in distress about getting their work out into the world, and from our strong belief that they have an important role to play as leaders in the growing research field of undocumented immigrant youth within and beyond education.

This, we hope, is a transformative project: budding scholars transform into full-fledged knowledge-producers and authors while also transforming the field through their theorizing of the undocumented experience. In the following sections, we provide a broad overview of the existing academic literature in these areas as well, noting the gaps in knowledge.

What We Already Know and Still Need to Learn about Undocumented Young People

Since the last mass legalization program over thirty years ago—the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986—hundreds of thousands of children who arrived without lawful permission in the United States have faced an unyielding and

unforgiving legislative environment, which has strictly limited their opportunities to legalize their status. Neither their long-term residence, nor their acquisition of the English language, nor their participation in their communities allows them to become legal permanent residents or naturalized citizens. In many cases, despite educational excellence and notable civic participation, and even when they have met with lawyers to explore their options, they find that they are not eligible for legalization through any existing means.

Their predicament is especially taxing because these young people have come of age in a contradictory educational context: though they are not legally permitted to reside in the United States, they do have legal access to public education. The 1982 Supreme Court ruling *Plyler v. Doe* affirms that it is unconstitutional to deny children access to K–12 public schooling due to their immigration status. Undocumented children, therefore, may legally attend school and expect not to be asked about their status. In 2019, it is estimated that out of 125,000 undocumented youth across the nation who are graduation age, 98,000 graduate from high school every year (Zong and Batalova 2019) and because their educational protections end at that point, they are likely to face stringent barriers to continued education. Categorized as international students in states that do not offer them in-state tuition, they are charged exorbitant rates. In most states, they also continue to be blocked from access to financial aid. In those instances, the select few who manage to attend college struggle to finance and navigate their education. Nationally, students and allies have organized for greater college access since the late 1990s.

In academia, we know much of their experience through the rigorous work of scholars from a variety of disciplines. Indeed, research on undocumented students has grown tremendously over the last decade, documenting the experiences (Gonzales 2011; Perez et al. 2009), challenges (Abrego 2006), strategies (Heredia 2015; Negrón-Gonzales 2014, 2015; Nicholls 2013), and policy changes across states (Flores 2010; Olivas 2005, 2010). Scholars have followed closely, providing analysis of the educational (Abrego 2006; Nájera 2015; Pérez Huber et al. 2006; Perez Huber and Malagon 2007; Perez et al. 2009; Soltis 2015; Teranishi et al. 2015), social (Abrego 2011; Gonzales 2016), psychological (Gonzales and Chavez 2012; Gonzales et al. 2013), political (Heredia 2015; Negrón-Gonzales 2014, 2015; Nicholls 2013; Schwiertz 2016; Seif 2004; Terriquez 2015; Zimmerman 2012), economic (Cho 2017; de Graauw and Gleeson 2016), and legal contexts (Abrams 2014; Abrego 2008; Buenavista 2012, 2018; Olivas 2005; Silver 2018) as students go through transitions, benefit from new laws, and attain higher education. Today, under the harsh anti-immigrant policies of the Trump administration, the field is ripe for expansion.

The vast majority of published researchers are not themselves undocumented immigrants (for exceptions, see Aguilar 2018 and Chang 2018). As we have learned from the work of Black and Chicana feminist scholars (see Anzaldúa 2012; Hull 1980; Collins 2000; Pérez 1999; Sandoval 2013; Taylor 2018), ways of knowing and knowledge production are situated and partial. Positionality is an integral part of the research process (cf. Rosaldo [1989] 1993). We occupy structural locations from which we observe with a particular angle of vision (Dillard 2000; Milner IV 2007; Takacs 2003; Zavella 1989). Scholars in the fields of Women's Studies, Black Studies, and Chicana/o Studies have convincingly argued that we need to make space for cultural, class, ethnic, and gender diversity among researchers, and welcome their unique analytical insights (Blauner and Wellman 1973; Gilligan 1982; Gordon et al. 1990; Zinn 1979). As scholars in the field of undocumented youth studies, we also now acknowledge the need to include insights of scholars from diverse legal status positions.

While many in the field of undocumented youth identify as scholars of color, the lived experiences of being undocumented inevitably make visible particular kinds of understandings that should be centered in the field. Although much of the research on undocumented youth is qualitative in nature and includes the voices of undocumented student interviewees as data, missing are the analytical voices of the undocumented students themselves. Following in the tradition of Black and Chicana feminist scholars whose work underscores the transformative possibilities of centering experiential knowledge in the research process, this book includes the original analyses of scholars who are currently or have recently been undocumented.

This volume reveals the urgent need for greater inclusion of undocumented scholars as knowledge producers and central leaders in the field. The voices of researchers whose lives are shaped by the contemporary production of "illegality" are critical in understanding the varied and complex ways that citizenship status shapes lived experiences. Their contributions have the potential to transform our understanding of undocumented youth and more broadly of how immigration policies play out in the lives of individuals and targeted communities at different life stages and in various social contexts.

The DREAMer Narrative

As educators, school staff, and university officials became increasingly familiar with the struggles of undocumented students, a discourse began to emerge to illuminate this conundrum among the mainstream. The extensive barriers

undocumented students face in their pursuit of education require them to be resourceful and build strong networks to succeed. Their stories of incredible sacrifice to attain an education that permanent legal resident and citizen students often take for granted, as well as the inherent unfairness embedded in an educational system that proclaims a meritocratic ethos, caught the attention and garnered the support of dedicated educators and university staff. The stories that became the most salient, as emblematic of this inherent unfairness, were of students who had earned college admission but were unable to matriculate due to their status. Allies—nonprofit leaders and educators—began using this powerful narrative to advocate for the educational rights of these promising students and increasingly, many undocumented students took up these narratives to make a strategic and compelling appeal for their rights (Abrams 2014; Nicholls 2013). This came to be known as the "DREAMer narrative" because it argues for citizenship for those who stood to benefit from the federal DREAM Act were it ever to pass—undocumented, but young and educated. The nonprofit industrial complex, DC lobbying groups, journalists, and researchers also played a role in the narrative's solidification.

In this now well-known portrayal, undocumented young people are presented as those who, by no choice of their own, were brought to the United States unlawfully as innocent children. Though their parents are to blame for the decision, the narrative affirms, the children did their best to attain the American Dream by working hard in school and making great sacrifices to complete a college education. Even without financial aid and despite various barriers produced by poverty, these students do not complain; rather, they put their heads down, work hard, and earn stellar grades. Their behavior is seen as evidence of their superior work ethic manifested in a determination to not let structural barriers thwart achievement. The DREAMer narrative has good intentions—it was deployed as a way to win the hearts and minds of the broader populace to build popular support for the educational rights of undocumented young people; it insists that undocumented students are being punished for a decision they did not make and for which they should therefore not be held responsible. Their potential for great productivity, as model neoliberal subjects (Pallares 2014), seeks to make the case that they have earned a chance to live in the United States.

Their proximity to Americanism is critical in this formulation. The DREAMer narrative not only celebrates these young people for their accomplishments and success, but also implicitly and explicitly celebrates their affinity with "American" values: "Their parents brought them to this country when they were infants in most cases, and for many of them this is the only home they know.

They have grown up "American" in every way possible; their dominant language is English, they proclaim an American identity, and they live an American lifestyle. In various ways, their community service participation and activities reinforce their affinity toward American society" (Perez 2009, xii). This "affinity" for Americanness is important to recognize as central to the DREAMer narrative because it is intricately wrapped up with notions of deservingness (Negrón-Gonzales, Abrego, and Coll 2015). Indeed, claims to an "Americanness" situate the right to belong in this country as the domain only of those who abandon a non-American identity, or who do not question the basic mainstream tenets of what the United States represents. In particular, such a notion upholds a myth of meritocracy that suggests that all immigrants have the ability to pull themselves up by their bootstraps without demanding inclusion or structural changes (Abrego 2008).

This narrative has powerfully captured the attention and sympathy of a large swath of the U.S. polity (Nicholls 2013). Along with dedicated organizing, in 2012 it led to President Obama's signing of the DACA program. Under the Trump administration, DACA is under threat to end (though court injunctions permit renewal applications), but the added protections from deportation along with permission to work and to drive legally have allowed beneficiaries to make great educational and occupational strides (Abrego 2018). It is important to point out that both nationally and regionally, the kinds of policy advances we have seen have not come about as a result of the goodwill of politicians but because undocumented young people, their families, and their allies have pushed the boundaries of these restrictive laws, advocating for institutional and policy change through bold acts of civil disobedience and grassroots organizing.

It is within this context in which we see the flourishing of more critical perspectives regarding the political narratives that frame undocumented youth's experiences. Readers of this volume will note that almost all the authors, from different situated experiences and through various analytical approaches, explicitly resist the DREAMer narrative. This is a theme we had not anticipated would end up being a framing analytical structure, but when it emerged as such, we tailored the volume accordingly.

The California Context

The state of California is uniquely important as a site to understand these experiences. Home to the largest population of undocumented students, California's evolving policies amply reveal the fruits of the advocacy and organizing

of undocumented activist young people. In 2001, following Texas's lead, California passed Assembly Bill 540, which allowed undocumented students to qualify as in-state residents for tuition purposes. AB 540 significantly brought down the cost of college and permitted growing numbers of youth to enter community colleges and four-year colleges and universities. The result of further organizing and political pressure, California passed two pieces of legislation together known as the California Dream Act in 2011, which gave undocumented students access to private and state-based financial aid. Paired with the federal executive action of DACA, these policies have greatly transformed the possibilities in higher education and professional pathways for undocumented students in California.

Though we did not set out to write a book about undocumented life in California, the location of the authors and the place California has occupied in the national undocumented youth movement have created an undeniable bias toward California experiences and processes in the book. Though unintended, all of the authors have lived in California at some point, even when they are not from the state or even if they do not currently reside there. Importantly, their empirical and theoretical work in this volume was conducted in California and readers should be mindful of the unique policy and associated social contexts that inform the chapters. The Undocumented Youth Movement, however, is national and there are vast networks across states and regions that also contextualize the work. For this reason and because legal and social contexts throughout the country are constantly in flux, we believe the volume has theoretical and analytical resonance for a broader national audience.

A Methodological Intervention

This is a unique volume. There is currently no other collection of empirical and theoretical work by undocumented or recently undocumented scholars. As editors of this volume, this was certainly an empirical and analytical matter, but also a methodological one. Each author details their own methodological approach in the chapters, but there are broader methodological interventions that must also be named. These involve explicitly positioning undocumented scholars as theorists of the undocumented experience while being mindful of the ethics involved in doing this work.

At the outset of this project, we were clear that we did not want this to be a collection of testimonies, narrative reflections, or first-person essays; this is not to say that there is not value in such endeavors, but rather to be clear that such a project is politically, analytically, and methodologically distinct from

our aims here. This volume is an intentional effort to position this work as critical to the field in that it pushes our understanding of undocumented life in the United States at this time. Thus, the positioning of the undocumented immigrant as scholar is a direct departure from the treatment of the undocumented immigrant as subject or object. This positioning is not only pragmatic or practical, it is also methodological.

Part of our politic and analytic around this is that this process of undocumentation (Negrón-Gonzales 2018), while it is discussed in public discourse as a clear-cut matter, is a social, legal, and political construction. There is nothing inherent in people that makes them undocumented. There is nothing unchangeable in society that determines that undocumented people are criminals. On the contrary, people move in and out of undocumented status and legal, political, and social treatment of undocumented people changes across different historical moments (Ngai 2004). Methodologically, then, it made sense to us to capture these experiences by including people who have direct experience with being undocumented and scholars, whether they are currently undocumented, DACA recipients, or formerly undocumented for a notable part of their lives as students. We feel strongly that the authors in this volume have an important role to play in shaping the field.

The other methodological dimension worth illuminating concerns research ethics. Many theorists of undocumented migration have aimed to be thoughtful in how they approach research ethically (Hernández et al. 2013; Suárez-Orozco and Yoshikawa 2013). Some have written about the ethics of cocreating theory with undocumented students who are the focus of analysis (Pérez Huber 2010), while others provide undocumented students with research training and writing support (Clark-Ibáñez 2015; Mena Robles and Gomberg-Muñoz 2016; Unzueta Carrasco and Seif 2014). There is, however, a persistent disconnection in the field more broadly. Undocumented young people note that there is a pattern of researchers entering spaces of organizing—sometimes without permission—only to gather information for their studies, never to be seen again. Those researchers have failed to reciprocate with undocumented immigrant communities, rarely using their skills to support the advocacy work that they document. And in most of those cases, people who participated in the study were not informed of the findings. Authors in this volume have had conversations about how to address these concerns regarding immigration scholars who are not themselves undocumented. One response, in particular, thoughtfully details the problems and suggests best practices for scholars to follow when conducting research with undocumented communities.

Gabrielle Cabrera, one of the authors featured in this volume, along with Ines Garcia and an anonymous student at their undergraduate institution in California, got together shortly after the election of Donald Trump. In an attempt to be proactive in this new political context and rooted in what they saw as the nonreciprocal pattern of engagement described above, they developed a brief guide on research ethics for scholars and researchers who were turning to write about undocumented youth in the midst of heightened political threats.

November 30, 2016

Dear Researchers,

We'd like to emphasize that Undocumented students are not research subjects. We respectfully, but adamantly ask faculty members who are conducting research on and with Undocumented people to please conduct ethical research. By ethical research, we mean:

1 the questions asked to participants should not attempt to uplift the "progressive" efforts of the university;
2 sharing the research and findings with our community through relevant and accessible means; and
3 researchers should not treat Undocumented students as a "trendy" research topic.

We'd also like to take this moment to express the need for critical research on and with Undocumented students. We believe the efforts of faculty are grounded in good intentions and understand the importance of it. We also want to name that research causes harm to our community as it has been known to exploit and commodify our bodies and experiences.

Researchers should not collect data about our lives and publish the knowledge solely for their own benefit. Researchers should intentionally disseminate findings into our communities in meaningful and relevant ways. "Policy Recommendations" at the end of articles are not enough. Researchers should not claim to give us "voice" when current research on Undocumented students perpetuate the violent "DREAMer" narrative.

A change in the ways in which Undocumented students are researched needs to occur. We are scholars. We are community members. We are collaborators in the research process. Researchers should not speak on

our behalf. Rather, researchers should give us the platform to speak for ourselves. Faculty members have the ability to do this by conducting ethical research that engages our community throughout the process.

As is true of many scholars we have worked with, Cabrera, Garcia, and their peers highlight the need to push back on the DREAMer narrative, not only identifying its limitations but also highlighting how it reifies and sanctifies a certain kind of "good" immigrant. This pushback is a persistent theme across the chapters in this book, and the analytical contributions of these young scholars remind us that a key part of decolonizing research methodologies involves disrupting the assumed unmovable distinction between the researcher and the researched. Part of that process involves marginalized people theorizing and producing scholarship about the experiences of their communities.

"We Are Not DREAMers" as Analytical and Empirical Interjection

The subtitle of this collection is "Undocumented Scholars Theorize Undocumented Life in the United States." One way to curate such a volume would have been to identify the key spheres of undocumented life and solicit chapters on each of those—perhaps one chapter on schools, one on work, one on family, and so forth. However, in our conversations with the authors, a much more nuanced conception of undocumented life emerged, which ultimately served as the organizing logic of the book. The first half of the book engages in the connection between identity, illegality, and resistance as a way to critically analyze how undocumented migrants have been "made" through these processes. The second half of the book centers quotidian life as a medium for the exploration of what an intersectional analysis of undocumented status looks like by grappling with the structures of relationships, family, and identity. These two halves, then, constitute a recasting of how we think about undocumented life in the United States; not simply as a collection of institutional interactions or a constellation of spheres of engagement, but rather as an examination of the ways undocumented actors move through the spaces of daily life and in doing so, remake those spaces in fundamental ways.

Although much of the initial research on the undocumented 1.5 generation focuses on their educational success and the support they received from institutions of higher education, the authors in this book challenge that narrative. Many highlight the role that scholars, along with journalists, political pundits, and the mainstream immigrant rights organizations played in

creating and inflating a good immigrant narrative to support the notion of a perfect "DREAMer." Joel Sati's chapter is a theoretical formulation which draws the lines between discourse and policy to interrogate race, naturalization, the state, and the DREAMer identity in the immigrant rights movement. The work of Grecia Mondragón exposes the pressures and expectations that students are forced to navigate within higher education while carrying the weight of the DREAMer narrative, which often adds stress to their lives and makes it difficult to focus on their education. Gabrielle Cabrera analyzes the political and moral economy of the undocumented DREAMer narrative within the institution of higher education. Gabriela Monico examines how young activists left out of the DREAM Act discourse navigate the arguments for market citizenship often embedded in immigrant legislation and activism. Gabriela Garcia Cruz deliberately thinks more broadly about undocumented activism and turns away from young people specifically to focus on the political engagement of older undocumented women activists and how this activism reshapes lived experiences of citizenship and dignity.

Turning most intentionally toward the quotidian, the second half of the book highlights the need to examine identity and day-to-day life, often through an intersectional lens. Carolina Valdivia's work examines the daily manifestations of undocumented life, with a particular focus on immigrants' mental health under the Trump administration. Maria Liliana Ramirez employs intersectionality as a theoretical tool to underscore the point that undocumented status is not always the only or the most important identity for queer immigrants, particularly as they navigate relationships with family. Audrey Silvestre, meanwhile, urges readers to center joy and the quotidian in the lives of all undocumented immigrants, but especially for Trans undocumented immigrants who are often made the most vulnerable through immigration, detention, and other policies. The research on immigrant families has highlighted the ways in which deportability weighs heavily on undocumented and other members of their families. Lucía León extends this line of research by emphasizing the insidious effects of immigration policy that determine even how people must represent their love to one another and to the state in the most mundane ways. In her chapter, Katy Maldonado calls us to think more deeply about the day-to-day processes of families that are more powerfully impacted by other aspects of their lives. In the case of queer families, this means a fear of separation that is lived internally due to homophobia and externally due to immigration policy.

The work of these young scholars contributes to the field broadly, not only as critical and thoughtful empirical and theoretical work being done by undocumented scholars but also because this work brings out the nuances and

complications of undocumented life in the United States, which as a field we have not fully considered in all its dimensions. Four important themes emerge from these chapters. First, authors point to the ways in which access to education and the space of the college/university has both opened tremendous opportunity yet also requires certain kinds of sacrifice while complicating already difficult dynamics involved in undocumented life and relationships. Second, authors point to the diversity within the 1.5-generation undocumented immigrant experience. This critique rests both on complicating the conception that being undocumented is a monolithic experience, and also articulates the dangers of exclusion that are embedded in perpetuating this conception. Third, authors stress the importance of understanding different life stages in the undocumented experience and examining how undocumented status is experienced differently within and through the life course. Last, and most prominently, there is deep resistance to the DREAMer narrative and a call for a nuanced understanding of how this critique aims to shift conceptions not just of deservingness but also of how undocumented subjectivities are negotiated and created through this process.

The Shifting Terrain of Immigration Policies and "Illegality" Studies

Following 9/11, immigration has increasingly been treated as a national security issue (Abrego et al. 2017; Menjívar and Kanstroom 2013). This is evidenced by the development of the dissolution of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the creation of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which was then brought under the jurisdiction of the newly-developed Department of Homeland Security. In the wake of the War on Terror, and an increased hostility toward immigrants, migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, undocumented young people waged a movement that shifted the political terrain around access to education for undocumented youth in this country. The policies and laws born as a result of the impressive movement built by undocumented young people and their allies have meaningfully reframed questions of access on the ground, yet the fundamental policing of illegality and criminalization of migrants persists (Gonzales 2013). The Obama administration, while credited with the passage of DACA, also oversaw a period of mass deportations that both rivaled those of previous administrations and created the institutional infrastructure that laid the groundwork for Trump's immigration enforcement machine.

Today, we are living in a deeply consequential period regarding immigration policy and immigrant communities in the United States. This moment

is both crucial and noteworthy—not only because of the particular policies that are being legislated, arbitrated, debated, and enacted, but also because of the long-lasting impacts they will have on family formation and immigration pathways, as well as conceptions of belonging, illegality, and citizenship for future decades. Since taking office in January 2017, Trump has ushered in a number of policies and programs that aim to increase deportations and family separations (Abrego et al. 2017). Among these are Executive Order 13768, passed in January 2017, which increased border enforcement; drastic expansion of the parameters for who the government considers a priority for deportation; threats to remove funding from sanctuary cities; and an expansion of categories that make migrants deportable without due process. In September 2017, Trump ordered the end of the DACA program, which gave some measure of protection to eligible undocumented young people who had grown up in the United States, including protection from deportation and a legal work permit. At the time of this writing, the Supreme Court is set to decide the fate of DACA in the coming months.

The Trump administration's April 2018 Zero Tolerance Border Policy ushered in the practice of criminally prosecuting every adult apprehended entering the United States. When parents and children are apprehended together, this policy has the effect of separating minors from their parents because once charged with a crime, adults are routed for criminal prosecution mandating placement in adult-only jails and detention centers. Children are processed separately through the Office of Refugee Resettlement. All of this takes place without a central plan to identify or track these families. Although Trump officially retracted this policy just months after its official initiation, thousands of children were and continue to be separated from their families; too many remain separated today.

At the end of 2017 and in early 2018, Trump also ended Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for over 300,000 people from Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Syria, Nepal, and Honduras. TPS—itself a response to organized protest against the U.S. government's discrimination against Central American asylum-seekers in the 1980s—was developed in 1990 as a humanitarian program to provide refuge for migrants from countries destabilized through war, natural disaster, or catastrophe (Hallett and Abrego 2017). Trump's attempt to end the program seeks to push these migrants, many of whom have lived in the United States for decades, out of legal status; to force them either to leave or risk being deported. At the time of this writing, TPS holders have organized their resistance on multiple fronts, including litigation that has temporarily halted the program's termination.

Many of Trump's policies and executive orders, along with his attempts to end legal protections for immigrants, are not generally identified as specifically targeting young people. However, together they profoundly shape the lives of many undocumented young people and their families. This is the historical moment these young scholars are navigating personally, professionally, and emotionally; and this is the sociopolitical context their work engages.

The undocumented scholars who have contributed to this book are impacted by these policies. They are members of family units who are weathering these changes. They are activists and advocates who have played leading roles in fighting for the rights of immigrants in various sectors and spheres. Also, importantly, they have been educated within this shifting political terrain—these fights have resulted in increased access to higher education for many, particularly in places like California—and thus, are now positioned to be active and insightful participants as writers, scholars, and theorists of the undocumented experience in the United States. This volume is dedicated to illuminating this work and elevating these voices, not simply out of the belief that their voices are important, or merely due to ethics or toward building more inclusive practices within the academy, but also because we deeply believe that the work they are producing has the potential to transform the field and help bring about new and critical understandings of undocumented life in the United States.

NOTE

1. The California Dream Act is composed of two bills passed in 2011. Assembly Bill 130 was implemented in 2012 and made undocumented students in California public colleges and universities who qualify for in-state tuition also eligible to access private sources of financial aid (see https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120AB130). Assembly Bill 131 was implemented in 2013 and made undocumented college students in California public colleges and universities who qualify for in-state tuition also eligible for California state sources of aid, such as Cal Grants (see https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billCompareClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120AB131).

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