



“I've done all that I can, and I still cannot get what I deserve”

Using Photovoice to Explore Latino youths' experiences of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

Background

For many years, individuals have been advocating in Congress for the educational and citizenship rights for undocumented youth.

When comprehensive immigration reform (in the form of the DREAM Act) failed, President Obama passed an Executive Action in 2012.

DACA as an executive action has some benefits, but several drawbacks.

Benefits for undocumented youth include:

- protection from deportation
- work permit
- driver's license

Drawbacks to DACA include:

- restricts access to the Affordable Care Act
- expires after 2 years
- lengthy and costly application for youth and their families
- lack of access to federal financial aid

In addition, DACA can be interpreted individually by different states.

For higher education, DACA is NOT a legal status and DACA recipients are not considered in-state residents.

In North Carolina (NC), DACA youth cannot receive in-state tuition, a financially prohibitive omission that limits:

- educational advancement
- economic opportunities
- long-term health

Thus, our project worked with undocumented youth in NC along with academic partners at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill to explore the question: “How does being an undocumented Latino/a affect my aspirations for higher education in North Carolina?”

Approach and Methods

We used a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach.

Academic and community youth partners collaborated in all phases of the research to:

- Develop research questions.
- Conduct research through Photovoice methods

- Code and analyzing transcripts for qualitative analysis (IRB approved secondary data analysis)

- Disseminate findings in community and academic forums.

Five youth participants were involved in six discussion sessions. Participants used digital cameras to document problems encountered by undocumented immigrants in North Carolina.

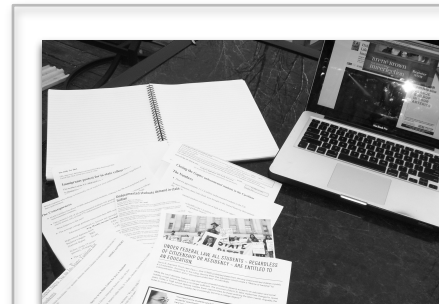
Photos were taken in response to participant-generated photo assignment questions.

Our three photo questions were:

- 1) Why don't I feel like a North Carolinian when it comes to higher education?
- 2) What are the costs of higher education for myself and my family?
- 3) What are the challenges and limitations of the DACA status?

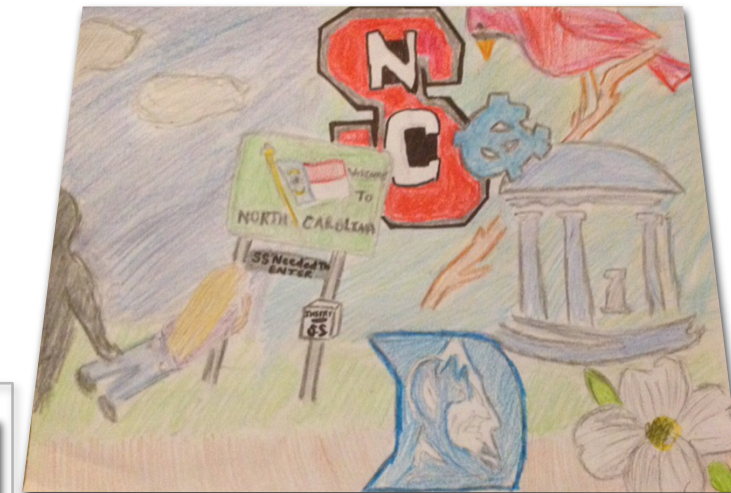
We used SHOWED questions (a set of critical analysis questions) in a graduate student facilitated discussion to think through:

- What can you physically see in the photo?
- How does the photo represent problems in society?
- What are some steps that individuals can take to improve these problems?



“So my notebook stayed blank”

“So I've been looking for universities that might allow undocumented [youth]. So I've been searching through so many and like so many say you have to pay out of state or like international thing. And basically, it's just state linked. And basically the only one that I could get in state is going to be [the local community college]”



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CITIZENSHIP & ETHNICITY

Are you a US Citizen? Yes No If not a US Citizen, county of citizenship: MEXICO

How many years have you lived in the US? Almost 14

If applicable, what is your immigration status? _____

Mother's country of birth & childhood: Mexico

Father's country of birth & childhood: Mexico

Applicant's first language(s): Spanish Language spoken at home: Spanish

Ethnicity/Race: Mexican

CAREER INTERESTS

What are your current career interests? (Such as artist, business, engineer, physician, teacher)

“I’m not undocumented anymore, but I’m also not a citizen or a resident. So, what do I put on those lines?”

"I mean so many people were like, I'm going to get DACA and I'll be able to go to school. But then they get DACA and they still can't go to school. It's like dreams got crushed. And like, oh, well [DACA] doesn't count anyways." (See photo C)

Findings

Our findings highlight the day-to-day challenges faced by DACA recipient youth in NC.

The illustrative photos and quotes in this brochure provide insights into the youth's daily struggles.

In the photos to the left (which pair with quotes A – C), youth describe feeling “locked out” of higher education because their legal status makes college unaffordable.

The images and quotes displayed elsewhere in the brochure are ones youth used describe the confusion associated with DACA status.

Conclusions

The voices of structurally marginalized youth highlight our need to build coalitions to advocate for youths' rights.

In terms of higher education, youth in this group felt systematically excluded from the dream of higher education.

They feared for their parents and other undocumented individuals.

Comprehensive immigration policy is imperative for the health and prosperity of our society.

Overall, the Latino/a youth in our study, advocate for organizing to make their voices heard to bring about policy changes.

Things you can do to make a difference

1) Write to your local Congressperson: tell them that you are a taxpaying voter who believes undocumented youth deserve tuition equity.

2) Email your University and encourage them to accept and provide scholarships for undocumented youth as a way to promote diversity and inclusion.

3) Join the movement to advocate for the rights of all undocumented individuals.

Visit these sites to learn more and get involved. The first one was built by Cruz Núñez.

<http://wherewedream.org>

<http://unitedwedream.org/>

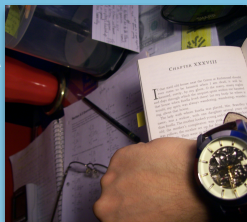
<http://bit.ly/16NOOPb>

"My teachers told me if I worked hard and got good grades, I could work in whatever I wanted to work. Well, guess what? Even after the hard work, the countless nights staying up and writing, reading, studying, and multiplying, I find the doors of higher education closed to me because I don't have residency status and am not eligible for federal aid."

(See photo A)

"When you are applying for schools or jobs or anything they ask you are you a legal resident, are you a citizen? When you are answering those questions, you are like, well I have DACA, so I don't really know, let me go ask a lawyer, sometimes the lawyers don't even know."

(See photo B)



A



B



C

