STUDENTS IN THE SHADOWS: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN CREATING COLLEGE ACCESS FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

by

MICHAEL JEFFREY TRIVETTE

(Under the Direction of Erik C. Ness)

ABSTRACT

This study uses qualitative methods to analyze a non-profit organization that seeks to help undocumented students successfully transition into postsecondary education. Located in Atlanta, Georgia, Freedom University began in 2011 as a response to an admissions ban restricting undocumented students from being able to attend Georgia's most selective public institutions. By using theories related to social capital and college choice, this dissertation seeks to explain how Freedom University works to assist undocumented students fulfill their dreams of attending a postsecondary institution.

INDEX WORDS: Undocumented students, college access, social capital, college choice, higher education, postsecondary education

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DEDICATION

To my family and all of the undocumented students that I have been fortunate to meet.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2009, I was working in the office of admissions at Appalachian State University, a large public institution located in northwestern North Carolina. Earlier that spring, the North Carolina Community College System voted to allow undocumented students to enroll at any one of the public community colleges at the out-of-state tuition rates. I read a report about undocumented students in North Carolina and I remember focusing on the term *undocumented*. It was the first time I recalled ever seeing the word used when mentioning a particular type of student. I spent a few minutes searching various documents and reports, and learning about how undocumented students were simply undocumented immigrants, brought here usually at young ages by their parents or guardians. Undocumented was not a word that I was accustomed to seeing because undocumented immigrants are often referred to as illegal aliens, especially in the south. *Illegal* carries a much harsher tone and one that seems to attribute guilt and subsequent punishment. But are undocumented children and students guilty for crimes in which they did not commit? I was already asking myself that very question only minutes after discovering the definition of undocumented students.

I spent the better part of an entire afternoon reading about undocumented students and trying to become more familiar with what North Carolina was doing in terms of their postsecondary access. Working in college admissions, I needed to be aware of our existing policies at both the two-year and four-year systems and how each viewed the enrollment status of undocumented students. It didn't take long for me to also learn that admission policies varied widely across state lines. I was intrigued by such a complicated topic.

The following year I enrolled in the doctoral program within the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia. My original plan was to attend UGA and study the impact of intercollegiate athletics on higher education, namely enrollment management and how universities balance athletics while trying to meet goals for student enrollment. One of the courses I was enrolled in for my first semester included "Higher Education in the United States," an introductory course that provided a general overview of our higher education system. The final paper that I submitted for the course was a paper about undocumented students, where I detailed the background of existing federal- and state-level policies concerning postsecondary access. The paper allowed me to further explore this topic while gaining more of a clearer understanding of the challenges presented to undocumented students.

I had no way of knowing it at the time, but that research paper laid the groundwork for this dissertation. It sent me exploring down a path that continues to develop almost each week. Although I may have once or twice thought about pursuing a different research topic, I am glad that I stayed true to my heart and went with the topic that interests me the most. It has been a life-changing experience for me personally, and has provided further clarification by showing me what I am destined to do as a career. What follows is a study about college access for undocumented students and how one organization sought to help these students by providing a pathway to postsecondary education.

Context

In a world in which we continue to develop new means of communication and interconnectivity between different people and countries across the globe, those within the United States need to be able to access public higher education in order to produce for their

family while contributing to our economy. The U.S. has always been viewed as the land of opportunity, and generations of immigrants have continued to seek its promise of equality where all people have, what are presumed to be, the same opportunities to pursue the American dream. Our global competitiveness will only continue to be strong with an educated population that has access to all sectors of public education. Few would argue against the reasoning that our country relies on a strong and educated workforce, and in today's global economy, access to public higher education with the opportunity to earn a college degree is a vital way to promote an individual's status (McMahon, 2009).

Unfortunately, this is not the current reality that exists for a particular group of students residing within our borders, as each year there are thousands of undocumented students who graduate from our nation's high schools without any guarantee of attending a postsecondary institution. Children that illegally enter the U.S. along with their parents are labeled as "unauthorized'" or "undocumented,"[1] meaning they do not have documentation that can prove legal residency within the U.S. Due to federal law, undocumented children are guaranteed a free K-12 education but there is no federal policy guaranteeing access to higher education.

While federal law does not mandate that undocumented students be allowed to attend public institutions, federal law also does not expressly prohibit their admission (Gonzales, 2010). There are no federal statutes that require students to provide proof of immigration status or citizenship in order to enter higher education. While the federal government has remained silent on the issue of college access for this group of students, states and university systems have enacted their own policies that either seek to promote or prevent access. With no promise of postsecondary education and recent estimates indicating that between 65,000 and 80,000

[1] In 2013, the Associated Press changed its stylebook to no longer use the term "illegal immigrant" when referring to a person without documentation within the United States.

undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools each year (Drachman, 2006; Gonzales, 2009; Olivas, 2012a; Passel, 2003; Pérez, 2009), many of these students simply do not enroll.

To date, 20 states have passed measures to help undocumented students gain entry to their colleges and universities, while several states have passed legislation to prevent in-state tuition benefits, or have passed state statutes that ban access altogether, both at two-year and four-year public institutions. The 20 states seeking to assist undocumented students reach higher education do so by offering in-state tuition benefits, which are often much less than the out-of-state tuition rates that can exceed in-state costs by as much as three to seven times (Gonzales, 2010). Scholars have shown that undocumented students benefiting from in-state tuition often succeed at much higher rates than similar students in states without these types of policies (Flores, 2010; Flores & Horn, 2009-2010). States looking to deter access do so by either forcing undocumented students to pay out-of-state tuition, or banning them completely from being able to enter their postsecondary institutions.

Georgia is an interesting state in that it has taken a hybrid approach of deterring access by allowing undocumented students to attend certain public four-year institutions while at the same time banning entry to the state's most selective universities. The policy was created following a complicated set of events in 2010 and presently the policy resides within the Board of Regents for the University System of Georgia (USG), although the state legislature has attempted to intervene on two separate occasions. To date, Georgia is the only state in the country that prevents access to a select number of their public institutions. Until the federal government becomes more involved in policies concerning admission for undocumented students in higher education, we can expect states and university systems to continue to set their own policies to meet the interests of their respective states.

The Spark that Ignited Controversy

In 2010, Jessica Colotl, a junior attending Kennesaw State University, was stopped by a university police officer for a minor traffic violation. After failing to produce a valid driver's license, Colotl was arrested and eventually turned over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to await deportation. After a month in detention and at the urging of community members, fellow college students, and the president of KSU, Colotl was released and ICE announced that she would be allowed to remain in the U.S. until she completed her senior year at KSU.

The events at Kennesaw State would ignite a controversy that expanded well beyond its campus. After Colotl's arrest, it was discovered that she was attending Kennesaw State, a public institution and a member of the University System of Georgia, while paying the in-state tuition rate (Diamond, 2010). Upon Colotl's release from ICE, many people felt her return to KSU was indicative of failed measures to enforce immigration policies (Shahshahani & Washington, 2013). Others argued that by Colotl being allowed to attend a public institution, the state was encouraging illegal immigration and allowing undocumented immigrants to take advantage of taxpayer-subsidized public education (Cook & Simmons, 2010). State politicians were vocal in putting pressure on the University System of Georgia to limit access for undocumented students and some even called for banning them altogether (Cook & Simmons, 2010; Diamond, 2011).

Out of response to the incident at Kennesaw, the Board of Regents for the University System of Georgia performed a system-wide audit of all 35 state institutions in order to

determine the number of undocumented students.[2] The audit reported that 501 of the system's nearly 310,000 students (less than 0.2%) were undocumented at the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year (Hebel, 2010), and all were paying the out-of-state tuition rates. The Regents also created the Residency Verification Committee to determine the impact of undocumented students on Georgia's public colleges and universities (Policy Center, 2010). The committee created a policy that banned undocumented students from attending the state's most selective institutions and the policy was approved by the Regents in October of 2010. Georgia Board of Regents' Policy Manual 4.1.6 states that "a person who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible for admission to any University System institution which, for the two most recent academic years, did not admit all academically qualified applicants (except for cases in which applicants were rejected for non-academic reasons)" (BOR Policy 4.1.6, 2010).

The policy effectively bans students from attending Georgia College and State University, Georgia Regents University[3], Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia State University and the University of Georgia. Undocumented students wishing to attend the state's 24 other public institutions must pay the out-of-state tuition rates. For some state legislators, however, the ban was not perceived to be as restrictive as what was needed to curb illegal immigration (Diamond, 2011). During the 2011 legislative session, several Georgia legislators proposed House Bill 59, a bill seeking to ban undocumented students from attending any of the state's public postsecondary institutions, including all USG public colleges and universities as well as the 26 technical colleges that comprise the Technical College System of Georgia. The

[2] Between 2011 and 2015, Georgia merged twelve institutions into six, thus reducing the total number of state institutions to 29.
[3] Georgia Regents University was created in 2012 as a result of merging Augusta State University and Georgia Health Sciences University, formerly known as the Medical College of Georgia.

bill did not gain enough political support, however, and it was eventually withdrawn from consideration. The 2012 legislative session marked the second time that state legislators would attempt to ban undocumented students when several representatives presented Senate Bill 458, a bill similar to H.B. 59 seeking to close the doors to all public state institutions for undocumented students. S.B. 458 gained more traction than the previous year's legislation as it received majority senate approval.

With senate approval, S.B. 458 was on its way to the state house and the Board of Regents may have saw this as a potential threat in that the state was attempting to interfere with USG policies. As a result, University System of Georgia Chancellor Henry "Hank" Huckaby spoke before the state's House Higher Education Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee, urging legislators not to pass any bills that would further increase the amount of restrictions placed on undocumented students. Huckaby noted that the system responded to legislators' previous concerns by banning undocumented students from all institutions that actively turn away qualified Georgians. Huckaby also stated that the system's current policies are working and they should be allowed to continue. Perhaps the most interesting take-away from Huckaby's remarks dealt with Georgia's obligation to preparing an educated workforce for the betterment of the state's future:

> Graduating more students is a key goal of the System as we work to help Georgia prosper. Even for those who are here through no fault of their own, it makes sense to me that we should educate them to the highest level possible. It helps our state economically, culturally, and educationally. – Hank Huckaby before the Georgia Senate Judiciary Committee, February 22, 2012

In the end, S.B. 458 would never come to a vote after stalling in the house. While it is not known whether or not Huckaby's comments likely deterred legislators from passing the bill forward to the Governor's desk, it seems plausible that Huckaby's justification for allowing the

USG to continue with its policies and procedures may have prevented any further action within the state government. Another likely contributor in the state refusing to interfere with USG policy is a history of allowing the USG to remain autonomous when it comes to making decisions concerning higher education.[4] Although the bill did not receive enough legislative support to pass in 2012, it signaled that immigration policies related to higher education would continue to be a contested issue in Georgia.

In opposition of the Regents' ban, a group of dissident college faculty members at the University of Georgia, along with key volunteers and local community members in the Athens community, came together to create a place where undocumented students could meet and attend regularly held classes while working to gain admission to a postsecondary institution. The school is called Freedom University, and while they are unaccredited without any hope of allowing students to transfer work to other institutions, 35 to 40 students come together each week within its walls to engage their minds and further their dreams of going to college. Freedom University, or commonly referred to as "Freedom U," is a non-profit organization founded in Athens, Georgia and currently housed in Atlanta that seeks to educate undocumented students who have recently finished high school and are unable to attend postsecondary institutions due to the Regents' ban or because of the financial difficulty to attend other institutions.

Freedom U has two primary objectives: (1) work to help undocumented students matriculate into a two-year or four-year postsecondary institution, and (2) protest the ban by the

[4] The University System of Georgia once lost accreditation in the 1940s as a result of Governor Eugene Talmadge interfering with the hiring and firing of professors and administrators at the University of Georgia as well as with members of the Board of Regents. For more information see T.G. Dyer's *The University of Georgia: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* and http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/cocking-affair

Board of Regents in an effort to have the ban lifted. Classes are typically offered each Sunday afternoon in order to allow for students to travel from nearby cities and towns such as Athens, Buford, Lawrenceville, Milledgeville and others. With support from the Economic Justice Coalition of Athens, the Athens Latino Center for Education and Services, and several other organizations, Freedom U is able to offer educational services to students free of charge. A handful of UGA faculty members were instrumental in organizing the first classes for students and other volunteers assisted with logistics and transportation for the students. In its first year (2011-2012) Freedom U had an enrollment of 30 students. Four of those students would go on to enroll in private universities in Massachusetts and New York, following the first year of the program. What started as a deterrent to higher education with Georgia's ban, Freedom U has allowed these students to have opportunities and new doors open for them that they may not have had otherwise. By exposing undocumented students to a college-going climate and network, students have been able to learn more about their college prospects while some have been able to submit college applications and successfully enroll. After a successful first-year cohort, Freedom U has continued to grow and now embarks on its fourth year with the hopes of sending additional students to various colleges and universities around the country. In states where access is limited, undocumented students may benefit from organizations like Freedom U in helping them reach their dreams of attending a postsecondary institution. Freedom U may serve as a model for those states where state DREAM Acts do not presently exist.

Statement of the Problem

College access for undocumented students in the U.S. is an important issue given that each year 65,000-80,000 undocumented youth graduate from high schools across the country

(Drachman, 2006; Gonzales, 2009; Olivas, 2012a; Passel, 2003; Pérez, 2009), while college-going rates for undocumented students continue to lag behind legal permanent residents and U.S. born residents (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Until the federal government creates guidelines for states to follow when it comes to admission for undocumented students into public colleges and universities, states will continue to set their own admission policies. As a result, some states may choose to create policies that deter access, such as those here in Georgia that have barred undocumented students from attending the state's most selective institutions while also requiring that they pay out-of-state tuition at the other public colleges and universities.

Most research concerning undocumented students tends to focus on the political process of setting tuition policy within various states (Dougherty et al., 2010; Reich & Mendoza, 2008), and there are numerous reports, articles and books that provide descriptive information that informs readers on state and federal legislation that impacts undocumented students (Biswas, 2005; Connolly, 2005-2006; Drachman, 2006; Gonzales, 2007, 2009; Olivas, 2004, 2009, 2012a; Salsbury, 2003). Recently, higher education scholars have began studying the positive effects of in-state tuition policies (Abrego, 2008; Flores, 2010) and persistence rates among undocumented students in postsecondary education (Flores & Horn, 2009-2010).

Surprisingly, however, little attention has been given to the role that social capital plays in creating college access for undocumented students. Until now, no study has analyzed how a community based organization generates social capital for undocumented students to be used in promoting their college attendance. This study aims to fill that gap by focusing on a nonprofit organization and how its leaders and students come together to form connections and social capital to be used for creating college access.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to learn more about how people come together in order to create social change by assisting a group of students who need help in reaching postsecondary education. Specifically, this study seeks to determine how social capital is utilized within an organization to create college access for undocumented students. It evaluates how a social network, like Freedom University, goes about helping students successfully navigate the college search and application process. The study also investigates how social capital may influence the college choice and decision-making process for undocumented students. As such, the research questions for this study are as follows:

RQ #1) How does social capital work within Freedom University to educate students about their college admission prospects?

RQ #2) What impact on students does social capital play in terms of expanding their college opportunity and goals for their future lives?

By analyzing how Freedom University brings together faculty, students and volunteers, we can develop a better understanding of how community based organizations are used to benefit groups of marginalized persons and in this case, how people are attempting to use their collective capital to open new doors to higher education for undocumented students. We also gain by learning how social capital is used within Freedom University, and how this capital is translated into helping these students navigate how to search and apply to postsecondary institutions. Through this process of evaluating the experiences of faculty, students and volunteers, we are able to see if and how an organization such as Freedom University can influence the postsecondary prospects for undocumented students.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is based on several factors. First and as mentioned previously, this study is the first in the field of higher education to examine how social capital within community based organizations is leveraged for the purposes of creating college access for undocumented students in the U.S. Second, this study continues to build on prior work surrounding social capital and how it is used to facilitate postsecondary transition. It also builds on the college choice literature in that social capital is being used to help students navigate the college search and application process. Finally, this study adds to the scholarly work focusing on undocumented students and their transition to postsecondary education.

This study is also of value because it attempts to address a highly sensitive and controversial topic concerning immigration and the rights of undocumented students residing in the United States. This timely work attempts to bring light to a complicated issue and offer insight into how people and organizations are working to address the needs of undocumented students who often, by no fault of their own, find themselves in the middle of a political conflict, both at the state and national levels. The study's rationale identifies Freedom University as a social movement with significant influence on undocumented students' college access and success in postsecondary education, while justifying further exploration into the impact that social justice organizations may have on the postsecondary trajectories of undocumented students. The significance of this study is clear—by understanding how Freedom University works as a means of creating postsecondary opportunities for undocumented students, we can better understand how social capital helps students successfully transition to and through higher education.

Organization of the Study

This study consists of six chapters, including chapter one which introduced the topic of undocumented students in higher education, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study along with appropriate research questions, and the study's significance and contribution to the field of higher education. Chapter two provides a thorough and detailed account of state and federal policies that affect undocumented students and their ability to access postsecondary education. Chapter two also introduces the main theoretical frameworks that are used to guide the research for this study, including social capital theory and college choice. Chapter three presents the research design by which the research questions are examined. It includes a description of the research method along with information related to data sources. It also details how I used participatory action research as a means of being able to thoroughly analyze the organization while gaining a better understanding of what was taking place within Freedom University. Chapter four provides further background details about Freedom University and my personal introduction to the organization. Chapter five presents the findings and how these relate to the initial research questions, and chapter six provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research involving undocumented students.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter gives a detailed background of the federal court cases involving undocumented youth and immigration that have led us to the current conditions that exist for undocumented students in the U.S. It also provides context for attitudes concerning immigration. The chapter then explores federal policies that affect undocumented students and their college access, as well as what specific states have done to both promote and deter college access for undocumented students. Finally, I provide a brief summary of previous studies focusing on undocumented students in postsecondary education and discuss the theoretical framework that guides this study.

Major Court Rulings

Over the past several decades, a number of key court decisions allowed us to arrive at the current political context that surrounds undocumented students and their access to higher education. In order to gain a better understanding of Freedom University and the political climate in which it functions in Georgia, it is important to document these events and how they led us to where we are today.

During the American civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s, the U.S. government became more involved in public education as a result of addressing racial segregation within public schools. In the 1954 landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students was unconstitutional. In *Brown*, the court stated "education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments" (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954) and that no one should be

excluded from a public education. *Brown* was important as it determined states could no longer restrict access to public education and equal opportunity and access would apply to all students regardless of race.

An interesting twist to *Brown* occurred in 1973 when the Supreme Court ruled that education was not a fundamental right in *San Antonio School District v. Rodriguez*. The case involved a Texas district court that found the state's method of creating budgets and financing public schools showed discrimination and disparities as a result of differences in the amounts of money collected through local property taxes. The district court ruling cited this as a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Supreme Court overturned the district court's ruling citing that differences in school district expenditures are not the result of a discriminatory system, and the poor are not a suspect class in this instance. This was followed by a 1977 ruling in *Nyquist v. Mauclet* which outlined that states could not restrict resident legal aliens from receiving financial aid, and that discrimination against aliens can only be justified if it promotes a legitimate and substantial state interest. Since resident legal aliens are required to pay taxes that support financial aid programs, the court deemed it unfair to prevent this group of students from receiving financial aid benefits.

Up until this point, undocumented students had not been addressed in either the K-12 or postsecondary sectors. The education of this group began to gain traction in certain states experiencing a large influx of undocumented immigrants in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in states like Texas along the southern border. As these families began to take residence in their newfound homes, their children began to attend the public K-12 schools. Local citizens and school districts became alarmed and somewhat threatened as these communities considered unlawful citizens to be burdensome on the public education system. Communities began calling

for action as many felt something needed to be done in order to control the number of undocumented students entering the public school systems.

In 1975, Texas became the first state in attempting to address the issue of public education for undocumented students by creating a law that gave local school districts the power to bar undocumented children from enrolling in public K-12 schools. In Tyler, Texas, the Tyler Independent School District took the alternative approach by choosing to charge tuition to undocumented students. In 1977, a class-action lawsuit was filed on behalf of "certain school-age children of Mexican origin residing in Smith County, Texas, who could not establish that they had been legally admitted into the United States" (Drachman, 2006, p. 92) against the State of Texas, the Texas Educational Agency, and several Texas school districts. Federal courts ruled in both 1977 and 1980 that the law barring access to public schools for undocumented students was a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. After a federal appeals court upheld the ruling in 1981, the Tyler school board and superintendent, James Plyler, appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The fate of undocumented students and their right to educational access now weighed in the balance of the U.S. Supreme Court and nine judges would decide whether or not the Equal Protection Clause applied to this group of students.

In a 5-4 majority opinion, Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. held that denying undocumented students access to public education "imposes a lifetime of hardship on a discrete class of children not accountable for their disabling status (and that) the stigma of illiteracy will mark them for the rest of their lives" (Drachman, 2006). The court recognized that children should not be held responsible for their status and that undocumented students should not be punished for the decisions made by their parents/guardians. The court also stated that "denial of a free public education to these children was unjustified because there was no empirical evidence

presented to demonstrate that the policy would further some substantial state interest" (Ruge & Iza, 2004, p. 3). Similarly to when the Supreme Court ruled in *Nyquist*, states had to be able to show that policies restricting access for undocumented students would promote a legitimate and substantial state interest, and Texas was unable to do so. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that undocumented students are persons under the Equal Protection Clause and should be afforded the protections set forth by the Fourteenth Amendment. Today, the *Plyler* decision protects the educational rights of approximately 1.8 million children under the age of 18, about one-sixth of the total undocumented population (Passel, 2006; Pérez, 2009). Olivas (1995) notes that the use of constitutional guarantees to reaffirm students' rights makes *Plyler v. Doe* a key decision on behalf of immigrants' rights in the United States.

While K-12 education is a constitutional guarantee for undocumented youth, their educational rights expire once they reach high school graduation, as is the case for an estimated 3.4 undocumented young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 (Pérez, 2009). Higher education continues to be elusive for many of these young adults with only 60% of those between the ages of 18 and 24 completing high school (Passel & Cohn, 2009), and only 10% of undocumented males and 16% of undocumented females between the ages of 18 and 24 enrolled in college (Fortuny, Capps, & Passel, 2007; Pérez, 2009). Current estimates indicate that 11.2 million undocumented immigrants reside within the U.S., and of those, Latinos make up 81%, Asians account for 11%, Europeans and Canadians represent 4%, and African and all other countries make up 3% (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Each year, approximately 65,000—80,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools (Drachman, 2006; Gonzales, 2009; Olivas, 2012a; Passel, 2003; Pérez, 2009).

Changing Attitudes on Unauthorized Immigration

While the 1980s and 90s saw major growth in the number of foreign-born persons residing within the U.S., the undocumented population also saw significant gains. When looking at undocumented immigrants and the numbers they represent, the ten-year span between 1980 and 1989 witnessed close to 2,000,000 undocumented immigrants residing within the U.S., while the 1990s experienced an additional 4,750,000 undocumented immigrants moving into U.S. borders (Hoefer, Rytina, & Baker, 2010). Current estimates project the number of undocumented immigrants at 11.2 million, or 28% of the total foreign-born population (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Rincón (2008) indicates that this rapid demographic change was used by the government, media, and nativist forces to promote anti-immigrant hysteria. During this time, portions of the American public began to perceive undocumented immigrants as a growing threat to American society. Trade agreements such as the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) were also put into place, sending many American manufacturing jobs overseas to places such as Mexico and other neighboring countries, further creating more resentment among certain parts of the American public. Chapa (2008) credits NAFTA and its effect on undermining economic viability in Mexico resulting in many Latinos to emigrate from Mexico and other Latin American countries to the U.S. As a result, undocumented immigrants would be targeted as those who wrongfully took American jobs while receiving other social benefits. The overwhelming number of immigrants and the changing American demographic provided the impetus to create additional policies aimed at undocumented immigrants. "Political pressure in the early 1990s, coupled with the states' economic burdens, led states to initiate legislation aimed at restricting benefits for both legal and unauthorized persons" (Connolly, 2005-2006, p. 202).

The first state that attempted to curb benefits for undocumented immigrants was California in 1994 with the passage of Proposition 187. Also called the "Save Our State" initiative, California's Proposition 187 prevented undocumented immigrants from receiving all types of public benefits, including education, nonemergency health care, and social services. A federal judge ruled Proposition 187 to be unconstitutional, but it still did not prevent six other states from filing suit against the federal government and demanding federal funds while citing costs incurred from providing services to undocumented immigrants. Ultimately, the states of Arizona, California, Florida, New Jersey, New York, and Texas were unsuccessful in their attempt to acquire funds for supporting services for undocumented immigrants. States would be required to fund any incurred costs from services provided to undocumented immigrants. Even though California's Proposition 187 was declared unconstitutional, federal legislation was only two years away in determining how benefits for undocumented students could be applied.

Federal Policies Affecting Access

The federal government passed two important pieces of legislation in 1996 that would have major implications for the types of aid undocumented students are eligible to receive. Although Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 prevents undocumented students from receiving any type of federal aid for postsecondary education, the issue of state funds and other local benefits was still a gray area. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 would change this however, by creating separate categories for aliens. Originally intended to help alleviate public dependence on welfare programs, the bill affected how undocumented persons received federal, state, and local benefits and services. The separate categories for aliens included "qualified" and "unqualified," and

public benefits would be granted based on the category. Since undocumented students are classified as being "unqualified," PRWORA prevents them from receiving any state benefit, including state financial aid for postsecondary education.

The other piece of legislation directly impacting undocumented students was section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). The legislation is viewed by many as a major deterrent for access to higher education due to how it establishes residency for undocumented students (Connolly, 2005-2006; Olivas, 2009; Rincón, 2008). Under IIRIRA, a person who is unlawfully present in the United States is ineligible for any postsecondary benefit unless the same benefit can be applied to any U.S. citizen. In summary, IIRIRA prevents states from providing in-state tuition to undocumented students unless they can provide the same in-state tuition rates to nonresident, or out-of-state, applicants. "Because it is economically impossible for postsecondary institutions to offer all applicants the lower in-state tuition rates, the federal legislation effectively bars them from extending in-state tuition rates to undocumented immigrant residents" (Yates, 2004, p. 596).

Drachman (2006) contends that PRWORA and IIRIRA were both enacted on a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment sweeping the country aimed at excluding undocumented students from receiving state and local benefits for postsecondary education. Both pieces of legislation are major hurdles to access of postsecondary education for undocumented students. Galassi (2003) notes that "regardless of their academic qualifications, desire, and motivation, federal legislation that was passed in 1996 has worked to keep the vast majority of illegal immigrants from obtaining in-state tuition benefits that would allow them to attend college" (p. 81). Despite these seemingly impassible hurdles, a number of states have found ways to bypass IIRIRA in order to help undocumented students gain access to postsecondary education.

States Redefining Residency & Promoting Access

Although PRWORA and IIRIRA did not prohibit undocumented students from attending public or private colleges, "states that wish to enable these students to be eligible for in-state public college tuition must pass legislation allowing them to establish in-state residency" (Olivas, 2009, p. 408). While the overwhelming majority of states consider IIRIRA as forbidding in-state tuition for undocumented students (Drachman, 2006; Galassi, 2003), a number of states have read between the lines to determine ways to offer in-state tuition benefits. In less than twenty years following the landmark decision in *Plyler v. Doe*, Texas became the first state to offer in-state tuition to undocumented students. In 2001, Texas governor Rick Perry signed into law House Bill 1403, a bill spearheaded by State Representative Rick Noriega that allowed undocumented students who are Texas high school graduates to pay in-state tuition at all public colleges and universities (Pérez, 2009). It seems somewhat ironic that it was Texas that first attempted to prevent undocumented students from accessing public K-12 schools in *Plyler*, and yet in the span of less than two decades, a conservative governor was signing into law a bill that allowed undocumented students to receive in-state tuition. In order to gain broad support for H.B. 1403, advocates relied primarily on an economic rationale where the bill would increase enrollment, tuition, and fees from students who otherwise would not enroll or would drop out (Pérez, 2009). In fact, to confirm the economic benefit provided by undocumented students, the Texas State comptroller performed an economic impact study in 2006 that showed for every dollar the state invested in higher education for undocumented students, the return would yield more than five dollars for Texas' economy (Strayhorn, 2006).

Texas' current in-state tuition requirements stipulate that students must have met the following criterion: (1) graduation or the equivalent from a Texas high school; (2) residence in

the state for at least three years as of the high school graduation date or receipt of the equivalent of a high school diploma; and (3) the signing of an affidavit stating the intent to file permanent residency at the earliest possible opportunity (Salsbury, 2003}. The Texas model would provide the blueprint for future states also wishing to create residency requirements for undocumented students and various state have created their own state DREAM acts based on similar criteria. California did just that by becoming the second state to offer in-state tuition after passing Assembly Bill 540 in 2001, only seven years after failing to become the first state to restrict undocumented students from attending pubic postsecondary institutions. By paying close attention to the language and wording of IIRIRA, both Texas and California managed to bypass the basis of residence provision altogether by granting in-state tuition on factors other than actual residency (Salsbury, 2003). By redefining how "resident" applies to their students and basing eligibility on years of attendance and graduation from a state high school rather than actual residency (Yates, 2004), both states have made postsecondary education more accessible and attainable for undocumented students. In total, 17 other states joined Texas and California in passing measures to offer in-state tuition benefits for undocumented students (Olivas, 2012b). These states include Utah (2002), New York (2002), Washington (2003), Oklahoma (2003), Illinois (2003), Kansas (2004), New Mexico (2005), Nebraska (2006), Maryland (2011), Connecticut (2011), Rhode Island (2011), Oregon (2013), Colorado (2013), Hawaii (2013), Minnesota (2014), New Jersey (2014) and Florida (2014). With the exception of Rhode Island, all of the previously mentioned states passed state laws to allow students to establish residency. Rhode Island's policy exists within the Board of Governors for Higher Education (NCSL, 2012; Olivas, 2012b). Wisconsin passed in-state tuition in 2009 but quickly revoked it only two years later in 2011. Maryland temporarily suspended in-state tuition benefits for undocumented

students in 2012 until Maryland voters passed a statewide referendum on November 6, 2012, confirming in-state tuition for undocumented students. In doing so, Maryland became the first state where voters decided to extend in-state tuition benefits to undocumented students (Pérez-Peña, 2012).

Although Illinois passed in-state tuition in 2003, just recently they took additional steps to help undocumented students pay for college by setting up a fund called the Illinois DREAM Fund, which is a non-profit organization created under state law to help undocumented children receive funds to attend Illinois' colleges and universities (Olivo, 2012). Applicants must have a 2.5 GPA and a minimum ACT score of 17. Students planning to attend a two-year college are eligible for $2,000 scholarships, while those attending four-year institutions are eligible for $6,000. The fund relies exclusively on private donations and the program is part of the Illinois DREAM Act that was signed into law by Governor Pat Quinn in 2011. The law was designed to offer scholarships, college savings, and prepaid tuition programs to undocumented students who graduated from Illinois high schools.

Connecticut, which passed in-state tuition in 2011, requires students to have attended high school within the state for four years (Fitzgerald, 2012), instead of three years in states such as Texas and California. Students must also graduate from a Connecticut high school and apply for legal status as soon as they are able. The differences between in-state and out-of-state tuition in Connecticut are worth noting; instead of paying the out-of-state rate of $29,000 per year at the University of Connecticut, students are able to pay the $11,700 in-state rate (Fitzgerald, 2012). Before the bill was passed, the Office of Fiscal Analysis reported that extending in-state tuition benefits to undocumented students would not harm the financial aspects of the constituent units of higher education. They noted that state institutions can adjust their ratio of in-state to out-of-

state students to keep the policy revenue neutral (Fitzgerald, 2012). It will be interesting to see if additional states going forward will follow the rationale of Connecticut and others when determining if and how to create policies that welcome access for undocumented students.

States Restricting Access

While a growing number of states have created policies enabling access to postsecondary education for undocumented students, several states have recently enacted measures to restrict their access to higher education. By and large, most states have not created any type of state policy regarding access and admission since many states view this as a decision left to the federal courts. A small number of states have recently set state policies regarding both in-state tuition and admission.

Two states currently ban access completely to undocumented students, both at the public four-year institutions and at the public two-year community/technical colleges. South Carolina became the first state to pass legislation in 2008 titled the "Illegal Immigration Reform Act," (NCSL, 2012) effectively barring undocumented students from being able to enroll at any public four-year or two-year institution (Olivas, 2009). Alabama followed three years later in 2011 by becoming the second state to ban students from all postsecondary institutions (Olivas, 2012c). As mentioned previously, Georgia nearly passed legislation in 2012 that would have barred access to undocumented students from the state's public colleges and universities, but state legislators decided against passing a bill targeting undocumented students, choosing instead to leave this as an issue currently residing within the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Georgia's Board of Regents adopted a policy in 2010 that prohibits undocumented students from attending the state's most selective public institutions.

States that have enacted state statutes that prevent undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition rates include Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Montana and Ohio (Olivas, 2012c). In 1998, Colorado became the first state to pass an administrative ruling in support of the federal IIRIRA legislation to deny in-state tuition benefits to undocumented students (Thangasamy, 2010). Several years later in 2006, Colorado became one of the first states to effectively ban in-state tuition for undocumented students. Arizona joined Colorado in November 2006 by also placing a ban on in-state tuition after Arizona voters overwhelmingly passed Proposition 300, with over 70% voter approval (Dougherty, Nienhusser, & Vega, 2010). The bill is similar to Proposition 200 that Arizona passed in 2004 which required undocumented persons to show proof of residency to obtain public benefits and forbade the granting of state benefits (Drachman, 2006). Georgia passed their in-state tuition ban in 2008, and Indiana and Ohio followed in 2011 with state legislation banning in-state tuition (Olivas, 2012c). Montana is the most recent state to eradicate in-state tuition after voters passed a state ballot measure in 2012 (Olivas, 2012c).

North Carolina and Georgia are examples of states where policies reside within university systems, meaning that state government in these two states have yet to hand down any legislation that would override the university system policies. The Board of Governors for the University of North Carolina created policies that require each of the state's 17 public four-year institutions to charge undocumented students out-of-state tuition. The UNC system allows undocumented students to be admitted to any of the state's public four-year institutions, excluding UNC School of Science and Mathematics, as long as students meet a set of criteria (Olivas, 2012c). The North Carolina Community College System has had a rather unusual history of changing its admission policies for undocumented students by altering its policies on five separate occasions

since 2001 (NCSL, 2012). Over the past decade the system has banned undocumented students from enrolling, allowed each campus to decide whether to admit undocumented students, allowed undocumented students to enroll system-wide, and then again banned undocumented students from enrolling altogether (NCSL, 2012). Currently, following a 2009 decision, undocumented students who graduated from a North Carolina high school are allowed to enroll in the North Carolina Community College System, but must do so at the out-of-state tuition rates. As mentioned previously, Georgia's Board of Regents for the University System of Georgia created a policy in 2010 that prevents undocumented students from attending the state's most selective public institutions; Georgia College and State University, Georgia Regents University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia State University, and the University of Georgia.

In more recent developments, Montana voters passed Legislative Referendum 121 on November 6, 2012 to deny state-funded services to undocumented immigrants, including financial assistance and in-state tuition to undocumented students. The referendum passed with almost 80% of voters supporting the measure (Stiff, 2012). Along with prohibiting undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition, the referendum also denies many state services and opportunities to undocumented people, including services related to state jobs, disabled services, access to public education and more (Stiff, 2012). Montana was the only state to pass such legislation in 2012.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

On June 15, 2012, President Barack Obama and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano announced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA); a

policy that gives rights to undocumented persons meeting certain conditions. The policy allows those who are eligible to avoid deportation for up to two years and secure a work permit. It applies to all undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. before the age of 16, are younger than 31 (as of June 15, 2012), are high school graduates or are in college, or have served in the military. Applicants must also have no serious criminal record in order to be eligible for consideration.

The policy was created with the intent of helping undocumented youth find legal work but it remains to be seen what implications it has for undocumented students wishing to pursue higher education. Nelson (2012) points out that students who are eligible for DACA will not be eligible for federal financial aid and will not qualify for in-state tuition unless they live in one of the states currently granting students in-state tuition regardless of immigration status, or if states begin accepting deferred action status – rather than legal residency – as a qualification for in-state tuition. Indeed some states are doing just that as is the case in Massachusetts where former governor Deval Patrick laid out a policy for undocumented students residing within the state to qualify for in-state tuition at public institutions (Pérez-Peña, 2012). However, in Massachusetts, in-state tuition is not available to all undocumented students – only those who have been approved for DACA (Hesson, 2012).

The policy follows on the heels of unsuccessful attempts by the Bush and Obama administrations to pass the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. In August of 2001, the DREAM Act (initially called the Student Adjustment Act) was introduced to the congressional floor in an effort to make education more accessible for undocumented students. The DREAM Act has two main goals; (1) repeal Section 505 of the IIRIRA in an effort to allow states to make their own determination on eligibility for in-state tuition; and (2)

allow students to become permanent U.S. residents (Drachman, 2006). The bill was introduced by senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Richard "Dick" Durbin (D-IL) after it received bipartisan support.

The current version of the bill would permit undocumented students to obtain legal permanent resident status if they meeting the following conditions: (1) they entered the U.S. at the age of 15 or younger and are under 35 on the date of the bill's enactment; (2) they have been continuously present in the country for at least five years prior to the bill's enactment; (3) they have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent; and (4) they can demonstrate good moral character (Gonzales, 2009). Assuming students meet these conditions, they would be eligible to receive a six-year conditional legal permanent status, which is important because it allows them to go to college, legally work, or join the military. During the six-year period, if students complete at least two years toward a four-year college degree, obtain a two-year degree, or serve at least two years in the military, they then become eligible to change their conditional status to permanent and become eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship. According to Gonzales (2009), the DREAM Act would provide 360,000 undocumented high school graduates with an opportunity to work and obtain additional resources for college, and may provide additional incentives for another 715,000 between the ages of 5 and 17 to finish high school and pursue a postsecondary education. However, Gildersleeve (2010) notes that not everything is guaranteed with the passage of the DREAM Act. The author points out that while the DREAM Act would repeal Section 505 of the IIRIRA, it would not require states to afford undocumented students in-state tuition. Also, while the DREAM Act could make undocumented students eligible for some state

and federal financial aid, they still would not have access to Pell Grants,[5] even if students qualified for them (Gildersleeve, 2010).

The most recent version of the DREAM Act was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2010 but it did not receive the required 60 votes from the Senate needed to prevent a filibuster. DACA is considered by many to be the appropriate first step in order to get the DREAM Act back on the legislative agenda in Washington. Given the recent developments around DACA and the amount of attention given to the DREAM Act from the Obama administration during his first term in the White House, it seems likely that the DREAM Act will reemerge during the next presidential term.

Previous Studies on Undocumented Students

Recent studies focusing on undocumented students in U.S. higher education tend to focus on the political process of setting tuition policy within individual states (Dougherty et al., 2010; Reich & Mendoza, 2008), and various books, reports and law articles provide a wealth of descriptive information intended to educate readers on legislation that impacts undocumented students, both at the state and federal levels (Biswas, 2005; Connolly, 2005-2006; Drachman, 2006; Gonzales, 2007, 2009; Olivas, 2004, 2009, 2012a; Salsbury, 2003).

While research focusing on undocumented students in higher education is limited, several recent studies have brought to light important findings related to access for undocumented students. Flores (2010) examined the effect of in-state tuition policies and found that undocumented students in states that offered in-state tuition benefits were 1.54 times more likely

[5] Pell Grants are vital as they are among the most useful financial aid programs available, and they tend to primarily serve students who come from the poorest backgrounds and have been shown to have a direct impact on students' ability to afford postsecondary education (Price, 2004).

to enroll in college than compared to similar students in states without in-state tuition policies. Abrego (2008) found that in-state tuition benefits provided to undocumented students also provided students with a stronger sense of social identity. In other words, the in-state tuition policy gave students a greater sense of legitimacy while making them feel accepted for who they are as undocumented students.

When looking at their persistence in college, Flores and Horn (2009-2010) found that undocumented students persisted at rates similar to that of their Latino peers who are U.S. citizens and legal residents. Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, and Cortes (2009) analyzed data from undocumented students at both the high school and college levels and found that those students who had higher levels of academic and environmental support (*i.e.*, family, friends, school) generally experienced higher levels of academic support. Even for students who were determined to be "at risk" (*i.e.*, elevated feelings of societal rejection, low parental education, high employment hours while in school), students who had higher levels of academic and environmental support tended to perform better while in school.

Theoretical Framework

There are several existing theoretical frameworks that can be used to analyze the work being done within Freedom University and how it goes about trying to create college access for undocumented students. Each theory contributes to the understanding of the important work taking place at Freedom University and the important role it plays in facilitating postsecondary access. By using these concepts to explain what is taking place within Freedom U, we increase our understanding of these types of organizations work to solve complex problems in higher

education. Specifically, the study employs the use of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 2001a, 2001b), as well as theory related to college choice (McDonough, 2005; Perna, 2006).

Social Movement Theory

Over the course of the past few decades, an increasing amount of literature has been devoted to studying social movements and their role in our society. As such, we might often struggle to find a clear and consistent definition of social movements, but McAdam and Snow (1997) define social movements as a collectivity acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional channels for the purpose of promoting or resisting change in the group, society, or world order of which it is a part. Social movement theory attempts to explain how groups of actors can come together at different points in time to create long-lasting changes that are aimed at improving opportunities and conditions for a minority group. It generally seeks to explain for why and how social movements occur and the conditions under which they operate in society.

Diani (2003) contends that social movements are a distinct social process where actors are engaged in collective action and are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, are linked to dense informal networks, and share a distinct collective identity. Social movements typically do not emerge until there is a political opportunity available and they rarely occur spontaneously, rather they usually require time and preparation at the individual, group, and societal level (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). Social movements are often thought of as a form of collective action (McAdam & Snow, 1997). We think of collective action because an individual is unlikely to attain an objective alone. Therefore, collective action is joint action in pursuit of a common objective. Social movements are often thought of as collective behavior as

well due to its group-problem solving behavior. But social movements differ in the sense that they seek to create change which cannot be said for all forms of collective action or collective behavior (McAdam & Snow, 1997).

Within social movements there are typically three separate groups of actors: protagonists, antagonists, and bystanders (Hunt, Benford, & Snow, 1994). Protagonists include all groups and collectivities that are supportive of the movement or whose interests are represented by it. The protagonists are made up by the movement's adherents, constituency, and beneficiaries. The adherents include those individuals who engage in movement activities and are involved in pursuing its objectives. Usually these persons share key values and objectives and identify themselves with the movement. Most adherents are typically drawn from the movement's constituency, which are the collection of individuals the movement claims to represent, and this group is typically a major source of resources and support. Finally, the beneficiaries represent the specific group that seeks to benefit from any gains made by the movement, but it can also represent society at large if the movement benefits the greater society.

Standing in opposition of the protagonists, the antagonists go against the movement's goals. Included in this group are the targets of a movement's actions, such as a city, state or federal government, an organization or corporation, etc. Any set of individuals, groups, or institutions can be the target of a movement's efforts. It is not uncommon to see counter-movements emerge when a group seeks to halt or neutralize the activities of the social movement in question. Finally, bystanders represent the third category of actors relevant to movements. This group is usually uninterested in the movement, but interest can be activated. Bystanders can either remain uninterested, or become part of the protagonists or antagonists. Their action or inaction clearly depends on how they see themselves relating to the movement.

Social movements in one site or time period are often inspired or influenced by movements taking place elsewhere (Givan, Roberts, & Soule, 2010). The movement centered around providing education to undocumented students and/or combating what some see as discriminatory admission policies toward undocumented students relates to the national conversation currently taking place on immigration, and there is a clear connection between the social movement involving Freedom University and the issues we face surrounding immigration. However, Freedom University is the only organization to my knowledge that focuses primarily on fighting the ban by Georgia's Board of Regents while also seeking to educate undocumented students and promote college attendance. In that sense, there seems to be the strong possibility of this type of ground-roots movement causing other movements in states facing similar challenges related to postsecondary access for undocumented students.

Social Capital

Within one's social network, he or she has access to resources – real or potential – by virtue of the connections and relationships provided by the network (Bourdieu, 1986). Membership within a group enables a person to have the backing of the collectively owned capital, a credential which entitles that person to certain privileges they otherwise would not possess without group membership. This social capital is derived from relationships between and among individuals (Coleman, 1988) within the group or network. Bourdieu claims that the volume of social capital exists as a function of the size of the network and the volume of capital (economic, cultural and symbolic) possessed by individuals in a network (Lin, 2001a). Within these relationships, social capital is embedded as the resources within a social network, which are accessed and used for purposive actions (Lin, 2001b). Unlike other forms of capital (*i.e.*,

human capital), social capital exists in the structure of the relationships within the network and a person's position within that network determines the amount of social capital he or she has access to (Coleman, 1988). Therefore social capital is not tangible, rather it exists within those relationships but yet it also has material outcomes. Individuals are able to draw upon social capital to find employment opportunities, acquire political assets, or generate economic returns (Lin, 2001). A primary function of social capital is to enable a person or group to gain access to human, cultural, and other forms of capital, as well as institutional resources and support (Coleman, 1988; Hofferth, Boisjoly, & Duncan, 1998; Lin, 2001b; Morrow, 1999; Portes, 1998; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995).

Bourdieu suggests that the amount and type of capital we possess is a function of the *habitus* we develop in the class we are born into (Ovink & Veazey, 2011). As a result, elites or the privileged sector of society possess the capital necessary to remain at the upper echelons of society while the underprivileged class is socialized in ways to limit their expectations and goals in order to prevent them from successfully navigating the institutions of the dominant class (Ovink & Veazey, 2011). Coleman (1988) notes that social capital is used to facilitate the creation of human capital by giving persons the necessary information and tools needed to navigate our society and move up the career ladder. In the U.S., this is most often achieved through our postsecondary system where individuals expect to gain both human capital and social capital by virtue of their college credentials (Perna & Titus, 2005). A postsecondary degree is essential in order to garner the skills necessary to compete for occupations as we continue to shift from an industrial economy to an information and technology-driven economy (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003).

Unfortunately, our society is currently structured in a way where all students do not play on a level playing field. Students are limited by the resources at their disposal and these resources are vital when it comes to their odds of being able to access and complete a postsecondary education. Coleman (1988), Lin (2001a, 2001b) and others suggest that the ability to procure the resources and support needed to participate in postsecondary education is largely a function of one's social capital, and this is most often drawn from a student's family, peer, and community relationships.

We can conceptualize the activities and work that is taking place within Freedom University as potentially being able to generate social capital for undocumented students. By gaining access or choosing to take part in activities and classes at Freedom University, students also gain access to a network that derives social capital from faculty, fellow students, community members, volunteers and other key actors. This social capital can then in turn be used to help students navigate the college search and application process. Gonzales (2010) notes that the majority of undocumented students outpace their parents' levels of educational attainment and many are left without proper guidance concerning postsecondary opportunities, particularly those students whose parents never attended college. Couple this with the fact that many undocumented students come from backgrounds where family poverty limits postsecondary matriculation (Gonzales, 2010), and it quickly becomes apparent that various hurdles stand in the way of undocumented students being able to pursue higher education.

In order to see how this truly works, it is best to use an example, such as a first-year undocumented student who has recently joined Freedom U. The majority of undocumented students come from a low socioeconomic background where the prospects of attending college are slim. These students with low socioeconomic backgrounds are significantly less likely to

have sufficient access to the information, resources, and support needed to access and succeed in a postsecondary environment (Ceja, 2006; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Whereas affluent students can use their primary source of social capital – the family unit – for information specific to higher education (Kim & Schneider, 2005), disadvantaged students – and specifically – undocumented students, do not have that same resource. While we may think that undocumented students should be able to interact with persons outside of the family unit in order to gain the knowledge and assistance needed to facilitate postsecondary transition, we must remember that the social networks in which many of these low-SES undocumented students reside often prevents them from doing so. Lin (2001a, 2001b) calls attention to the principle of homophily in order to explain how social networks function to limit social mobility. It is a relatively straightforward principle indicating that social interactions occur primarily among individuals from similar socioeconomic backgrounds and lifestyles. If we think about our own lives, we can usually attest to the fact that many of us have spent the majority of our time interacting with those who are similar to ourselves. If we begin to think about how this can shape our college prospects and how we might begin to think about postsecondary attendance, it becomes easier to see how these homophilous interactions and relationships within our social network serves to either promote or hinder our likelihood of attending college. The same can be said for undocumented students and the interactions they most commonly face in their high schools and communities. If we continue with the use of our example of the first-year undocumented student at Freedom U., we may realize that this student has strong aspirations of attending postsecondary education but he or she simply did not have the type of support and resources needed to make this a reality while in high school. As a result, the student may have been left lacking the type of knowledge needed to successfully navigate the college search and

application process. The student may also not realize their college potential if he or she does not have access to a high school counselor or a network of peers with plans to attend college. In fact, he or she many not even know if they are eligible to attend college.

However, if the student enters a network where there are college-educated staff, the student may be able to benefit from the collective social capital of the organization by learning about each of the following: how to apply to college; how to complete financial aid forms; what colleges provide the best fit; and other items related to the college search and application process. Prior research suggests that academic success for working-class and minority youth is dependent on the formation of supportive relationships with institutional agents, such as those who can help students gain resources and opportunities associated with information about school programs, academic tutoring and mentoring, college guidance and admission information, and assistance with career decision making (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). Croninger and Lee (2001) found that when teachers take time and effort to assist students, they are an important source of social capital. As such, the faculty at Freedom University may be a strong source of social capital for undocumented students wishing to pursue higher education.

College Choice

In order to better understand reasons for undocumented students choosing to pursue higher education, it is important to point out the literature surrounding college choice. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) posited a three-phase model of college choice in which students go through three separate steps when determining whether to enroll in postsecondary education. Predisposition is the first stage of the model and this typically occurs during high school, or even before high school, when students become interested in college as they begin to develop their

educational and career goals. Search is the second stage of the model in which students search for information related to and about colleges. In this stage of the model, students use any and all information at their disposal as sources for college-related information, including parents, siblings, friends, etc. The final stage is the choice stage, where students decide to enroll at a particular college or university. For most traditional college-bound students, predisposition typically occurs between 7th and 10th grades, while search takes place during the 10th through 12th grades, and choice occurs during the 11th and 12th grades (Perna, 2006).

While a model such as Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) can be attributed to a majority of the college-going population for traditional students, it does not account for the complexities associated with students from disadvantaged backgrounds. A number of recent models (e.g., Perna, 2006) on college choice now incorporate sociological concepts of cultural capital and social capital in order to account for the differences exhibited by historically underrepresented populations. Although conceptualizations of cultural capital and social capital have at times overlapped (McNeal, 1999), there are differences between the two. Cultural capital can be conceptualized as the set of attributes, such as language skills, mannerisms, and cultural knowledge, that an individual inherits from either a parent or guardian and that defines an individual's class status (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Perna, 2006). It is widely known that middle- and upper-class individuals hold the most valued forms of cultural capital (McDonough, 1997). As mentioned earlier, social capital refers to the various networks, connections, and resources to which an individual has access to in their social network.

Using both cultural and social capital in her study on college choice, McDonough (1997) presented a theoretical framework guided by three propositions: 1) a student's cultural capital will affect the level and quality of college education that student intends to acquire; 2) a student's

choice of college will make sense in the context of that student's friends, family, and outlook, or habitus; and 3) by using bounded rationality, students will limit the number of considered alternatives. McDonough's study focused on the college-related decisions of 12 white females attending high schools in California and her findings indicated the roles of both individuals and organizational habitus. She found that students' college choices are often determined by the student's personal circumstances, including academic performance and socioeconomic status, as well as school-level characteristics, such as the organization, structure and makeup of the guidance counseling at the high school. Findings revealed marked differences across schools, specifically in terms of time and resources that counselors have available for college counseling, the types of postsecondary institutions emphasized by counselors to their students, and the role that counselors play in the college-choice process. McDonough (1997) also found that differences in the organizational structure and operations of the counseling offices in schools are related to the SES of communities in which the schools reside.

The Importance of College Counseling

Kane (1999) notes that prospective college students not only lack information about college opportunities but also have differential access to information about postsecondary education. Research indicates that many students are poorly informed about issues related to costs and the benefits associated with investing in higher education, and that lower observed enrollment patterns for low-income students, African-Americans, and Latinos may be attributable, at least in part, to a lack of this college knowledge (Perna, 2006). McDonough (2005) indicates that high school counselors are often the persons in K-12 responsible for college access preparation and assistance, and we often assume they are handling the responsibilities

associated with this role, however, counselors are inappropriately trained and structurally constrained from being able to fulfill this role in public high schools. The National Association for College Admission Counseling found that great disparities in college counseling resources and activities are often the direct result of the social class of the communities in which high schools are located (NACAC, 1986). Those who are especially disadvantaged in terms of inadequate counseling are communities, schools, and students of color (McDonough, 1999; Paul, 2002). Scholars found that African American and Latino students are significantly more likely to be influenced by their school-based counselors when it comes to their college preparation (Lee & Ekstrom, 1987; Plank & Jordan, 2001), but these students are often those least likely to have counselors, the most likely to have underprepared counselors, and the most likely to have counselors who are pulled away from college counseling-related work to devote time to other tasks (Paul, 2002).

Many of the students attending Freedom University are from disadvantaged backgrounds and attend high schools with poor college-going rates. Most are Latino and live in communities where college attendance is not the expectation. As a result, Freedom University attempts to reverse these inequities that are often present in the schools by establishing a climate that promotes college attendance and the value of obtaining a college degree. McDonough (2005) and other scholars have contributed work that points toward four key components that have a positive impact on college attendance: 1) a college preparatory curriculum; 2) a college culture that sets high academic standards and includes communication networks that promote and support college expectations; 3) a school staff committed to students' college goals; and 4) resources devoted to counseling and advising college-bound students. Each of these components will be explored through my involvement and research with Freedom University.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

The goal of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how a non-profit organization like Freedom University goes about trying to create postsecondary opportunities for undocumented students. By focusing on the students, faculty and volunteers within Freedom University, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence students during the college search and application process. This study focuses mainly on how Freedom University influences undocumented students in the college search and application process. It does so by analyzing the generation of social capital within Freedom University and how that capital leads to postsecondary opportunities for undocumented students. To carry out this research, the study relies on a qualitative approach to answer the following research questions:

RQ #1) How does social capital work within Freedom University to help students with their college admission prospects?

RQ #2) How does Freedom University influence students' college choice decision, and how does social capital factor into this decision-making process?

A qualitative approach facilitates understanding of how individuals ascribe meaning to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009) and it allows the researcher to acquire deeper understanding into the antecedents and impact of a social dilemma (Merriam, 1998). From this perspective, my study provides a unique viewpoint of the complex relationship between immigration status and postsecondary transition, and illuminates how organizations like Freedom University may offer undocumented students a path through higher education that is rarely achieved by this group of marginalized students.

The study will employ an ethnographic, single case study (Yin, 2009) design since Freedom University is the single unit of analysis. The topic is also best suited for this type of design due to its "bounded" (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002) nature and because the research takes place in real world settings (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research is "naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002). This case study will be used "to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena" (Yin, 2009, p. 4). Our need for this type of research arises out of our desire to understand complex social phenomena (Yin, 2009, 2012). Qualitative research is the appropriate method for studies aimed at understanding processes or phenomena in a bounded system, rather than attempting to predict or show causality (Creswell, 2007; King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009).

It is also important to point out that I used a combination of a critical research approach and participatory action research (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015) approach for this study. Critical research not only seeks to study and understand society, but it also works to critique and change society (Patton, 2002). Participatory action research "encourages collaboration within a mutually acceptable inquiry framework to understand and/or solve organizational or community problems" (Patton, 2015, p. 220). My involvement within Freedom University can certainly be viewed as conducting critical research. I see a problem with the way current conditions exist for undocumented students attempting to pursue higher education and as a result, I am attempting to help these students maximize their chances of attending college. The participatory action research also takes place in that students often gain empowerment through their involvement in Freedom University, whether they realize it or not. In many ways, Freedom University is a

research project where participants are involved in their own design and implementation in order to conduct social change, and collective action is the result of this process. I also became a participant in the study when I decided to begin assisting students in the college planning process and offering advice to both students and faculty at Freedom U. Both theory and action are united in this type of research approach.

Accordingly, Freedom University provides the perfect opportunity to employ qualitative research through the critical and participatory action research approach in order to address the research questions. By analyzing data from interviews, I seek to explain how Freedom University facilitates high school-to-college transition and how it influences the college-related choices of students and their ability to gain access to postsecondary education. I also attempt to address how Freedom University seeks to create college access for undocumented students.

Gaining Access to Freedom University

As one can imagine, being able to gain access to Freedom University presented the greatest challenge for this study. As a result of their immigration status, undocumented students may be unwilling to speak to people outside of their network and people with whom they have no prior relationship. Students enrolled in Freedom University may be hesitant to talk to people outside of the organization for fear that their immigration status may be revealed to outside parties or governmental agencies such as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which could potentially lead to detention and/or deportation. Faculty members at Freedom University are also skeptical of outsiders unless those persons have been properly vetted by someone inside of Freedom University. There is a sense that faculty and volunteers want to do everything possible in order to protect the students and provide a safe space for them to meet.

Fortunately, I was able to gain access as a result of a prior working-relationship with a gatekeeper. In this type of research, gatekeepers are beneficial in that they assist researchers with gaining access and developing trust with a group or community (Hatch, 2002). Gatekeepers can be instrumental in gaining access to an individual or group that may be otherwise unable or unwilling to speak with outside persons. This person acted as the gatekeeper by providing me with access to Freedom University. She was also instrumental in the creation of Freedom U and is highly respected by both faculty and students. If she approves of an outside person, it is likely that both faculty and students would be willing to speak with the person simply because he or she has the approval of the gatekeeper. The gatekeeper in this study was assigned a pseudonym, Susan, in order to protect confidentiality. Although this individual is a key component in gaining access to Freedom University, he or she was not present while conducting each interview in this study.

Sample Selection

I first became involved with Freedom University in 2012 as a volunteer driver. In this role, I would pick up undocumented students from nearby neighborhoods in Athens and drive them to their class on Sunday afternoons. As a result, I came to know the participants in this study over the course of three to four years and I have interacted with them in various settings, including classes, social events, protests and demonstrations, conference presentations and panels, hearings before the state senate, and other events. I listened to students' stories of hardship and observed as they attended classes and participated in events associated with Freedom University. Throughout this entire time, I became close to several of them by virtue of

our relationship within Freedom U, but I was recognized by a majority of the students who attended each week and I spoke to almost every student during my time of involvement.

In December of 2013, I attended a class session in Athens, Georgia and this was the first time that I disseminated a recruitment letter for interview subjects. Several students agreed to participate in the study and through the process of conducting their interviews, I used snowball sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to identify other potential subjects. I also used criterion sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to locate former students who are currently enrolled in postsecondary institutions. This relied both on my knowledge of former students as well as recommendations from students and faculty.

For this research study I interviewed 13 current students of Freedom U and 7 former students who have gone on to successfully enroll in college. I also interviewed 2 former faculty members and 1 current faculty member who currently directs and leads the organization. Lastly, I interviewed 3 volunteers who were instrumental in various aspects of Freedom U. In order to be able to assess how Freedom U impacts students college choice, I attempted to interview as many former students as possible and was fortunate to include 7 of them in this study.

Study participants were identified based on their role within Freedom University. This study collected data from three primary groups: (1) current and former students of Freedom U, (2) current and former faculty of Freedom U, and (3) current and former social movement members or volunteers of Freedom U. The primary targeted population are those undocumented students who are currently attending Freedom University and the former students now enrolled in college. Students must have been older than 18 years of age to be included in the study. I felt that by interviewing both current and former students, it would provide the widest sample of interview data. I identified the study participants based on my relationships within the

organization and based on others whom these participants recommended as potential interview subjects. Each undocumented student received a study recruitment letter (as marked APPENDIX A) during a class session in November 2013. Students who volunteered to participate in the study received the consent form (as marked APPENDIX B) before participating. The Institutional Review Board at the University of Georgia granted the researcher the right to waive documented consent in an effort to protect the confidentiality of the study's participants as a result of undocumented students being considered an at-risk or vulnerable population.

Data Collection

Interviews were the primary source of data used in the study. This ethnographic study amassed observational data at Freedom University over an extended period of time that allowed for a better understanding of how students capitalize on the offerings of Freedom University to yield postsecondary-related benefits. Several rapport-building approaches, including the provision of transportation and on-site presentations about the college application process, were used to ensure the collection of sufficient data. Although my involvement with Freedom University spans over a three-year period, interview data collection took place over a 6-month period. In addition to the interviews, I conducted a brief survey with each study participant to gather their biographical information and to also collect information related to their social network connections within Freedom U.

In an effort to keep the study's components organized throughout the data analysis, all interview documents and observation documents were labeled and stored in separate folders. Categories for each group of study participants were also created and subfolders were used for

each study participant's files. Following the recording and transcription of all interviews, transcripts were labeled and placed into the electronic files. These files are password-protected to ensure confidentiality. Additionally, printed copies of all interview transcriptions were placed in a file cabinet, protected under lock and key. In addition to all data files being stripped of individually identifiable information, all audio recordings were destroyed after the transcription process.

Interviews

Interviews are typically one of the most important sources of information when using a case study approach (Yin, 2009). Interviews were used to learn more about the experiences of participants of Freedom University. The interviews are focused (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990) with each interview having a set of predetermined questions and lasting anywhere from twenty minutes to up to two hours in length. Interviews consisted of an in-person, semi-structured interview where participants were asked a series of questions related to their experiences. Each interview was also audio-recorded with two separate recorders to ensure consistency while transcribing the interview data. I also gathered notes during the course of the interview. I reminded each study participant of their consent to participate in the study. They could have also elected to not answer a question if he/she felt uncomfortable. The participant could also choose to withdraw from the study at any point in time.

Due to that fact that undocumented students are considered to be an at-risk/vulnerable population, additional measures to protect the identity and confidentiality of each study participant were put into place by assigning pseudonyms to all study participants, and I was careful to not disclose the identities of the study participants in the study's findings. All findings,

written reports and other records used pseudonyms to protect the identities of each participant. Interview protocols varied according to the participants. For example, undocumented students still enrolled within Freedom University received questions that differed from their undocumented peers who were once enrolled in Freedom University and have since left and enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Similarly, questions for faculty members of Freedom U are different from the types of questions posed to students. The same can be said for volunteers who were interviewed for the study. Interview protocols are provided for each of the following: current Freedom U students; former Freedom U students now enrolled in postsecondary institutions; faculty members of Freedom U; and volunteers of Freedom U (as marked APPENDIX C-F). Access to all interview data was limited to only the primary researcher. The table indicating the study participants is featured below:

Table 1 – Study participants

Pseudonym	Role	Gender	Age	Years in Georgia
Victor	Current student	Male	20	14
Leo	Current student	Male	23	23
Jesse	Current student	Male	18	16
Pablo	Current student	Male	19	15
Carolina	Current student	Female	20	13
Rose	Current student	Female	21	21
Emma	Current student	Female	21	11
Olivia	Current student	Female	27	24
Julia	Current student	Female	19	17
Diego	Current student	Male	20	17
David	Current student	Male	20	16
Anna	Current student	Female	22	13
Devon	Current student	Female	18	14
Paula	Former student	Female	24	18
Eva	Former student	Female	21	16
Javier	Former student	Male	25	16
Maria	Former student	Female	23	16
Marco	Former student	Male	22	6

Sara	Former student	Female	21	14
Oscar	Former student	Male	20	18
Eleanor	Faculty	Female	-	-
Sofia	Faculty	Female	-	-
Violeta	Faculty	Female	-	-
Vicki	Faculty	Female	-	-
Wendy	Faculty	Female	-	-
Lucia	Faculty	Female	-	-
Susan	Volunteer/Organizer	Female	25	-
Brenda	Volunteer/Faculty	Female	-	-
Maxwell	Volunteer	Male	-	-

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began shortly after I collected interview data. Initially, pre-existing codes were used to guide the coding process (Creswell, 2007). These codes actually helped shape some of my interview questions. The pre-existing codes consisted of several open codes (*i.e.,* "college access" and "activism") and I often grouped open codes into larger categories through axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) or analytical coding (Merriam, 2009). This deductive approach allowed me to have a set of predefined codes based on prior research and studies analyzing college access. Additionally, I looked for emerging themes throughout the coding process and over the courses of transcribing and analyzing all interviews. I felt combining an inductive and deductive coding structure would allow for me to gather the most complete information about the experiences of my study participants. It would also afford me the opportunity to potentially find new results that have not been cited in previous literature while also being able to offer support to previous work involving college access.

Data was coded and analyzed by using NVivo qualitative software to look for emerging themes (Merriam, 2009) that developed over the course of conducting interviews and collecting observational data. Triangulation involving the data sources was used as a way to corroborate

evidence while displaying emerging themes (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). I also believe that my participatory action research approach allowed me to analyze the data using both an ethnographic and narrative analysis (Merriam, 2009) where I attempt to gather the stories/experiences from the study's participants while also offering my own account of what took place within Freedom University. By doing so, I feel that I present the best account of what truly took place within Freedom University and am able to offer perspective about the organization that few individuals could offer.

Triangulation

One of the most widely known methods of ensuring internal validity in qualitative research is by performing triangulation (Merriam, 2009). Denzin (1978) points out four different types of triangulation: the use of multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings. This study employs both data triangulation as well as methodological triangulation. It achieves data triangulation by comparing and cross-checking data collected from personal observations across multiple points in time. Methodological triangulation is performed by comparing findings from observations to the findings collected from interviews. By comparing the data from each method, we achieve methodological triangulation in the process.

Validity & Reliability

As Merriam (2009) notes, "all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (p. 209). Fellow researchers need to be able to trust research results in applied fields such as education because we often intervene in people's lives. For us to

want to intervene and help students and families in education, we need to feel confident that our results from research studies are trustworthy and have met standards for rigor. To that end, qualitative researchers utilize various strategies for validity and reliability to ensure that studies are credible and rigorous (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This study achieves validity and reliability by using triangulation, thick rich description, maximum variation in the study sample, peer debriefing, and researcher reflexivity.

As mentioned previously, data triangulation occurs by both data triangulation and methodological triangulation. Thick rich description is used as a strategy to enable transferability from one study to another (Merriam, 2009). By providing a detailed description of the study's setting and participants, as well as a detailed account of the study's findings along with adequate evidence, we attempt to make it as easy as possible for someone to transfer the results to another study. According to Merriam (2009), another way to enhance transferability is to give careful attention to the study's sample by employing maximum variation. This study does so by giving careful consideration to the types of students interviewed. By interviewing first-year students, second- and third-year students, and past students now enrolled at postsecondary institutions, this study attempts to gather the widest range of potential study participants.

I also sought the assistance of two colleagues outside of the study who will serve as peer debriefers. Both are doctoral-level social scientists and are familiar with qualitative research methods. There is also the added benefit that one peer debriefer is very familiar with undocumented students and the issues surrounding them in U.S. higher education. Finally, researcher reflexivity is "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the 'human as instrument'" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183). Researchers need to be able to articulate their

biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research taking place, and I do so in a later section of this chapter, titled "Researcher's Position."

Ethical Considerations

This study seeks to uphold all ethical guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Georgia. The study poses limited risks and as a result, certain safeguards have been put into place to protect the rights and welfare of the study participants. This includes performing the following safety measures: (1) protecting each person's individually-identifiable data by using a pseudonym in order to not disclose the person's identity to outside parties; (2) storing all information in a password-protected computer and in a locked file; and (3) allowing participants to withdraw from the study at any point in time if they choose to do so. In addition to the above considerations, each study participant was informed about the study on multiple occasions and also received a consent form before participating. Additionally, before each interview took place, I once again reviewed the consent agreement with the participant (APPENDIX B). This consent form identified the participant's involvement, reason/purpose of the study, benefits, procedures, risks and/or discomforts, a statement on confidentiality, and contact information for the primary investigator.

Study Limitations

One of the main limitations of this study is that its findings are limited to these particular students at this particular time in Georgia. By using qualitative methods, I may be sacrificing breadth for depth, and what may be lost in generalizability may be gained by an in-depth look into the participants featured in this study. While every state has varying policies concerning

admission to postsecondary institutions for undocumented students, we can safely assume that there are a number of undocumented students in various states that experience similar challenges to those students here in Georgia. It is my hope that the lessons learned from this study may be applicable in other areas of the country where there may be high concentrations of undocumented students facing seemingly impassable odds of being able to access higher education.

Researcher's Position

Given the political nature of this topic and the controversy the surrounds immigration in the U.S., I felt compelled to articulate my personal position on access to public higher education for undocumented students. Merriam (2009) recommends establishing the researcher's position because "such a clarification allows the reader to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data" (p. 219). As a result, I want to be honest and upfront about my position on undocumented students. This is also important given my participatory role in this type of action research approach. I should point out that I am not attempting to be objective in my research due to the fact that I am advocating for undocumented students. I need to also indicate that I performed this research in order to fulfill the requirements of the doctor of philosophy. While that was not my sole intention of doing this work, it is something that I will be able to benefit from throughout the rest of my life, and so I need to call attention to the fact while also pointing out that I hope to be able to use this credential as a means for social change.

Ever since I wrote my first research paper on undocumented students in the fall of 2010, I can remember feeling a sense of helplessness as there was nothing I could do to fix what I

perceived as a huge problem in higher education. With each news piece that I read about new states, such as Georgia, taking aim at undocumented students in attempts to prevent them from accessing postsecondary education, I became more inspired in wanting to do something to help these students. To me, it simply did not make sense for states to make policy to ban students from higher education when the students were not the persons who made the decision to illegally enter the U.S. In essence, banning these students is punishment for the parents' crimes. Again, I think it is completely out of line to punish children for something they did not commit. That should not be how our society operates. There is also an economic argument to this topic. Because of the ruling handed down in *Plyler*, our state and federal taxes are used to support the public education of all undocumented children in K-12. If an undocumented student enters public education in kindergarten, our society supports this student through thirteen years of tax-supported education. It seems like a waste of public funds if we are willing to support a student up until high school graduation and then not commit ourselves to helping this student through college. Numerous studies have pointed to the increased benefits to society by having college graduates, such as increased tax revenue for government as a result of higher salaries for college graduates.

Certainly this is a topic that I feel passionate about and one in which I hope to make some sort of impact. It is my goal that this dissertation will shed light onto a group of students that are "hidden in the shadows" and need the voices of people like me to speak out on their behalf. One of my faculty members once posed an interesting question to me by saying "Mike...you're a white male studying undocumented students. You don't relate to them and you aren't like them, so why should anybody listen to you?" I thought it was a valid statement and an important question, and I responded by saying "If as a white male in today's society, I don't see the

problem with preventing undocumented students from being able to go to college, then we have much deeper problems than this particular issue. To fully understand what another person is going through, we have to be able to put ourselves in their shoes and attempt to understand the problems and challenges they face, and for me this issue is very clear – it's wrong and we need to do something about it." With that being said, I want to do everything within my power to advocate for changes at the state and federal levels to help undocumented students achieve equality in gaining access to all public postsecondary institutions. I also want to expose the problems and challenges that undocumented students are attempting to combat with their struggle for equality. Additionally, I think it is important to recognize the faculty and volunteers that go out of their way to help these students and give them hope for a brighter future. Whether it was helping to create Freedom University, teaching a course, protesting the Regents' ban, or simply giving a car-ride to a student, these people devote a tremendous amount of time and energy to advocate for a group of students they believe in. It is very inspiring to see such efforts and it gives me hope that we will continue to speak out and fight for those who cannot do it alone. To me, that is one of the true definitions of education -- giving a voice to those who need it the most and helping our marginalized students.

Pro Bono Work

Shortly after I began my work with Freedom University, I started a company called College Transitions LLC and we focus exclusively on college planning. I launched the company with fellow doctoral student, Andrew Belasco, and Dave Bergman, a former colleague of Andrew's during his previous career as a high school counselor in Philadelphia. I first met Andrew in the fall of 2010 after we both began the doctoral program in the Institute of Higher

Education at UGA. He became an instant friend and we quickly learned that we shared many academic interests, including those related to college admissions. Given our background as both having worked in careers that focused on college planning and college admissions, we felt we had the experience to start a company that would offer families the opportunity to receive expert guidance from counselors whose primary job focuses exclusively on every step of the college search and application process.

One of our main goals also focused on the idea of providing college guidance to students and families who could not afford the services of a private counselor. We have long-term goals of eventually having a non-profit arm of College Transitions that would provide college counseling to low-income and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. For me, Freedom University was a perfect place to begin this type of work and Andrew and I have since worked with several students to guide them into good-fit colleges. We both have presented to students at Freedom University on multiple occasions and will continue to offer support to these types of organizations in the future.

CHAPTER 4

BACKGROUND OF FREEDOM UNIVERSITY

The Beginning of Freedom University

During the early part of 2011, several activist organizations began organizing and strategizing about ways to overturn the Board of Regents ban on undocumented students. Ambitious for Equal Rights (AFER) was a group that began at Cedar Shoals High School in Athens, and they had access to quite a number of undocumented students in the local community. Made up primarily of students, AFER worked with the Athens Immigrant Rights Coalition (AIRC) and the Georgia Undocumented Youth Alliance (GUYA) to stage a protest on the campus of the University of Georgia. The Georgia Students for Public Higher Education (GSPHE) were also involved in planning and recruiting activists for the protest.

Several UGA faculty members were also instrumental in the lead up to the first major protest on campus and the creation of Freedom University. Sofia was a faculty member who began hearing about students' claims concerning undocumented students protesting against the ban. She also heard about the ban and other pieces of legislation, such as H.B. 87, in the news and she continued to grow more concerned as the issue gained momentum. But the matter was also personal for Sofia, an immigrant who desperately wanted other immigrant students in her classroom:

> I felt horrible, because I saw these kids are out there, and I'm here in my office not doing anything, and I have -- I'm also an immigrant, but I'm a professor. And I have all these privileges. And I'm not using them. So that was something that got me very annoyed. I was reading the news and seeing this happening, and feeling that I was not doing anything productive. I felt I needed either to quit my job or do something.

Growing tired of sitting on the sidelines, she and her colleague, Lucia, began questioning one another about what they should do in order to assist the movement:

> We are working here, and our boss is forbidding the students who we would like to educate to get in our classes. I thought my role was exactly the opposite. I wanted to be out there recruiting Latino students to come here, so we started asking what could we do, and at the same time there were other people in similar situations. – Sofia

Sofia and Lucia met with a small group of fellow colleagues and students from UGA at a local restaurant in town where they began discussing ways they could help the undocumented student movement. They also met with Ivan, a local undocumented immigrant who had a lot of strong connections to undocumented students in both Athens and Atlanta through his work with GUYA. Ivan suggested that UGA faculty offer a class for undocumented students. Sofia and the rest of the faculty jumped at the idea:

> Ivan came with this simple idea of well, you are professors, and they want to go to school. Why don't you offer them a class? And we looked at each other and said, "Wow, that it is a wonderful idea! Let's go for it."

The team of faculty, students and volunteers/activists met with a small group of undocumented students from Athens and Atlanta to pitch the idea. Sofia described the reception as an amazing experience and the beginning of Freedom University:

> We met with the students and basically we told them this idea came up, and we want to do something, what do you think? And the reception was amazing. They said this is exactly what we want. Many of them were very accomplished high school students, and they found that they were losing their identities, because they no longer could call themselves students, and so we decided to give it a shot, and it worked.

After a few months of planning, the stage would be set to formally announce the creation of Freedom University. The "Graduation of Resistance" at the University of Georgia proved to be a pivotal moment for undocumented students in Georgia. On August 23, 2011 a group of students and activists who were a part of AFER, AIRC and GSPHE organized a rally to protest the Board of Regents ban on undocumented students. The rally took place on the UGA campus and several students delivered a petition to the undergraduate admissions office that demanded admissions officials to remove the ban. Jesse, an undocumented student attending Cedar Shoals High School, was the one selected to present the petition and make the special announcement:

> And we left it there and we made it very clear that we were -- to recognize what this was, because we were going to come back with more petitions, you know, to show this. That stuck out for me, because after that, we went back to the arches and that's when Vicki and Wendy told me to make the announcement for everyone that was in the audience that one, that fall semester Freedom U was going to start. It was going to initiate. It was rolling. And two, for volunteers to sign up as well, so that led up to Freedom U. That was like the first like broadcast of it.

Freedom University was now officially off the ground. Students and activists continued to protest by speaking out against the ban at the site of the UGA arch, a prominent location on north campus and adjacent to Broad Street. They delivered speeches and provided interviews for news media. Students and activists were excited about the future of Freedom University.

Four UGA faculty members were the founders of Freedom University. They included Sofia, Lucia, Vicki and Wendy. Both Sofia and Lucia worked in the same academic department while Vicki and Wendy worked together in another academic department. A fifth faculty member was also on board in early discussions of Freedom University, but as the project came to fruition, this person decided to step down due to the potential conflict of interest within UGA. Since the University of Georgia is one of the five institutions in which undocumented students

are barred from attending, this faculty member may have thought the risk was too high to continue with his involvement. Indeed, one could make an argument that all of the founding faculty members were taking a gamble by involving themselves in an organization to assist undocumented students, given the political nature of the topic. Moreover, most of them had not yet secured tenure and it quickly becomes apparent that these faculty members were potentially risking their careers and personal lives to help undocumented students. Although the faculty could delegate certain responsibilities and tasks to one another, they still had obligations to their work and to their families, and they desperately needed someone to help manage the day-to-day tasks.

In order to help manage these day-to-day items and the logistics and recruitment of volunteers, the faculty recruited Susan, a recent UGA graduate and an established social activist, to lead the grassroots organization. Susan was a proven activist with a history of fighting for different causes[6] and had been in Atlanta working on a campaign to prevent coal plants from being built. Vicki and Wendy knew of Susan through our activism work at UGA and they believed she would be a huge asset to Freedom U. In order to ensure that Susan would be able to devote her much needed time and energy, Freedom U provided a stipend position as a way of getting things going and creating a measure of accountability.

From the onset, Susan began working 60-hour weeks in order to organize Freedom U. Immediately she plugged into several organizations to recruit volunteers: GSPHE, GUYA, the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, the Georgia Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, and the ACLU. She also worked with faculty to fundraise and solicit donations from

[6] I met Susan on an unrelated project in the spring of 2011 concerning changes to the HOPE scholarship program in Georgia. I interviewed Susan for the project based on her role as president of Georgia Students for Public Higher Education.

private donors. It was also during this time in which Freedom U created a board of advisors with a comprehensive list of faculty members from across the country and other top figures with academic affiliations. While the board of advisors was initially created to put increased pressure on the ban, Susan credited the board for being able to pump in funds and resources which enabled Freedom U to grow:

> That was kind of the main goal of this national board of advisors, was one to have a comprehensive list of faculty and kind of prestigious top figures with an academic bent to kind of shame the regents to a degree, like there are all these outstanding academics that think what's going on is terrible, but it was also like a networking tool. Like these are all faculty members that were supportive of what the founding faculty were doing, and were willing to make donations to help things get started, to donate books, and to circulate requests for books and funds to their departments, to their peers, and members of their institutes, what have you.
>
> But yeah, I mean, obviously it's hard to ask for money, so early on as much as we could, we tried to just get in kind donations, like to make sure we ask specifically for books or specifically for…and it's easier for faculty to give in kind anyway, so yeah. Fundraising has never been difficult for Freedom U. I think so many people have been supportive, whether they're activists who kind of see it as being in the spirit of Freedom Summer, Freedom Movements, or just people that were so excited to see this coming out of faculty in the South, period.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges was securing a meeting space for the class. Fortunately they were able to secure a meeting room at the Athens Latino Center for Education and Services (ALCES). Conveniently located in town, ALCES provided a room large enough for the first cohort of thirty students. The location was not publicized as faculty members wanted Freedom University to be a safe place for students, meaning they wanted students to know that this was an area where they could feel free to discuss any issues of concern without the threat of someone alerting officials about their residency status.

One of the central questions I kept asking myself centered on how faculty and volunteers could commit themselves to such as undertaking as creating Freedom University. It takes a

special kind of person to be able to selflessly give one's time and energy to create an organization such as Freedom University. College faculty members, especially, since they have the pressure to both teach courses and produce research, in addition to their commitments outside of work. Still, the faculty who taught at UGA felt they had to do something in order to combat the ban against undocumented students. One faculty member pointed to the fact that several undocumented students were forced to drop out of UGA after the ban was implemented. Undocumented students who were attending UGA at the time in which the ban was enforced were not grandfathered in from being able to attend. She felt this was an injustice and that she had a personal responsibility to act.

> I wanted to inform other faculty members who were going about their jobs, not really probably paying attention to the fact that the ban had been enforced and that there were students having to drop out. I had some undergraduates here who knew a couple of friends who had to drop out because of the ban, so I wanted to inform faculty members and that's why I worked on the resolution and was very happy that it passed, and that was a democratic moment, a memorable democratic moment in the University Council. I wanted to get involved in Freedom U in part because I had a personal connection to one of the core faculty members, which was Sofia -- she and I had been friends for a long time. She was very interested in the project and she and Lucia invited me in and then when I met the students…I was just, you know, taken with the opportunity to be able to teach the students. – Eleanor

Eleanor was active on the Franklin College Faculty Senate and used her position to draft a resolution that opposed the ban against undocumented students from being able to attend the University of Georgia and the other four institutions. The resolution was put before the University Council and it passed. Due to her involvement with advocating for the inclusiveness of undocumented students at UGA, Eleanor was invited by the founding faculty members to teach courses at Freedom University. In its first year, Freedom University was being led by five faculty members and a full-time organizer.

My Introduction to Freedom University

While I did not begin assisting Freedom University until the spring of 2012, my introduction to undocumented students occurred much earlier. One of the first research papers I worked on in my doctoral program was about state-level admission policies for undocumented students throughout the United States. This was in the fall of 2010 for Dr. Erik Ness' overview of U.S. higher education course. I remember being fascinated by how states differed so much in their admission policies and how little to no federal guidelines existed for instructing postsecondary institutions on how to view undocumented students in terms of admission. The news story that sparked my interest in the topic was Jessica Colotl's arrest at Kennesaw State University, as mentioned in Chapter I.

The following year in August of 2012, I began an assistantship in the office of student affairs at the Board of Regents in Atlanta. As the advisor to the Student Advisory Council, I worked with student body presidents from all 35 state institutions on matters related to the Board of Regents and their respective campuses. Part of my work responsibilities also required that I attend each Board of Regents meeting in Atlanta throughout the year. Typically, at these meetings the 19 members and Chancellor come together to discuss different campus issues and vote on whether to take an action or create a policy that affects any one institution or the entire USG system. Most meetings followed the ordinary patterns of reports and presentations from various system offices and campuses. But the 2011-12 meetings for the Board of Regents were anything but ordinary. Following the previous year's creation of BOR Policy 4.1.6, undocumented students and activists regularly showed up to BOR meetings to protest the ban. It

was not uncommon to see groups of students and activists stand up during a meeting and begin protesting or shouting to remove the ban, only to be removed by police force from the meeting.

The meeting that stood out in my mind the most occurred on November 8, 2011 when the BOR broke into subcommittees to discuss various issues. Given my position within student affairs, I went to the Committee on Organization and Law meeting, where students opposed to BOR Policy 4.1.6 were planning to speak with the Board members. Those Regents included the following:

Vice Chair W. Mansfield Jennings, Jr.
Rutledge A. Griffin, Jr.
Doreen Stiles Poitevint
Willis J. Potts, Jr.
Neil L. Pruitt, Jr.
Kessel D. Stelling Jr.
Wanda Yancey Rodwell

Larry R. Ellis was excused from the meeting.
Chair of the Board, Benjamin J. Tarbutton, III, was also in attendance.

A large contingent of students from both Freedom University and GUYA were in attendance. Several students spoke and I remember a powerful piece of testimony from a female undocumented Asian student who represented Freedom U. She argued that she had worked hard her entire life to make good grades and achieve success both inside and outside of the classroom, yet Policy 4.1.6 was forcing her to leave what she considered to be her home state. As she cried while telling her story, I remember Regent Poitevint weeping and wiping away tears from her face. It was a telling moment to see an undocumented student causing a Regent to show this type of emotion. After her testimony, a separate group of undocumented student allies from nearby Georgia State University stood and began shouting at the regents demanding that they remove the ban. Unfortunately this had a negative effect on the student's convincing speech and

it almost felt like it negated the argument that was made. Police then forced the group to leave the room and vacate the building. I stayed behind to watch, as the regents took no further action.

I later learned that the group from Georgia State was there in support but Freedom U students were not aware that they were planning to protest after the student speeches. Also present at the meeting was Susan. We exchanged a few words after the meeting and I told her that I would do all I can to help. However, being in my position, there was little that I could do. But going forward, I kept in touch with Susan and by the spring of 2012, I was offering rides for undocumented students to their classes at ALCES on Sunday afternoons. This is where I met Jesse, Pablo, Carolina and others. Most weekends I would drive to their community and give them a ride to class.

Through providing rides, I was able to meet the faculty members. One of the first I met was Eleanor, who I found to be a wonderful resource for the students. Eleanor invited me to sit in on the classes after I mentioned to her that I wanted to write about undocumented students for purposes of my dissertation. I also mentioned my background in college admissions and the fact that I had been keeping track of admission policies for undocumented students for a couple years. I did so to establish and build rapport as a way to gain access to Freedom U. I should also say that Susan was invaluable when it came to me being allowed to participate in Freedom U. Susan vouched for me to all of the faculty members and unquestionably earned their trust when it came time to allow me to assist. That said, there were other faculty unwilling to participate due to the sensitive political nature of Freedom University and the potential conflict of interest between both the University of Georgia and the Board of Regents.

By the fall of 2012, I was providing rides and regularly attending classes at Freedom U, while also working individually with several students on items related to the college admissions

process. This is when I also met Paula, an undocumented student who recently received permanent citizenship but had endured so many challenges during her time while being undocumented. After high school, Paula enrolled in a small private college in Georgia but due to financial obstacles, she was unable to continue her studies. Paula sought assistance from Freedom University and I was impressed with her determination and enthusiasm for attending college.

Initially, Paula was worried about disclosing the obstacles that she faced as a result of her previously undocumented status, and wasn't quite sure how admission officers would view her application. While working with Andrew Belasco in our pro bono college advising work, we encouraged Paula to take pride in her identity and to use her application and essays to highlight the adversity she had to overcome just to be able to apply to college. In our minds, we knew admissions officers at selective colleges would see her potential and the essay was a chance to distinguish her from the rest of the applicants. Over the course of several months, we helped Paula craft her story and complete her applications. Several months later, Paula received an official acceptance letter from an Ivy League institution and she was ecstatic. I instantly realized the gravity of the moment and knew this would be a life-changing experience, not only for Paula, but also for her entire family. Paula would also become another positive example for students at Freedom University.

To this day it remains one of my proudest moments. Words can't accurately describe how much satisfaction I received from knowing that I may have had a positive influence on a student's life at a time in which they needed it the most. It was a moment that will stick with me forever. As a result of this success with Paula, Eleanor invited Andrew and I to give an admissions presentation to the students of Freedom University at their new location in Atlanta in

October of 2013. Over time, I continued to work with students and help them throughout the college search and application process.

I think it is also important to point out that while I was using this opportunity to conduct research through my participatory action role within Freedom University, it was not the sole reason why I chose to be involved. In other words, I was not merely assisting the students to perform research, rather I saw a need and knew that I could help students by applying my knowledge and expertise. It just so happened that an added benefit of participating in Freedom University was the ability to use it for research purposes.

Freedom University's Transition to Atlanta

In 2013, big changes were taking place at Freedom University. During the spring, Susan began to pull back on her commitments while finding replacements to carryout her responsibilities. She was beginning to think more seriously about graduate school and knew her time in Georgia may be coming to an end. Other volunteers became more involved as Freedom University transitioned the bulk of their operations to Atlanta.

While most would be unable to discern from the outside, behind the scenes there was inner organizational conflict taking place within the leadership at Freedom University. According to Sofia, Vicki and Wendy felt the organization needed to move to Atlanta due to its close proximity and the ability to reach additional students. They also felt there were more resources in Atlanta and that Freedom University would benefit from being able to tap into those resources. The Atlanta metro area was already sending a majority of Freedom University's students to Athens, so in their minds it made sense to move closer to their student population. But faculty members were split on the decision to move to Atlanta. Sofia and Eleanor wished to

keep Freedom University in Athens. As a result, the four faculty members agreed to teach their separate courses in a quarter system format, split between Atlanta and Athens. Vicki and Wendy would teach their courses for the first two quarters in Atlanta, while Sofia and Eleanor would teach their respective classes for the final two quarters in Athens.

The summer of 2013 also saw its first core faculty member leave. Lucia took a faculty position at Harvard University and would be moving away from Athens and the University of Georgia. By this point, Susan was also completely fazed out of the organization and with the beginning of a faculty split between the four remaining faculty members, Freedom University needed someone with expertise in social movements and a passion for wanting to help undocumented students. That summer, Vicki reached out to Violeta, a recent PhD graduate from Emory University who had a history of working on several different social justice initiatives. She had also worked on a recent research project involving undocumented Latino workers and was teaching courses at Emory. Vicki recruited Violeta to begin teaching in the fall of 2013 and Violeta taught her first course at the Martin Luther King, Sr. Community Resources Complex in Atlanta.

Violeta managed to take on an incredible amount of work with managing most responsibilities of Freedom University through 2013 and 2014. Susan and Lucia were now completely removed from Freedom University and by the fall of 2014, Vicki and Wendy were away from Athens on a research fellowship. There was a breakdown in administrative roles and Violeta eventually met with Sofia to discuss matters related to Freedom University, but it was also a time in which Violeta indicated to Sofia that there was a period of time in which she didn't even know about other faculty members who were involved with Freedom U.:

> When I met with Violeta, she said that she didn't know that I existed. So I realized that I could be more helpful being out of Freedom University than in. – Sofia

The organizational conflict between the groups of Sofia and Eleanor and that of Vicki and Wendy seemed to have caused both Sofia and Eleanor to step away from their faculty positions at Freedom U. In the span of only one year, Freedom University went from five faculty members and their trusted leader/organizer in Susan, to only one new faculty member and a handful of volunteers. Violeta would be forced to handle almost every administrative role of Freedom University if it was going to continue operating during the 2014-15 academic year.

Over the course of several months, Violeta worked to recruit new faculty members from Emory, Andrew College in South Georgia, the University of North Georgia, and the University of South Carolina. She also recruited several faculty members to focus exclusively on college preparation. In addition, she revamped the website (www.freedomuniversitygeorgia.com) and sought outside funding and grants to expand programming opportunities. Remarkably, she spent the better part of her first year with Freedom University as an unpaid employee.

A New Project in Athens

Sofia, on the other hand, still felt a strong desire to help the undocumented students in the Athens area who would not be able to travel to Atlanta to attend classes at Freedom U. Maxwell, a local teacher at Cedar Shoals who had been feeding students into Freedom U for several years, sent Sofia an e-mail pleading for community members to help the undocumented students who were in Athens and needed assistance on their college applications. Maxwell also copied Eleanor, Brenda and several other community members on the e-mail, including myself. Maxwell envisioned a group comprised of educators and mentors who could assist the local

undocumented students in their college search and help them to complete college applications. He stressed that he was not looking to create another Freedom U, rather he wanted a weekly group that could focus specifically with helping students on items related to college planning, including but not limited to: course planning, standardized test prep, recommendation letters, essay coaching, financial aid guidance, assistance with residency forms, college applications, and more.

The new project was called Athens U-Lead and Maxwell was the major driving force behind all of it, and each Thursday he meets with a group of 15-20 students and a group of 10 or so educators and mentors to work together for a two-hour period. The group began meeting together in the fall of 2014 and already they have helped several students gain admission and financial aid to selective colleges across the country. Brenda helped to secure the space for this group and she and others have been instrumental in gaining financial support and donors to assist with purchasing materials and providing scholarship funds. While Freedom University may no longer exist in Athens, Maxwell was quick to point out that it left behind the network to create a new organization to help undocumented students:

> It is too hard to stand for something or especially against something if you don't have people and allies and relationships, so certainly I would have lacked some of the steam probably if I didn't learn from Freedom U and learn from working with the people of Freedom U. And U-Lead wouldn't have easily filled up like it did in terms of like mentors. I mean, you see it. Half the time there's more mentors than students. And we could get 50 more if we wanted real quick if we tried. Yeah, Freedom U left, but in its wake it left a whole bunch of people that had helped Freedom U and see what Freedom U did, and aren't going to drive to Atlanta every Sunday, but they're happy to donate food. They're happy to come tutor. They're happy to donate a ride. They're happy to forward a link of a new thing. So yeah, not just for me, but for other people there helping. It wouldn't exist if not for Freedom U.

As Maxwell mentioned, Freedom University was the driving force behind creating a network of people who knew how to help undocumented students and more importantly, wanted to help them.

Why I Decided to Help Freedom University and U-Lead

Originally, I set out to conduct a qualitative study that would be consistent with what Merriam (2008) describes as the "basic" qualitative study involving interviews, observations and documents. However, upon conducting my first few observations when I first gained access to Freedom University, it quickly became apparent that I could be more useful by providing college counseling assistance to the students and that they would benefit from my experience of having previously worked with students through the college search and application process. Once I committed to assisting the students, I realized that it would change my perspective of the organization and the work that was taking place within Freedom U. My role as a participant in my own research also afforded me the ability to gain access to the organization that I may otherwise not have been able to gain as an outside researcher. This level of access allowed me to attend classes, meetings, protests, provide transportation for students, present at class sessions, etc. It also allowed me to build rapport with faculty, students and volunteers, and I feel this benefited the study by allowing participants to express themselves freely during interviews given that we were able to establish a level of trust.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The findings are separated into several major themes. Each theme emerged from the data as being central to the work at Freedom University. They are as follows: main objectives of Freedom University; creating college access; activism affecting college applications; inspiring hope; motivation for attending Freedom University; and the importance of high school counseling. Each theme includes quotes from current students, former students, faculty and volunteers.

Main Objectives of Freedom University

One of the main questions I initially asked dealt with the main objectives of Freedom University. From my perspective and involvement, I felt like the main purpose was to help students successfully enroll in an accredited postsecondary institution, but I also realized that there was more taking place than just helping students reach college. I knew the activism piece was a large part of Freedom University because student activism initially led to the creation of Freedom U. Activism was a large part of its identity and I don't believe one could exist without the other, meaning that activism coincided with the education at Freedom U, and neither could be mutually exclusively. Nevertheless, I wanted to be able to gauge how Freedom University focused on both activism and education, and how my interview participants perceived the main objectives of Freedom U.

Susan felt that Freedom University was originally created as a way to drum up pressure on the Board of Regents in hopes that Policy 4.1.6 would be repealed. As it became clearer that the policy was unlikely to be repealed, Freedom U began to take on additional responsibilities as

the organization grew and changed. Susan's thoughtful reflection below outlines the primary motivations for creating Freedom U and how things evolved over time:

> Obviously immediately when it was designed, the purpose was like overturning the ban as like just one more action or campaign designed specifically to highlight the Board of Regents' inaction on the issue, and to kind of monitor community support and university support for these students having access to UGA -- to demonstrate that they would be successful in this environment given the proper support and resources, so initially overturning the ban was the primary focus.
>
> And then I think early in the fall of 2011, there was a lot of organizing and kind of campaigning, and then when that wasn't terribly effective -- And it just didn't really seem to be -- I think the focus had to turn to getting students into schools. Like obviously this is like a good interim substitute, but Freedom U was never designed as a replacement or a substitute for a college education. It was really designed as a, like a campaign strategy against the ban, and a space to bring undocumented students together, not only to kind of network about getting to schools elsewhere, but I mean, really to become activists.
>
> So it went from like a campaign strategy to just kind of like a collective networking space for folks that have a stake in the ban itself, and then kind of it always maintained that piece of the puzzle of having this kind of like, sense of camaraderie, and students having access to peers, and other students in similar situations that they would have never met outside of Freedom University. And then kind of more and more so as things evolved, it kind of had more of an emphasis on getting students to schools out of state and finding scholarships, and creating -- participating more in a national conversation about undocumented access, more so than the kind of the global situation, and I think it's been effective in that obviously we've had a lot of colleges create scholarships specifically for undocumented students at Tugaloo and Whitman and Hampshire and there's a couple other schools -- Berea just recently. So I think -- I don't know, still important work, but definitely -- I mean, it keeps the conversation going around the ban, but I'm not sure how effective Freedom U is ultimately against the ban right now.

As attention turned more toward providing students with educational opportunities, faculty began placing more emphasis on creating a college classroom experience for the students. As faculty members at the University of Georgia, they wanted to be able to give students a true idea of what college courses could be like in hopes that many of them would then choose to

apply to private colleges inside and outside of Georgia. Eleanor pointed to the fact that Freedom U attempted to create a college classroom experience for the students who attended:

> The stated objectives are to provide a rigorous college experience that would be similar to an experience students could have in a classroom at one of the universities they're banned from. The second purpose is to fight the ban. And I think that afterward we realized that one of the major purposes was to bring students together, to help them organize themselves, find their voices…

This mindset of serving a two-fold purpose quickly became the understood mission of Freedom University. It received buy-in from all the key stakeholders, including students, faculty, volunteers, and people like Brenda, a retired UGA professor who served as both an adjunct faculty member and a volunteer:

> I think it has two main purposes. One of them is political activism and awareness, and the second one is to create a college experience for students so that they are not only better prepared when they do go to college, but that they have that learning in its own right that is being denied to them by the Board of Regents.

Preparing students for higher education. While some students saw the primary focus of Freedom University as being a two-pronged approach of activism and education, others valued the importance of preparing students for the college application process, as Marco mentioned:

> I think that the main purpose is to get undocumented students ready to apply for colleges and have a better chance of actually making it through the process, be it applying, which is like one of the important steps, but also, you know, getting a little better at the SAT, SAT taking the tests, and making a good grade. I think, yeah, I mean, just a short -- getting them ready to apply for college and go through the process.

Eva, another former student, offered a similar perspective, but also highlighted the safe space that Freedom University created for students:

> It really reaches out to that specific group of people, which nothing else really did. It kind of filled that void for just all the kids who probably weren't going to have an opportunity to go out of state or didn't have whatever lined up, didn't know the

> right people. It kind of put a lot of people together that know what they're doing, know what they're talking about, and are dedicated to researching all the time and being advocates. It put them all in one place so that it's easy. You're not overwhelmed as a student trying to think of like where you can -- Because before at Freedom University, I didn't know where to start looking into stuff. I was looking into going back to Mexico and just like going to university there and just not coming back here.

There were numerous other incidences, as represented by Victor's statement below, where students reported that they viewed the main goal of Freedom University as being able to help them reach higher education:

> I liked it just because it gave me, I guess a place to go to seek higher education, because that's what it was for, to seek higher education because we can't do that here at UGA. So it was good. It was kind of weird, because it's like they're teaching you college stuff, but so when I did go it was like, "wow!"

But students also realized the importance of keeping their minds engaged in the school setting in the time between high school and college. Julia commented on the importance of continuing their education: "I think the overall goal is to get into college, but I think also a big part of it is to stay current in your education, because it's really hard to, I guess, go into college and have years passed without you learning anything, so it's really helpful to still be learning while trying to get into college."

In keeping with the idea of providing higher education, students like Leo felt that it was more about giving education to those who are unable to receive it due to policies that limit college access: "I think the main purpose would be to provide an education to those who are unable to receive an education due to policies here in Georgia, and I just kind of see them being there for students who aren't able to move ahead or be there." I thought it was important to point out that for students like Leo, he felt Freedom University was an organization that was willing to step up and provide education for students who were disenfranchised by the state and its Board

of Regents. Oscar elaborated on this point by describing Freedom University as "sort of like the bridge way to connect the DACA students or undocumented students to other universities and college work, because they're not allowed to go to college in Georgia or even afford it… sort of like that bridge way towards the higher education."

The theme of Freedom University as being sort of this stopgap between high school and college was prevalent among students. Maria may have said it best when she described Freedom U as being a stepping stone for students:

> Definitely to like -- as like a pathway to get students into like colleges, because that is like why it was started, to get students into college, and like it's not meant for it to go on forever. It's meant to get students into college since they can't attend schools here. Like a stepping stone. Not like a stepping stone, but like a stepping stone into colleges.

It was clear that students realized how Freedom University worked to prepare them for postsecondary education. It also worked to instill the mindset that these students belonged with their American-born peers, as highlighted by Pablo when he said that Freedom University attempts "to get students a higher education that they desire. I mean, not just undocumented students, but any student."

Using Activism. Along with preparing students for postsecondary education, Freedom University also had the stated mission of working to lift the ban on undocumented students from being able to attend Georgia's selective public institutions. As Freedom University continued to rally around fighting against the ban, faculty members like Sofia recognized that a transformational process was taking place inside the classroom.

> Our main objective was to protest against the ban and to offer support, show support to this group of kids who were attacked and put in a very difficult position. And then we started finding out that we could do more things from that.

> Through the class, we were creating this space in which the kids were discovering things about themselves and becoming interested in participating in something either…well, there was a strong group of activists, but not all of them were activists, and still they wanted to be in that group, and come out of isolation and integrate something. For me, it was very striking this first idea of "we are losing our identity. We are no longer students. We are nothing." And then we brought this and they became -- they were creating their own identity in that space.

That space was very important for students and creating an identity seemed to be a large part of what Freedom University was accomplishing. Javier points to how Freedom U established a place where students could learn how to apply themselves to multiple things inside and outside of the classroom:

> Honestly, I know like their main goal at first was to combat proposition 4.1.6, and to have a space available for students to go and educate themselves, but as the years have gone by, it's definitely evolved. It's also a space for activism, taking what we learn in the classroom and being able to actually apply it and not just talk about all these movements of things that people have done previously. What good is knowledge if you can't use it? So I think it's definitely evolved into a more, what's it called, like fruitful space where people can do various things.

One of the things that quickly became evident during my time at Freedom University was the closeness of the community between the students and faculty. It was clear that students were forming close relationships within a network of their peers. Both students and faculty felt free to discuss complicated and sensitive issues due to the safe environment established within the school's walls. This "safe space" proved to a central theme among both current students and former students, and students like Jesse valued the environment created by Freedom U: "Well, for one thing is you know, for giving those students -- the undocumented students like myself -- that safe space, a place to have that conversation to begin with." Daniela felt it was important to have a "place where you can like talk to other people" and "just to be together with other undocumented students."

Former students also commented on the fact that Freedom U allowed for them to feel comfortable while offering the space to be around similar students with common backgrounds. For many, it was the first time in which they truly felt comfortable talking to other strangers about their residency issues:

> I really didn't tell anyone I was undocumented unless they were my close friends or my counselor until I went to Freedom University, where everyone was like around the same situation I was, so it was easier for me to open up. And we all understood each other, we all were together…had some of the same struggles. We hung out, so it was a very good place to really decompress and talk about anything pretty much. – Oscar

This shared background was instrumental for helping students in a variety of areas. For many students, Freedom University helped with battling severe depression and anxiety. Many students described Freedom U as being instrumental in giving them "hope" and helping them to look past their current status and toward a brighter future. Students like Rose pointed to the fact that Freedom U helped her to see that other students were in similar situations and that they could get to a better place with the collective efforts of each other:

> It just kind of guided me onto the right path. I did want to graduate high school. I felt terrible. My mom saw it. I did nothing for six months. I ran. I slept. I did clean around the house. But all I did was…that's it. I never went out. I didn't want to talk to anybody. I didn't want to talk to my parents or anything. My mom told my dad and my sister, "Hey, give her some time." I avoided any kind of thing, any help. Because I did get like a lot of invites from Freedom U, "hey," this and that, all of it. But I guess I picked up. Once I picked up, I felt better, but my idea was, "If I can't help myself, why should I help others?" So I think just one day from another, Freedom U was just give it a try, just one day. And I just saw a lot of people that were in the same situation and that needed guidance, and my idea thought, "Well, if I can't, we can all help each other, then maybe we'll get somewhere." If it's not somewhere, then at least it was worth a try, but you just have to reach out to each other, and it felt a lot better connecting with others and knowing I wasn't alone. And there are people probably in worse conditions and situations than I can relate to.

Helping others was a common theme throughout the interviews. Many students like Rose helped other students cope with depression and learn how to be confident in who they were as people. Other students often helped one another on items related to the college admissions process. Oscar, who attends a private college in the south, helped fellow students prepare for their college scholarships interviews and he did this at the same time in which he was competing for the same scholarship. It is rare to find students helping others who are competing for the same scholarships but this is a prime example of the community built within Freedom University, and students saw the value in helping one another reach success. Whenever one student had success by being admitted to college, the rest of the students were motivated even more to continue their quest to reach higher education. For each student who made it to postsecondary education, the momentum within Freedom University continued to build.

When students reflect on their time and involvement at Freedom University, many of them have very fond memories and view it as a pivotal moment in their lives. Current students like Pablo, who takes classes part-time at a public college in Georgia, works multiple jobs in order to save up enough money to take one or two classes each semester. Due to his undocumented status, he is paying the out-of-state tuition rates in Georgia. Given these challenges, Pablo still views Freedom University as: "Hope, pretty much hope for the future. A chance that other colleges or teachers won't give me, especially the Georgia Board of Regents. I mean, we have some smart kids, but it's just a lack of paper, the nine digits."

Inspiring Hope

Picking up from the last quote mentioned above, one of the themes that began to emerge time and time again was the idea of Freedom University being able to inspire hope in students. I

heard the word "hope" from a majority of the students whom I spoke with and I felt it was a fitting tribute to the role that Freedom University played in their lives. I also kept thinking how ironic it was for students to comment about hope given how the majority of Georgia's high school students and current college students ascribe meaning to the word. But students at Freedom University do not have the luxury of receiving the HOPE scholarship, even if their grades and test scores permit them to be eligible. Undocumented students are prevented from receiving the HOPE scholarship funds due to their residency status. Hope for them means something completely different, and its results have been very powerful for a host of students. Jesse viewed Freedom University as a place that provides: "Love, community, you know, strength…yeah, power. Hope, definitely." Maria saw the value in the hope and change that Freedom University attempted to instill:

> Hope. It means change. It means opportunity, and it means that no matter how horrible our lives have been, it will change and it will get better. Not to quote the get better slogan, but they will do their hardest to make sure that you get in somewhere and that you have the best opportunity you can, and they have definitely changed my life.

Students gained more of a positive outlook on things as their involvement increased within Freedom University. Daniela, a somewhat shy and reserved student who eventually became an outspoken student leader, commented on the organization's advocacy work in giving students hope: "I think the students really feel it helps them and it's like they get a lot of passion and hope from that, and community building, too – like all of us doing it together and raising awareness of Freedom U."

Freedom University opened students' eyes to different types of opportunities beyond anything they expected, or even imagined for themselves. Anna went from

feeling destined for a factory career her entire life to now thinking about a better future and working toward reaching for something more:

> For me, for my thinking, I think it's like giving people hope, knowing there's doors we can open, knowing there's something we can do, not like just have a closed mind and be like, no, I don't have a future. They open doors for you. They give you like hope. That's what they gave me, because before I didn't have like any hope of going to school or whatever. They like gave me a dream of going to school. Because before I know I was thinking, I'm like, like I have no dreams. I want to go to school. I know I cannot do that. So it was like, I thought I was going to be working in the factory for my whole life, and now I now have a future. I can do something better than that.

Hope allowed Maria to begin her college career over a year ago. She attends a selective liberal arts school in the Northwest and receives a full scholarship and stipend. Jesse was recently admitted to a private college in the south and has also received a full financial aid package to cover his cost of attendance. He is currently awaiting the decision letters of several other colleges before deciding where to attend. Anna hopes to be able to one day attend a college near her home in order to stay close to her mother.

> I would see Freedom University as a beacon of hope, you know? I feel like I felt very welcome when I went in there, and I learned some stuff. I've learned many things about art, and sciences, experiments. It's like a place of knowledge where you can…since you can't get it at a regular college, you go there and you learn and you write. You share your comments, your thoughts, and it's like, for me, I always imagined it like in the Greeks, like in ancient Greece that they would just like meet somewhere and they would just discuss about things and read or things like that. For me, I see it as a very welcoming place and very friendly, and like I said, a beacon of hope. – Emma

Creating College Access

While Freedom University initially set out to help undocumented students access higher education in Georgia by working to repeal the ban, once that idea more or less faded away as

Susan mentioned earlier, eventually their work turned into helping students access any college through both admission and financial aid. Part of the challenge with helping undocumented students reach postsecondary education was the fact that many students were giving up the idea of attending college early in their high school careers. Due to the Board of Regents banning undocumented students from admission to several of the state's public colleges, many lost motivation inside the high school classroom. The out-of-state price tag was also a significant barrier for students who also do not qualify for federal aid. With what was perceived by many as little chance of attending college, many students did not push themselves toward achieving high grades or preparing for standardized tests. Susan, a volunteer at Freedom University, witnessed this take place on a regular basis:

> Even the brightest students who should have been super successful in applying to colleges and easily admitted, they were usually the ones that had the most atrocious SAT scores, just because they hit their senior year and they didn't care. Like they knew they couldn't get into a state school or couldn't afford a state school, and it was just kind of off the table, so I mean, they took the SATs probably because they felt like they had to or like, oh well, everybody else is doing it so I probably should, or their counselors were kind of pushing them to do it.

Javier, a high-achieving student with a 1300+ SAT score (math and critical reading), also noticed fellow undocumented students who lost hope of attending college and did not take the SAT as a result: "I know many people in Freedom U never took SAT tests because they're like, 'well, I'm not going to be able to go to college anyway, like why even bother?'" Many students felt defeated during high school. Most were early in their high school career when the ban was handed down from the Board of Regents, and as a result, many lost motivation to perform at a high level inside of the classroom. Students like Rose were the ones who found it difficult to

stay motivated while in high school. Undoubtedly she was depressed about her college prospects and high school counselors lacked the knowledge to be able to help students in her situation:

> It wasn't until my senior year I was like, I could have tried hard. But I just lacked motivation my freshman and my sophomore year and junior year. My counselors couldn't really help me out. They just didn't have an answer or anything for me, so it just unmotivated me so much more. It was just some situation where they didn't know what to do and how to guide me, so it was hard.

The fact that students lose motivation and do not put forth their best effort on standardized tests has huge implications for the likelihood of undocumented students being able to enroll in postsecondary education. There are numerous private colleges, both within Georgia and outside of the state, that admit undocumented students but oftentimes they are looking for high achieving students with strong grades and above average test scores. Current Freedom U students now realize the importance of both grades and standardized test scores, and many of them wish they could go back to high school and do things differently or help their younger peers who may find themselves in similar situations. Victor offered advice for his younger peers still in high school:

> No matter what, try and keep your GPA real high and do really well in class, just As and Bs, As and Bs. If you can, try and get all As, just because whatever your status is in the country, if you have like really, really good grades and you study hard, that's what's going to keep you up top no matter what your status is.

Similarly, Julia encourages students to begin thinking about college early in their high school career and also recommends that students keep their grades up while being sure to adequately prepare for standardized tests:

> If I were to tell somebody who didn't know four or five years ago, I would probably tell them to start caring about college as soon as freshman year. Have in mind sort of what you want to do in life like as a career, and definitely work to keep your GPA up, because I didn't even know what a GPA was. Yeah, and to take the SATs and everything, just prepare.

Julia now realizes the value of grades and test scores because faculty members took time to individually assist students in the college search and application process during the weekly classes at Freedom University. I can recall many classes that I attended where faculty held group discussions to teach students what admissions officers and committees valued in the college application, and what colleges would be looking for when evaluating the student's profile. I also gave a couple of these presentations with Andrew Belasco when we spoke to students about the Common Application and how to submit the application while also showing students what admissions officers would be looking for in their college applications. Whereas before in high school students like Julia missed out on the in-depth conversations centered on college admissions, and for many of them it was the first time they received one-on-one college counseling focusing on the essential elements of the college application process. But students also learned from one another, and they continued to share information to their fellow undocumented students at Freedom University. Everyone was learning more about what was necessary in order to be able to attend college, and Sofia points out that students began to believe in themselves and what they were capable of accomplishing:

> Freedom University did a lot to get kids in college. Not only because of these behind the scenes conversations, but because this -- Well, the kids started believing that they could make it. They started seeing kids that were making it, and kids who were not that different from themselves, and I think that was the key piece. They didn't give up.

As Sofia mentioned, several students from the first cohort at Freedom University successfully gained admission and enrolled in four-year institutions. Those students enrolled in places like Syracuse University and Hampshire College. For the students who remained in Freedom University, as well as the new enrollees, the former students became models of what

could potentially happen for all Freedom U students. Students began believing in what was taking place at Freedom U and more importantly, they began believing in themselves and what they could accomplish with the support of faculty and fellow students. Eleanor commented on how important it was to be able to train students and give them the kind of necessary skills to be able to enroll in college:

> I think that it particularly gives them the kind of knowledge, soft skills that they need to understand the application process and to complete it on time, so some, it gives them some assertiveness training and gets rid of some of the mystery of what is needed to apply that people in middle class backgrounds with parents who have gone to college just have. And I think it encouraged people and gave them hope and gave them a sense of support.

Creating this environment was crucial in being able to have students believe in their abilities while also believing that they could succeed on a college campus. If anything, the faculty at Freedom U were insistent upon teaching students that they *belonged* with their peers on a college campus, and being able to instill that confidence in them was a big part of what Freedom U was trying to accomplish:

> I think by helping them see that they absolutely belong in college classrooms, by preparing them -- I know a lot of the students have said the discussion based classes help build their confidence that they can participate in that sort of thing. I think seeing adults volunteer their time shows that it isn't a nation full of people who hate them and discriminate against them, that it includes people who feel exactly the opposite and are willing to give their time for that. – Brenda

Current and former students realized the importance of faculty and students creating an environment that gave them access to people and resources that they otherwise would not have had access to:

> I think it's sort of really nice to be able to have a network or to have access to different people who, A, understand the importance of education, and two, are also like really knowledgeable about the way that the system works in the U.S. So not all of us have the privilege of sort of growing up with parents who

> understand the process, and so I think for a lot of us, it is entirely up to ourselves to sort of get through all that, and it was nice to sort of have that support, and I actually kind of wish I would have taken more advantage of it and maybe asked more questions, but you know, it was just nice to be able to approach Allie or whoever and say, "what do you think about this?" or "is this legit?" or "do you think I have a chance here?" So I think just having that access to everybody and developing those friendships and those connections…I think, you know, Maxwell sort of tried to do that within the high school setting, but a lot of other things get in the way, and it's hard to give individualized attention to people who need it, so I think this is just kind of necessary. – Sara

Activism Affecting College Applications

Another theme that tended to come through in the interviews was the idea of activism and advocacy work having an impact on students' college applications and admission prospects. By virtue of their involvement with Freedom University, numerous students participated in protests and activism work related to BOR Policy 4.1.6 and various Georgia House and Senate bills. As a result of their civic engagement, many elected to write about their participation in their college essays and/or stress their involvement in other areas of the college application. Additionally, Freedom U faculty members often wrote about these student leaders in the recommendation letters they submitted to the college on the student's behalf. When discussing whether they view activism having the potential to affect their college applications, many of the current students at Freedom University saw it as a positive attribute to their college admission prospects. Students like Jesse felt empowered by his activism work and the confidence he gained from his participation transcended through to his college applications:

> Just from one point, just like going to those protests really empowered me. It made me feel, you know, confident, and being just, you know, undocumented, but it didn't make me feel ashamed any more about it, you know? It's who I am, so I mean, it can change if I become documented, but currently that's what…that's who I am, and it's a very political thing at one point and then second it's like…it's just so weird, you know? It's like not even a race or anything, but it's like a stamp that you have. It's a label you have. One thing, you know, it's helped motivate me. It really helped me out, and for two, like the logistical point of it, you know for a

> very activist oriented, you know, grassroots type of college that like seeks leadership and stuff, social leadership, then yeah, I mean that could work for like a point in a resume, you know?

Daniela also felt that colleges valued civic engagement and she thought it was important to be involved in her local community: "Colleges really like to see that you're proactive in your community and what are you doing about your issues instead of just sitting around like hoping someone else does something. Like you're passionate about learning and stuff like that." While not yet enrolled in college, David felt his activism work would have a positive influence on his college applications: "Some colleges will look at it as a plus, as how he sticks up for what he believes in and fights for what he's passionate about."

Former students felt their involvement with activism work played an integral role in their college applications. Most students viewed their participation as having played a significant part in their personal stories and felt it was another way to distinguish themselves from the rest of the applicant pool at various colleges. They also generally felt their advocacy work was a positive experience for their personal growth and development. Javier commented on his activism work being something that would distinguish him from the rest of a college's applicant pool: "I feel like you're playing almost like on a level field when you apply to college, like mostly everybody has really good grades, so a lot of that stuff…they kind of like expect it for people, and what really filters out people is what your involvement with your community or what you're seeking was definitely a boost."

Paula was another former student who really felt empowered through her previous activism work and used her personal experiences to write compelling essays for each of her college applications:

> I don't think it kind of altered like the places that I wanted to go to, although I probably should have looked into like kind of the atmosphere of the colleges that I wanted to go to. But I think at the end of the day the rallies gave me this sense of power of like I can do this, and I have a voice, and I need to use it. And it certainly helped me -- I guess it gave me the confidence that I didn't have, but it also was really influential in my essays, kind of fighting this power kind of opened up this I guess other side of me that I didn't know, and I use it a lot in my essays.

Paula was the student that I assisted on her essays and I remember her being somewhat reluctant to write about her experiences as being undocumented. But once we convinced her of how it would separate her from the rest of the applicant pool, she was fully on board and she wrote extremely powerful essays that would offer strong support to the rest of her application. It was no surprise to me that she was admitted into very selective institutions in the northeast and now attends a world-class institution on a full scholarship. Maria was another student who realized the value in being active within her community and credits this experience as impacting her college admission: "Definitely. I mean colleges definitely look into people that have been active in their community and stuff like that, so I definitely think that all of my work that I did definitely influenced the decision of my admittance."

Faculty members also realized the importance of activism and how students grow as individuals through their participation. More than one faculty member told me about how Freedom University was creating leaders and agents of change. I also witnessed with my own eyes, when students like Daniela, who were shy and introverted in high school, would turn around and be some of the most vocal leaders at Freedom U, having participated in multiple speaking events before the State Senate and Board of Regents. Sofia commented on how these moments change students lives:

> I think it has a strong impact in their personalities. I think they find that they do not need to be in the shadows, and there's something they can do. They come

> from a background in which they are told not to say anything, and to be in the shadows, and this for them is like taking their destiny on their own hands. It's empowering, and I've seen it. It's amazing. You see one day one kid who is so shy, who is not willing to share anything, and you can tell he's suffering, and then you see this blooming person with so many things to say and to do, and getting into college, so I think it's -- They need to do it. I think it's something that they -- in whatever degree they can, they need to participate in the protest and be part of the movement that changes their life story.

Motivation for Attending Freedom University

One of the more interesting aspects of student attendance at Freedom University is the fact that students do not receive any type of academic credits that are transferable to accredited two-year and four-year institutions. Each week, over thirty undocumented students voluntarily attended classes at Freedom University. Some students, like David, found the course material to be both new and interesting. The material and the teacher's passion for teaching was a major drawing point:

> I think it was that learning…that I wanted to learn more, because I was learning stuff that I should have been taught in high school, but I really wasn't. I was learning more about Mexico's history and like way back during the revolution, and it was just so intriguing to me about how much stuff I didn't know, but I wanted to keep learning. I wanted to keep learning and I just…just that passion, mostly that Vicki had. She was really cool and I really liked how she taught, and I just went back. I don't know why, but I just went back.

David was also drawn to the fact that faculty members were donating their time for the benefit of the students. He appreciated this gesture and he also saw the added benefit of previous students having successfully been accepted into college. The former students proved to be a motivating factor for his attendance:

> I chose to be involved with it because they were willing to teach outside of their classroom for free on a Sunday, which not many people do anything for free anymore, and that whole like hearing how many people…how many people that they helped go to college, and how they just motivated them to go to college and had them at all these crazy colleges that I wouldn't even…I didn't even hear of or

> even dreamt of going. I think that's what motivated me to come back, and just the people. The people were all…everybody is so great and friendly to you. – David

A common thread through all of the interviews was this idea of building community at Freedom University. It was something that I noticed and felt from my earliest visits to the classroom and it was something that was very organic. Undocumented students have a shared experience that few people in our society can relate to, but these students are able to take that common background and build a close-knit community. Each person, in some varying way, described the familial aspects of Freedom University. Leo described it as "one big family, because I literally have built my connections and know more people, and know people who are in my spot and in my shoes, and who kind of have almost the same struggles, and just another friend you can talk to." In my time at Freedom University, I quickly realized that there was a shared bond between the students and you would have thought they all grew up together and attended the same K-12 schools. They were a close group as Olivia eluded to:

> I used to think that they were just all about school, and I think they are for the most part just trying to get you in school and keep you educated, but I think as I went more, I realized that it's a lot -- community is a big part of it, just to -- for you to feel like you belong somewhere, because a lot of times, or at least for me, I grew up with most of my friends, or all of my friends are not in the situation I am. They're all college graduates. They didn't have to go through what I went through, so they understand of course, and they tell me, "I understand your situation," but they haven't lived it. So I think that Freedom U does provide that space for people to just feel like someone else understands them and has been in the situation, and just provide many, many resources, great professors, help with applications, help with SAT prep, all of that. But I definitely think community is something I didn't know was a big part of it, but to me at least, it ended up being.

A common finding in most of the student interviews was the community and relationships between students and faculty as being a primary motivator for students continuing to attend Freedom University. While students like Emma were drawn to the advocacy aspect of

Freedom U., it was the welcoming atmosphere that kept her wanting to return to classes each week:

> Well, because it's more young people like me. I felt very welcome and felt it was a very friendly…it's a very friendly place. Also, I felt like I was doing something -- I was starting to work on my own -- reaching my education, and I saw it as something very productive to do, like because most of us, we just work or some of us were unemployed and things like that, and it's just having something to do, something that is so productive. It felt great, it felt like I was starting to reach my goal or working on reaching my goal to get my degree. There are other organizations, but they're just like -- They're not about education. They're more about -- I mean, Freedom University is also like a lot about advocacy or activism, but the reason why I chose Freedom University was because like I said it before, I just felt very welcomed, and seeing other people like me and seeing these teachers spending their time helping us to get somewhere, I saw it as a very kind thing to do. Like, a very human thing to do.

And students like Paula felt a palpable energy that she described as being contagious. She also commented on how important it was to be surrounded by like-minded students who all aspired to want something more in terms of their education. This, too, contributed to the shared experiences of students at Freedom U., as Paula explains:

> I think what really kept me going was the energy and the hope that I got from going to class, because everybody was amazing. Like everybody in that classroom was amazing, and being in that space at that time, I can't even describe it. It was just -- Yeah, and so being in the moment and I think really knowing what learning was, I guess selfishly, learning was really -- Yeah, it was something that I wanted to be a part of. The professors, their energy was contagious, you know? And it was also -- It was nice to be with a group of undocumented students who really got it. Because not all undocumented students are wanting to go to school and they don't sort of have that path that they want to go to. I definitely felt that in my own community. So for the most part I was kind of alone and kind of wanting to keep learning and being in the classroom with 50-plus other people who felt the same way was just really interesting, because they became the support network. I know at one point like we started our own therapy session, and we started asking questions, like we're supposed to be undocumented, but like we didn't -- but like we had never had the space before to kind of like be around people who were undocumented and felt the same way, and they asked the questions, and so that was nice. I guess in short, they became my family, and so you can't give up your family.

But besides the atmosphere that Freedom University was cultivating inside of the classroom, some students viewed Freedom University as their only chance at something more. One of the most powerful responses came from a former student who has gone on to enroll in a selective liberal arts school in the northwest. After being down and depressed about her situation, she viewed Freedom University as the way to a better opportunity:

> There was nothing else in my life. I mean I'm going to be completely honest, like I wasn't doing [Georgia] Perimeter anymore. I was babysitting because I couldn't work legally. I was going through a very rough time like personally, and it was like, you have to do something, and you might as well -- Like you need to do this, because there's nothing else, and like this can lead to something better, because anything is better at this point, and it was like, you're going to be with people who are going through the same thing as you are, something that I had never really gone through, like I never really had -- Like even through high school, like there weren't a lot of Hispanic kids in my classes. I was always like the token Hispanic girl, so it was like, you're going to have this whole class of people who are going through exactly the same thing you are going through. They're going to know what you're going through, so you don't have to explain anything. You don't have to give like some like weird answers as to why you can't drive or why you can't do this, or like why you're not going to school, and it was just like very refreshing, and I knew it was going to be amazing, and like I knew that it was this opportunity to grow and become like this better person even if I didn't get like into colleges. I mean, I knew that Freedom U could lead me to colleges, just because like the prior class, a couple of them had gone on to Syracuse, so like I knew that that was like an option. So like, I mean, that's why my dad told me to go, because he knew that they could help me, but like I personally went because they were these people who knew exactly what I was going through, and I didn't have to hide anything. And they could lead me to something better. – Maria

In my opinion, this was the most powerful quote from all of my interviews. While there were many powerful statements through the course of this study, Maria's statement was one that really showed the gravity of the topic and what these students faced on a daily basis.

Importance of High School Counseling

The importance of high school counseling was also a major theme throughout my findings. Through the interview process, I learned more about what students were facing in terms of the level of support and college counseling they were able to receive in high school. Many of the former and current students of Freedom University noted that they often had high school counselors who were not knowledgeable about their undocumented status and how that could possibly impact their admissions prospects to colleges and universities.

Almost every student in Freedom University comes from a family background with little to no college background or knowledge. Without the luxury of having parents or siblings who have attended and graduated from a postsecondary institution, these students are often at the mercy of whatever resources they have access to while in high school. Pablo commented on the problem many undocumented students in his community face during their high school career: "Most Latino parents don't know anything and it's up to us to find out, the whole process, the due dates, the SATs, how important your classes are in your final senior year."

With little to no support inside their homes, students were simply left with the support and resources they had through their high schools. If the high school resources were limited, students faced the college application process alone and limited information meant that many students struggled to know how to properly manage their college applications:

> I just knew to pass the class to graduate. I didn't have any hopes of going to college. I didn't know what a GPA was. I didn't know how important the SAT was. I didn't know what a college application was going to look like, or the fact that it's like 12 things you've got to get for one application, so it was just like not having that. So people that have had like a parent go to college, I think it's a little bit easier, because you know they can mentor them. They can help them out. This, I had to go at this alone basically. – Jesse

Daniela pointed out that “high school counselors, they don’t really know about our situation. They were asking me if I wanted to apply for HOPE and I was the one that had to tell them ‘no, I can’t.’” A lack of support and assistance during high school was a common finding across multiple interviews:

> When I was in high school, I had no idea how college worked, so that's basically the help I wanted, which was help I never got. I think it would have been helpful to know as far as what options and majors I had or what schools were good, like as far as teaching or having good reputation or -- I didn't know you had to have a minimum GPA or SAT scores for certain schools. I didn't know a lot of the requirements as far as recommendation letters or I didn't even know about the common app or sending your transcript fees or anything. I had no idea. – Julia

But some students were also quick to point out that high school counselors tended to be overworked, oftentimes due to limited personnel in large school settings. Sara, who now attends a selective private college in the southeast, was able to reflect on her high school counseling experience:

> What happens with college counselors is that they tend to be very overworked. I think my high school was four college counselors -- I mean, four counselors in general, and so they're splitting that time between clinical work and sort of clerical duties, and then also college advising. So honestly, I don't think it was very effective. I certainly did not have a specific problem with my counselors in any way, but I just don't think students receive adequate college counseling. If that's their main source, I don't think it's appropriate or I don't think it's enough.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study originally set out to determine the extent to which social capital impacted the college admission prospects of undocumented students within Freedom University. My initial research questions included the following:

RQ #1) How does social capital work within Freedom University to help students with their college admission prospects?

RQ #2) How does Freedom University influence students' college choice decision, and how does social capital factor into this decision-making process?

What follows is a brief discussion of the findings along with implications for policy and practice. I also recommend ideas for future research involving undocumented students and offer a final conclusion to the study.

Discussion

When looking at how and why Freedom University was created, it becomes very evident that it arose as a social movement in response to the ban implemented by the Board of Regents. McAdam and Snow (1997) defined social movements as a collectivity acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional channels for the purpose of promoting or resisting change in the group, society, or world order of which it is a part. Freedom University clearly fits this description due to its early level of organization shortly after the ban was put in place, and the fact that UGA faculty were going against the University System of Georgia by resisting the policy. Social movement theory also attempts to explain how actors come together to create long-lasting changes that are aimed at improving opportunities and conditions for a

minority group and/or disadvantaged populations. It is clearly evident from the results of this study that Freedom University attempts to improve opportunities for undocumented students by doing each of the following: 1) protesting the ban, policy 4.1.6; 2) providing college-level coursework to undocumented students; 3) assisting students in their college search and application process; and 4) creating student leaders through advocacy-related work. As long as the ban remains in place, I believe Freedom University will continue to push for equal access and opportunity for undocumented students. This movement has already carried on for several years and as it continues to have success with helping students, I believe this momentum will continue to carry it forward.

After conducting the interviews and reviewing the data, it seemed that college counseling in high schools seemed to be lacking for many of the students. Freedom University attempted to fill this void by focusing on the four key components that have a positive influence on college attendance, as identified by McDonough (2005) and outlined earlier in chapter 2: 1) a college preparatory curriculum; 2) a college culture that sets high academic standards and includes communication networks that promote and support college expectations; 3) a school staff committed to students' college goals; and 4) resources devoted to counseling and advising college-bound students.

Freedom University accomplishes each of these four components through the work they do each week. The courses offer college-level work that acclimate students to the rigor they can expect from a typical postsecondary environment, while the faculty set high expectations for students inside the classroom. The networks within Freedom University also promote college expectations by consistently keeping the dialogue centered around college. They do this by having guest lecturers speak on a variety of topics while also allowing students to communicate

with one another about college. Students are expected to converse about college attendance and what is required to be able to attend. Former students of Freedom U also contribute to this discussion when they return on university breaks. This gives current Freedom U students the chance to ask questions related to their college experiences. And finally, Freedom University devotes counseling and advising resources to students by having faculty and staff dedicated to each part of the college search and application process. Most recently, they appointed several staff members to cover topics such as standardized test prep, college applications, financial aid and other components of the college search.

One of the more interesting ideas that I began to realize through my involvement with Freedom University was the notion that many of these students needed the ban to occur in order for them to receive the assistance they desperately needed. Many of the undocumented students profiled in this study needed the ban from the Board of Regents to be handed down in order to increase the likelihood of their college enrollment. The Board of Regents created the impetus needed to motivate UGA faculty like Eleanor and Sofia and community members such as Susan to want to help undocumented students. As documented earlier, this was the spark that ignited a ground-roots effort to create Freedom University – first as a way to combat the ban, and second, as a means to provide undocumented students with an education and a helping hand in their goal of reaching higher education. Without the ban in place, there may not have been the rallying point needed to create Freedom University. The ban is only a small picture of a much greater complicated problem surround college access for undocumented students in the U.S., and it brought to light many of the problems that students in our local communities are facing.

Another key concept with social movements is that we tend to think of them in terms of collective action (McAdam & Snow, 1997), given that an individual is unlikely to attain an

objective alone and the fact that the larger group benefits from the joint action of those in pursuit of a common objective. This collective action that initially began as a way to combat the ban eventually turned into something positive for students as it relates to their college admission prospects. The combined effort by everyone involved with Freedom University led to the generation of social capital within the network that could then be used for accessing higher education. The results of this study indicate that social capital can be a very powerful resource for helping undocumented students in organizations such as Freedom University. I believe that many of the students who have gone on to successfully enroll in college may not have been able to get there without the assistance of Freedom University, and many of the current students at Freedom University would most likely not be attempting to reach postsecondary education without having seen former students have this success. Findings related to students wanting to pursue higher education due to their involvement with Freedom University supports prior research related to peers transmitting necessary social capital (Perna, 2006) and that students are more likely to plan to attend a selective four-year institution (Gonzalez, Stone, & Jovel, 2003) and enroll (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Perna & Titus, 2005) if their friends also plan to attend college.

Freedom University also provides students with access to resources that they may otherwise not have access to, and these reaffirms the importance of social capital as outlined by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Lin (2001a; 2001b). These resources are then used for purposive actions (Lin, 2001b) related to the college application process. It is clear from having worked alongside both the students and faculty at Freedom University, that positive things are happening within students' lives. Many students have gone on to attend selective colleges and universities across the U.S. while other students continue to attend Freedom University with

hopes of one day joining their former peers. More than anything, students have gained a new self-worth and confidence that seemed to be lacking for many of them. While the term *undocumented* may pertain to their current immigration status, it does not define who they are as people. These are the children of immigrants who are attempting to live the American dream and doing the best they can to better their lives. I have been fortunate to develop relationships with many of them and I am continually inspired by their determination in the face of unimaginable challenges.

It was an amazing sight to see so many educators and volunteers come together each week to help students in need. But it was even more wonderful to watch it when a student with little hope of actually attending college received the acceptance letter and financial aid award that would allow them to attend college. I don't believe words can accurately describe that moment when you realize a person's life is forever changed in one moment, and changed immensely for the better of both that student and their immediate family. When students spoke to me about family sacrifices and reasons for why their family would risk bringing them to the U.S. at young ages, I thought about how much it must have meant to the mother or father to see their child have the opportunity to pursue a college education. And for the Freedom University students who have yet to reach that milestone, I imagine that their family members are happy to see them working toward their educational goals through their involvement at Freedom University.

More often than not, I also thought about how many similar areas could benefit from having organizations similar to Freedom University helping students in need, and it does not necessarily have to be strictly undocumented students. In fact, the new U-Lead project in Athens is an organization that is open to both undocumented students and students who are U.S. citizens.

Both Freedom University and U-Lead have been able to implement various elements of the four key components that have a positive influence on college attendance, as mentioned in chapter 2. While Freedom U focuses on both educating students and providing college counseling, U-Lead focuses strictly on college preparation while also assisting current high school students with their coursework. While both organizations have their differences, they are alike in the sense that one of their main objectives is to send students into postsecondary education. As both groups continue to have success and generate increased exposure within the community, I would expect both to continue as long as there is a need for this type of assistance within the areas in which they reside. I am hopeful that both Freedom University and U-Lead will be models for how community based organizations can have a positive impact on the lives of students who are often marginalized in the college admissions process.

This study was aimed at learning more about how social capital is being used to create college access for undocumented students at Freedom University. What began as a social movement in response to what many saw as an unjust policy targeting a minority population of students, Freedom University has opened the doors to college for many students and will likely continue to facilitate postsecondary access for undocumented students well into the future. Until Georgia's Board of Regents creates admission policies that allow undocumented students increased access, or the federal government steps in to create more favorable open-access policies nationwide, we can expect organizations like Freedom University to continue their work in helping these students reach their dreams.

Freedom University continues to shape and create student leaders through their activism work while also assisting students in the college search and application process. Each year, additional students from Freedom University successfully transition into a postsecondary

environment. Their success in being able to enroll in college proves that the social capital generated within Freedom University is making an immediate and lasting impact in the lives of undocumented students. While often faced with difficult challenges, Freedom University has proved that their work is not impossible and that positive results can occur in the lives of these students. As we continue to look for ways to increase college access for all, we would be wise to learn how community-based organizations like Freedom University can help students access postsecondary education, and this goes for not only undocumented students, but for all disadvantaged and underserved populations.

Implications for Practice

One of the interesting pieces about this study is the idea of possibly replicating this kind of work in other states facing similar obstacles to college access for undocumented students. Alabama and South Carolina are two states that stand to benefit the most since both have the most restrictive admission policies in the nation. Conveniently enough, both states border Georgia and this would seem to make it easier to share information while working with people in both states. If programs like Freedom University existed in all states without in-state tuition benefits for undocumented students and made a concerted effort to focus exclusively on college preparation and college counseling, I think we could expect to see similar results to what has occurred for students in the study. I believe it is also important to remember that until a federal policy granting increased access is implemented, we should still work to assist undocumented students in all states, including those with in-state tuition benefits. Even in Texas, the first state to offer in-state tuition to undocumented students in 2001, current Governor Greg Abbott has recently commented on possibly working to repeal these benefits. This example indicates how

vulnerable this population is to the current political climate that exists in states and how important it is to continue working on behalf of undocumented students in every state.

From my perspective, I think it is very difficult to create an organization like Freedom University that has multiple goals on various fronts. But what seems more likely is being able to create an organization that focuses exclusively on preparing undocumented students to reach postsecondary education. I have been a part of the new initiative in Athens with the U-Lead project and I have been able to see firsthand how this organization is already making a positive impact with current high school students who are undocumented. U-Lead has been able to tap into the collective social capital and expertise of local educators at both the high school and college levels to create a network of people who know how to help undocumented students, and perhaps more importantly, want to see them reach higher education and will do whatever it takes to help them do so. It is my hope that we will continue to help these students for years to come and potentially serve as a model for others who wish to help undocumented students reach higher education.

Future Research

This study allows the opportunity for a follow-up study to examine how and if Freedom University continues to increase college-going opportunities for undocumented students. It also naturally provides future longitudinal studies with the same study participants in order to track their movement and examine to what extent a college education has impacted their lives and careers. The longitudinal study that I wish to conduct includes following up with a number of study participants included in this study to highlight their stories of college preparation, college enrollment, and graduation. The qualitative study would be based on interviews and highlight

the importance of higher education in the lives of undocumented students. Unlike Pérez's (2009) earlier work focusing on undocumented students in high school, this book would focus primarily on undocumented students during their time in college and post-college. All of the students would be former participants of Freedom University and/or the U-Lead project in Athens.

Another idea involves being able to survey students to learn more about the types of careers they choose to pursue following graduation. I think this of particular interest because many of the students I have interviewed expressed interest in social justice, sociology, public service and other careers to benefit the greater public. It would be interesting to see if there is any correlation between students' early advocacy work and post-graduation career plans. A survey to gauge career interest and how this relates to students' postsecondary experiences seems like an interesting study and a strong contribution to the field.

Conclusion

More than anything, I am proud of the fact that I was able to study and write about a topic that is of great importance in our society. College access for undocumented students is a relevant issue facing our nation's postsecondary institutions and this work allowed me to explore something that I considered to be worthwhile and important. I have always been drawn to helping those who are less fortunate than myself, and helping our undocumented youth in Georgia has been both an honor and a privilege. In many ways, I never viewed this project as *just a dissertation*, rather I looked at it as a chance to make a positive impact in the lives of students who simply needed a person to help. Oftentimes it was being there to provide a push for a student in an attempt to motivate him or her in doing things related to the college application. There were also times when it was something as easy as reviewing a college essay,

or being there to talk a student when he or she was having doubts about whether they are college-ready material. Participating in something like this showed me that many of us often take for granted how complex the college admissions process truly is for many students across our country, and I'm not talking just about undocumented students, although for points mentioned in this dissertation, they certainly have a more tougher set of challenges. But I also learned that great things can happen when caring people come together and work as a team to help students. It was a fascinating process to watch and it still amazes me each time I go back to Freedom University or U-Lead.

Through this journey of exploring Freedom University and learning from its participants, I have learned a great deal about undocumented students and the unique set of challenges they face in their quest to reach postsecondary education. In fact, I often feel like I learn something new each week due to the complexities concerning immigration and college admissions. I have also learned more about my own self and the passion I have for assisting students from underrepresented populations. In the process of conducting this study, I have made lifelong friends and connections with people all across the country. For those students that I have been able to meet and work with, I am excited to continue to follow them on their life's journey and I look forward to seeing all that they accomplish. I do not believe this dissertation is the end, rather this is only the beginning of something great that is worth continuing, and for that, I am very excited about the future and the positive outcomes that are sure to result.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Recruitment Letter

<<Date>>

Dear <<Insert Name>>,

I am a doctoral student within the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia with research interests in state policies related to undocumented students in postsecondary education. I would like to request your participation in my dissertation research dealing with state-level policies in Georgia that limit college access for undocumented students, and the creation of Freedom University as a result. The study focuses specifically on the creation of Freedom University out of response to the ban against undocumented students being able to attend the state's most selective institutions, and how Freedom University impacts students' college choice decisions.

The general purpose of this dissertation research is to examine how Freedom University came to be formed as a result of a ban against undocumented students in Georgia, and whether or not Freedom University influences students' college choice decisions. This work will expand our knowledge of social movements and how they work within issues related to higher education. It will also help us understand how social networks and social capital work within these types of movements, and how they impact college choice for undocumented students.

As a [student or administrator/faculty member], I am most interested in documenting your account of Freedom University. If you are willing to participate in this study and if your schedule permits, I would like to conduct an interview with you during the fall/winter months of 2014. The interview will last approximately one hour and we can decide upon a location in Athens at a later date.

If you would be willing to participate in this study, I would greatly appreciate your time and insight into what I see as an important topic in higher education. If you already know that you would like to participate and want to schedule a formal appointment or if you have additional questions related to this study, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at mjt@uga.edu or by calling 980-622-1882. Otherwise, I will contact you via e-mail or by phone in late June or early July to check on your interest in participating and will look to schedule your interview at that time and answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Trivette
Doctoral Student
mjt@uga.edu
980-622-1882

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

I agree to participate in a research study titled "Freedom University: The Use of Social Movements, Social Networks, and Social Capital to Create College Access for Undocumented Students" conducted by Michael Trivette from the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia (706-542-3464) under the direction of Dr. Erik Ness, Institute of Higher Education, University of Georgia (706-542-0573). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at anytime without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. If I decide to discontinue or withdraw from the study, or if the investigator decides to terminate my participation without regard to my consent, the information/data collected from or about me up to the point of my withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed.

Reason/Purpose

The reason for this study is to document the creation of Freedom University and evaluate the experiences of undocumented students who are currently enrolled or were previously enrolled at Freedom University.

Benefits

I will not benefit directly from this research. While I understand that I will not benefit directly, there are potential benefits to the social science community and to our society in general that include a better understanding of the issues related to undocumented students in postsecondary education.

Procedures

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

1) Answer questions about my experiences within Freedom University, which will take approximately one hour. The interview will be audio recorded to assist the researcher with documenting and recalling information from the interviews.
2) Allow myself to be observed by the researcher during class sessions at Freedom University.

Risks and/or Discomforts

Risks include the fact that I am undocumented and that my immigration status is in question, and if I were to be identified, it may have consequences on my personal wellbeing. As a result, concerned efforts will be made by the researchers to protect my individually-identifiable information and protect my confidentiality.

It should also be noted that my decision to either take part or not take part in the research study will have no effect on my grades, class standing, or access to any of the programs and services at Freedom University. In no way will my participation in this study have any effect on my involvement at Freedom University.

Confidential

In order to prevent any breach of confidentiality, efforts will be made to protect my information collected during the study.
No individually identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others. Only the researcher (Michael Trivette) and the researcher's advisor (Erik Ness) will have access to my information. I will be assigned an identifying number and/or pseudonym and this number/pseudonym will be used on any and all materials related to my personal information, but my name or any other individually identifiable information will not be used. The identifying number and pseudonym are used in place of my actual, legal name. This added measure of protection will protect my identity from being exposed. The identifying number and pseudonym will be used in all research data collected and all reports that stem from the research. The researchers will not disclose my identity anywhere in the data that is collected or the research reports from the study.

Further Questions
The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at: 980-622-1882.

Final Agreement
I understand that by accepting this form, I am agreeing to take part in this research project.

Michael Trivette
Name of Researcher
Telephone: 980-622-1882
E-mail: MJT@uga.edu

Please keep this copy for your records.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX C

Current Students – Interview Protocol

Undocumented students currently enrolled at Freedom University

Script:

Thanks again for being here today and agreeing to meet with me. As you know, my study is looking at Freedom University and how it works to help undocumented students reach higher education. Please know that everything we discuss will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym and so your answers will remain anonymous. The interview will take roughly one hour and it includes various questions related to your experiences. I'll use a personal recorder in order to be able to go back and transcribe our discussion. Please let me know if you need a break at any point in time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. What is your birthdate?
3. What country are you originally from?
4. When did you first move to the United States?
5. How long have you lived in Georgia?

Introduction to Freedom U.

6. When did you begin taking classes at Freedom University?
7. How did you find out about Freedom University?
    a. When was this?
    b. Who told you about Freedom University?
    c. How close are you in terms of your relationship with this person?
    d. What role does this person play in Freedom University, if any?

8. If you weren't currently taking classes at Freedom University, do you think you would currently be working toward going to college? If not, what types of things would you be involved with?

9. How do you arrange your transportation to classes at Freedom University?

10. What do you see as the main purpose of Freedom University?

Protests

11. Do you ever participate in any protest activities as a part of Freedom University?

    a. How did you get involved with these protests?
    b. Do you think your participation or non-participation will have any influence on whether or not you ultimately attend college?

12. How much of a factor does protesting and these types of efforts play into the work being doing at Freedom University?

13. Were there key events that occurred with the protests?

14. Who are or were the key actors involved with the protests, both within and outside of Freedom University?

College Search

15. How does Freedom University help you with your college search process?

16. Who is the most influential faculty member in terms of helping you with the college search process?

    a. Does this person offer any assistance with counseling, financial aid, admission applications, etc.?

17. Have you contacted any other staff or faculty members at other institutions to discuss the prospects of attending college as a result of a faculty member at Freedom University introducing you?

    a. Who was this faculty member at Freedom University?
    b. Who was the person you were introduced to?
    c. What institution do they work for?

18. What has motivated you to continue attending Freedom University?

a. Has there been specific students or faculty members that have motivated you to attend classes?

19. If you weren't attending class sessions or outside-of-class activities such as protests or other events, how do you think you would choose to spend that time?

Personal Reflection

20. What does Freedom University mean to you?

21. Why did you choose to be involved with Freedom University?

22. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

23. Finally, is there anything else you'd like to comment on, maybe something that I didn't ask that seems relevant or return to a topic that we discussed earlier?

AERA grant questions:

24. When you think back to your time in high school, what information do you think would have been helpful for you as you began to think about college?

25. What information do you wish you knew during your high school years that you now know about college?

26. If you could help a current high school student who is undocumented, what information would you provide to him or her, as well as their high school counselor that could help with the college search and application process?

27. What tools or resources would you suggest for undocumented students who are looking to enroll in college?

APPENDIX D

Former Students – Interview Protocol

Former students of Freedom University who are now enrolled in college

Script:

Thanks again for being here today and agreeing to meet with me. As you know, my study is looking at Freedom University and how it works to help undocumented students reach higher education. Please know that everything we discuss will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym and so your answers will remain anonymous. The interview will take roughly one hour and it includes various questions related to your experiences. I'll use a personal recorder in order to be able to go back and transcribe our discussion. Please let me know if you need a break at any point in time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. What is your birthdate?
3. What country are you originally from?
4. When did you first move to the United States?
5. How long have you lived in Georgia?

Introduction to Freedom U.

6. When did you begin taking classes at Freedom University?
7. How did you find out about Freedom University?
    a. When was this?
    b. Who told you about Freedom University?
    c. How close are you in terms of your relationship with this person?
    d. What role does this person play in Freedom University, if any?
8. How did you arrange your transportation to classes at Freedom University?

9. What do you see as the main purpose of Freedom University?

Protests

10. Did you ever participate in any protest activities as a part of your time in Freedom University?

    a. How did you get involved with these protests?
    b. If you participated in protests, do you feel your involvement influenced your college prospects and applications? How?

11. How much of a factor does protesting and these types of efforts play into the work being done at Freedom University?

12. Were there key events that occurred with the protests?

13. Who were the key actors involved with the protests, both within and outside of Freedom University?

College Search

14. Do you feel that you would currently be enrolled at a college/university without having been a part of Freedom University?

    a. If not, what types of things do you think you would be doing at this time instead of attending college?

15. How did Freedom University help you with your college search process?

16. Who was the most influential faculty member in terms of helping you with the college search process?

    a. Did this person offer any assistance with counseling, financial aid, admission applications, etc.?

17. When you were considering the prospects of attending a college, did you ever contact any other staff or faculty members at other institutions to discuss the prospects of attending college as a result of a faculty member at Freedom University introducing you?

    a. Who was this faculty member at Freedom University?
    b. Who was the person you were introduced to?
    c. What institution do they work for?

18. What motivated you to continue attending Freedom University when you were a student there?

    a. Were there any specific students or faculty members that motivated you to attend classes?

Personal Reflection

19. What does Freedom University mean to you?

20. Why did you choose to be involved with Freedom University?

21. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

22. Finally, is there anything else you'd like to comment on, maybe something that I didn't ask that seems relevant or return to a topic that we discussed earlier?

AERA grant questions:

23. When you think back to your time in high school, what information do you think would have been helpful for you as you began to think about college?

24. What information do you wish you knew during your high school years that you now know about college?

25. If you could help a current high school student who is undocumented, what information would you provide to him or her, as well as their high school counselor, that could help them with the college search and application process?

26. What tools or resources would you suggest for undocumented students who are looking to enroll in college?

APPENDIX E

Faculty - Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol – Faculty/Administrators

Script:

Thanks again for being here today and agreeing to meet with me. As you know, my study is looking at Freedom University and how it works to help undocumented students reach higher education. Please know that everything we discuss will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym and so your answers will remain anonymous. The interview will take roughly one hour and it includes various questions related to your experiences. I'll use a personal recorder in order to be able to go back and transcribe our discussion. Please let me know if you need a break at any point in time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Creation of Freedom University

1. I'd like to begin with a general overview question and ask you to outline how Freedom University was created?

   Follow-up probes:
   a. What was the process that drew your interest to Freedom University?
   b. Who were the key actors in establishing Freedom University?
   c. To your knowledge, who are some of the other key volunteers within Freedom University?

2. What do you see as the primary objectives of Freedom University?

Protests

3. Can you talk about how the process began with protesting the ban in place by the Board of Regents and the timeframe in which that all took place?

   a. Were there key events that occurred with the protests?
   b. Who were the key actors involved with the protests, both within and outside of Freedom University?

4. How much of a factor does protesting and these types of efforts play into the work being done at Freedom University?

    a. Do you participate in any of the protest activities?
    b. As far as students are concerned, do you feel protesting impacts their college prospects, and if so, how?

Freedom U. and college access

5. How do you believe Freedom University works to create college access for undocumented students?

6. Do you feel that these students would be as likely to pursue postsecondary education without the assistance of Freedom University?

7. Of the students who have attended Freedom University and are now enrolled in college, how likely do you think it is that they would be in a postsecondary setting without having been a part of Freedom University?

8. Have you introduced students to faculty members at other institutions?

    a. To whom have you introduced this student?
    b. What is the nature of your relationship with this faculty member?
    c. Is it strictly a professional relationship, or more of a friendly relationship?
    d. Why this specific faculty member?
    e. Do they have a specific interest in helping undocumented students?
    f. How did you decide to introduce a particular student to a faculty member? What were the deciding factors?

Personal Reflection

9. Why did you choose to be involved with Freedom University and what does it mean to you?

10. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

11. Finally, is there anything else you'd like to comment on, maybe something that I didn't ask that seems relevant or return to a topic that we discussed earlier?

APPENDIX F

Volunteers – Interview Protocol

Current/former volunteers at Freedom University

Script:

Thanks again for being here today and agreeing to meet with me. As you know, my study is looking at Freedom University and how it works to help undocumented students reach higher education. Please know that everything we discuss will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym and so your answers will remain anonymous. The interview will take roughly one hour and it includes various questions related to your experiences. I'll use a personal recorder in order to be able to go back and transcribe our discussion. Please let me know if you need a break at any point in time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. When is your birthdate?
3. Are you an American citizen?
4. What country are you originally from?
5. How long have you lived in Georgia?

Introduction to Freedom U.

6. When did you begin assisting Freedom University?
7. Are you still involved with Freedom University today, and if so, in what capacity?
8. How did you find out about Freedom University?
    a. When was this?
    b. Who told you about Freedom University?
    c. How close are you in terms of your relationship with this person?
    d. What role does this person play in Freedom University, if any?

9. What is/was your role within Freedom University?

10. What do you see as the main purpose of Freedom University?

Protests

11. Do you ever participate in any protest activities as a part of Freedom University?

    a. How did you get involved with these protests?

12. How much of a factor does protesting and these types of efforts play into the work being done at Freedom University?

13. Were there key events that occurred with the protests?

14. Who are the key actors involved with the protests, both within and outside of Freedom University?

College Search

15. How do you believe Freedom University works to help undocumented students reach their dreams of attending college?

16. During your time at Freedom University, who do you feel was the most influential faculty member in terms of helping students during the college search process?

    a. To your knowledge, does this person offer any assistance with counseling, financial aid, admission applications, etc.?

17. During your time at Freedom University, what motivated you to continue assisting the students and faculty?

Personal Reflection

18. What does Freedom University mean to you?

19. Why did you choose to be involved with Freedom University?

20. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

21. Finally, is there anything else you'd like to comment on, maybe something that I didn't ask that seems relevant or return to a topic that we discussed earlier?