



5-4-2015

Bridgewater State University Students' Perceptions of Undocumented Immigrants

Christina Minich

Follow this and additional works at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj

 Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Minich, Christina. (2015). Bridgewater State University Students' Perceptions of Undocumented Immigrants. In *BSU Honors Program Theses and Projects*. Item 106. Available at: http://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj/106
Copyright © 2015 Christina Minich

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

Bridgewater State University Students' Perceptions of Undocumented Immigrants

Christina Minich

Submitted in Partial Completion of the
Requirements for Commonwealth Honors in Social Work

Bridgewater State University

May 4, 2015

Dr. Laura Boutwell, Thesis Director
Dr. Kathleen Bailey, Committee Member
Dr. Emily Douglas, Committee Member
Dr. Beverly Lovett, Committee Member

Abstract

Undocumented immigration is a hot-topic discussion in the United States and among students at Bridgewater State University. The perceptions students have may impact future policies, how undocumented immigrants are treated, and the overall cultural competency of the country. This study examines the perceptions students at Bridgewater State University have about undocumented immigrants and if a number of demographic variables affect their opinions and beliefs. In this study, a total of 236 undergraduate students at Bridgewater State University participated in an online survey. The survey results demonstrated that students' political party, major in college, and year at Bridgewater State University impact their perceptions about undocumented immigrants.

Despite a decrease in the population of undocumented immigrants since 2007, undocumented immigration remains a key issue. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions students at Bridgewater State University have of undocumented immigrants. I explore the prevalence of negative perceptions of undocumented immigrants and examine correlations between these perceptions and specific populations at Bridgewater State University. The primary goals of my study are to determine perceptions about undocumented immigrants, to analyze various populations and their perceptions of undocumented immigrants, and to develop an action plan to increase positive perceptions of students on campus. In this paper, I define an undocumented immigrant as an individual residing in the United States without legal status; this includes individuals who have entered the United States illegally or who have entered legally and have subsequently lost their legal status.

The Undocumented Immigrant Population

In 2007, undocumented immigration peaked at 12 million people residing in the United States (Passel & Cohn, 2012). Since 2007, the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States has dropped. In 2011, about 11.1 million undocumented immigrants were living in the United States. The decrease in numbers has been attributed to a decrease in immigration from Mexico. In 2000, approximately 770,000 immigrants arrived annually from Mexico, with the majority being undocumented. That number dropped to approximately 140,000 in 2010, with the majority of immigrants entering legally (Passel & Cohn, 2012).

Undocumented immigrants live in dispersed areas throughout the United States. In 2008, states with the highest levels of undocumented immigrant populations, in order of highest to lowest, were in California, Texas, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Arizona, Georgia, Illinois,

North Carolina, and Virginia (Passel & Cohn, 2009). In the United States, approximately 154 million people make up the labor force with 8.3 million (5.4%) being undocumented immigrants. Undocumented immigrants are most likely to work in unskilled jobs. One in four farm workers are undocumented and about 17% of construction workers are undocumented. In 2007, undocumented immigrants had a median household income of \$36,000 and did not receive significantly higher incomes dependent on their length of stay in the United States. About twice as many undocumented immigrants live in poverty as compared to United States citizens. Approximately one third of children of undocumented immigrants and one fifth of adults live in poverty. Most children of undocumented immigrants, 73%, are legal citizens by birth. In 2008, there were 4 million citizen children of undocumented parents in the United States and 1.5 million undocumented children (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

Causes of Negative Perceptions

In addition to being driven by economic concerns, anti-immigrant bias is linked to group attitudes. In the 1990s and 2000s, negative media coverage of Latino undocumented immigrants outweighed other populations (Valentino, Brader, & Jardina, 2013). This has caused increased anxiety among white Americans towards undocumented immigrants, particularly Latinos, entering the U.S. For white Americans, this has led to a synonymous linking of immigrant and Latino, if not immigrant and Mexican. Latino immigrants are often seen the “out-group,” which breeds negative perceptions. In a study conducted by Valentino, Brader, and Jardina (2013), the researchers found that the difference between whites’ feelings about their own group versus Latinos had an impact on their perceptions of the availability of American jobs and on their support for immigration restrictions. Of ethnic groups in America, whites tend to have the most

negative perception of undocumented immigrants, who they perceive to be almost exclusively Latino.

Immigration history in the United States has been marked by significant anti-immigrant bias to various populations, including Irish, Italian, and Chinese immigrants. Fourteen years after the United States was founded, the first law defining citizenship arose (Chomsky, 2007). This law restricted naturalization in America to free white men. By defining citizens as white, Native Americans and blacks, free or not, were denied the privilege of citizenship. In 1875, the Page Act, the first federal act to exclude a particular target group was passed (Ewing, 2012). This act excluded criminals, prostitutes, and Chinese contract laborers from entrance into the U.S. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, which suspended immigration of Chinese workers for ten years, denied Chinese citizenship, and allowed for deportation of Chinese people. The act was renewed for the following twenty years and was made permanent in 1902 (US Department of State, 2015). The Chinese Exclusion Act was not repealed until 1943 by the Magnuson Act which allowed for Chinese immigration to resume at a quota of 105 per year (Ewing, 2012).

Myths about Immigrants

There are many myths surrounding undocumented immigrants in the United States, resulting in negative perceptions by U.S. citizens. Historically and in present day, these myths can lead to discrimination, anti-immigrant bias, and governmental policies that negatively affect undocumented immigrants. Delving into the myths surrounding immigrants, both documented and undocumented, illustrates the false perceptions many hold.

In order to demonstrate the existing negative perceptions of undocumented immigrants, I have outlined four dominant myths. These myths are that undocumented immigrants “steal” jobs

from the labor force, undocumented immigrants do not pay taxes and take advantage of the welfare system, undocumented immigrants bring crime to American cities and towns, and that most immigrants cross the border illegally to enter the United States. These myths demonstrate what fuels the anti-immigrant bias that may exist on the Bridgewater State University campus; this study, in part, explores the extent to which students believe or reject prevailing myths about undocumented immigrants.

Myth 1:*Undocumented Immigrants “Steal” Jobs from the Labor Force*

Despite the belief that undocumented immigrants take jobs from American citizens, there is no pattern that demonstrates that unemployment rates are affected by immigration rates (Chomsky, 2007). The number of jobs in America is not a fixed number; it is a flexible one that is affected by a wide variety of variables. Throughout times of economic depression and growth in the United States, rates of unemployment do not correlate with immigration rates (Chomsky, 2007). From the 1920s until the 1970s, the unemployment rate on average was between four and six percent. During the Great Depression, the unemployment rate rose to over twenty percent and dropped again in the early 1940s. Lower rates of immigrants entered the United States during the time of the Depression while thousands of Mexican immigrants were being deported from the Southwest. These deportations did not increase employment in the region. Since the 1970s, unemployment rates of risen variably between five and ten percent (Chomsky, 2007). These rates of unemployment do not show any correlation to the immigration rates during this time.

As communities in the United States grow, the number of jobs grows relative to the needs of the growing population. When the community’s population decreases, people lose jobs due to

less demand. Further, undocumented immigrants stimulate state and local economies and provide the workforce with unskilled labor pool (Androff, Ayon, Becerra, & Castillo, 2012).

The high percentages of undocumented immigrants in the United States has been connected to lower rates of unemployment. This is because more undocumented immigrants perform labor-intensive and low wage jobs, causing more specialization of work done by American citizens and an increase in their wages (Androff, Ayon, Becerra, & Castillo, 2012). Finally, the American economy is a part of the larger global economy. Immigration benefits the host country because the sending country raises the individual until working age (Nadadur, 2009). This ultimately benefits the American economy over the sending countries in the world market because the United States benefits from the labor being done by the adult.

Jobs performed by undocumented immigrants are highly concentrated in low-skilled labor (Ruark, 2013). Much of this labor involves low pay and hazardous conditions that many Americans would not accept. Farming in the United States has become increasingly dependent on the work done by undocumented immigrants (Ruark, 2013). At least one in four of all farm workers are undocumented and are paid on average \$5,600 less annually than authorized workers. If wages were increased to attract native-born Americans, it would result in either higher food prices or a decline in food production in America (Ruark, 2013). Contrary to popular belief, undocumented immigrants are shown to increase jobs and benefit the United States economy.

Myth 2:

Undocumented Immigrants do not Pay Taxes and Take Advantage of the Welfare System

When immigrants are seen as competing with the economic resources in the host country, attitudes and perceptions become negative (Brochu, Dickson, & Esses, 2012). These perceptions include the belief that undocumented immigrants do not pay taxes and take advantage of the welfare system in America. With approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, opinions of immigrants draining the economy have intensified.

Despite public opinion that undocumented immigrants put a strain on the economy, they do the opposite. Undocumented immigrants are more likely to pay taxes than they are to use public assistance. Undocumented immigrants pay taxes through sales tax, real estate taxes, and gas taxes, just as citizens do. Three-fourths of undocumented immigrants who are employed in the formal economy become employed by presenting false social security numbers (Chomsky, 2007). These undocumented immigrants have state and federal income taxes and social security withheld from their paychecks. In 2010, undocumented immigrants paid \$11.2 billion in state and local taxes (Yang & Vargas, 2013). It is estimated that in 2010, undocumented immigrants contributed approximately \$13 billion to Social Security that they are ineligible to collect (Goss Wade, Skirvin, Morris, Bye, & Huston, 2013).

Despite paying into public services, most undocumented immigrants do not utilize them out of fear or because they do not qualify. Households headed by at least one undocumented immigrant are less than half as likely to use federal public assistance programs as documented immigrants and citizens (Yang & Vargas, 2013). Undocumented immigrants are not able to apply for public assistance themselves because of their status. They can apply for their children if their children are United States citizens (Broder & Blazer, 2011).

Myth 3:*Undocumented Immigrants Bring Crime to American Cities and Towns*

Undocumented immigrants do not pose a threat to the safety of American cities and towns. Between 1999 and 2006, violent and non-violent crime rates decreased faster in high immigrant jurisdictions than in areas with a lower undocumented immigrant population (Androff, Ayon, Becerra, & Castillo, 2012). It has been speculated that immigration actually lowers the crime rates in American cities and towns. According to Sampson and Bean (2006), the reduction of violence over the past decade is due in part to increasing diversity and immigration. In 2006, Sampson conducted a study of cities in Chicago and found that first-generation immigrants were 45% less likely to commit violent crimes than third-generation American citizens.

Between 1999 and 2006, undocumented immigrants had a lower rate of incarceration than that of native-born citizens. The cost of incarceration for undocumented immigrants is less than 5% of state and local budgets allocated to law enforcement (Congressional Budget Office, 2007). Despite public opinion and constant media exaggeration about crime and immigration, immigrants actually have a positive impact on the safety of American cities and towns.

Myth 4:*Most Undocumented Immigrants Cross the Border Illegally to Enter the United States*

Despite the fact that many undocumented immigrants do cross the border illegally, it is not the majority. Of the 11.1 million undocumented immigrants, approximately 5.9 million are from Mexico, 2.5 million from the rest of Latin America, 1.5 million from Asia, 600,000 from Canada and Europe, and 400,000 from Africa (Chomsky, 2007). Many of the undocumented

immigrants from Mexico enter the country without any documentation through the border. Most undocumented immigrants from outside of the Americas enter with travel or work visas and overstay those visas. Latin American undocumented immigrants are split between entering with visas and crossing the United States-Mexico border (Chomsky, 2007).

The rates of undocumented immigrants overstaying visas has increased since 2008. The issuance rate of visas has increased in at least twelve countries since 2008, with Mexico's issuance rising 22%. The increase in issuance of visas may be increasing this mode of entrance into the United States. These immigrants enter the United States with a valid visa and stay past the visa expiration date. In 2013, approximately 40% of undocumented immigrants entered the United States utilizing a visa and overstayed the expiration (Seminara, 2013).

Impact of Negative Perceptions

False media portrayals can lead Americans to believe undocumented immigrants increase crime rates, negatively impact the economy, and that they are in competition for limited resources. This leads to negative sentiments about undocumented immigrants in America. These myths function as perceived threats and have increased negative outcomes for undocumented immigrants in American society. New bills and laws that increase deportation of undocumented immigrants not only psychologically traumatize the population, but it negatively impacts the United States economy (Brochu, Dickson, & Esses, 2012).

State and local ant-immigrant bills shape the everyday lives of undocumented immigrants and citizens. In 2004, Arizona passed Proposition 200, which in part required public employees to check the legal status of individuals before the receipt of public benefits (Jones, Furman, Loya, Acherman, Negi, Epps, & Mondragon, 2014). This act paved the way for additional

legislation in the state of Arizona. In 2010, Arizona's bill, SB 1070, was signed into law. This bill required local authorities to investigate legal status, report status to the federal government, arrest undocumented immigrants, and facilitate their removal from the country (Jones, et.al, 2014). SB 1070 required anyone over the age of eighteen to carry legal identification, criminalized harboring or transporting an undocumented immigrant, legalized the power to arrest without a warrant, and other anti-immigrant actions (Jones, et.al, 2014).

SB 1070 created a hostile environment for the Latino population in Arizona, undocumented and documented alike. If the anti-immigrant laws in Arizona eliminated all undocumented immigrants, the state would pay a high price (Wolgin & Kelley, 2011). Arizona's economy would shrink by approximately \$48.8 billion and would eliminate 581,000 jobs. SB 1070 was challenged by the Supreme Court in 2012 where three sections were declared unconstitutional: the piece that made working as an undocumented immigrant illegal, the failure to carry federally administered papers as a crime, and the authorization of a warrantless arrest (Jones, et.al, 2014). Despite these downfalls, some states, such as Alabama, Kentucky, and Tennessee, have followed in Arizona's footsteps in creating anti-immigrant laws (Wolgin & Kelley, 2011).

In addition to anti-immigrant bills, hate crimes against undocumented immigrants are fueled by negative perceptions. With the Latino population often scapegoated in the immigration debate, hate crimes against undocumented immigrants often target Latinos (Mock, 2007). These hate crimes manifest themselves as both physical and psychological violence. There are no national data collection methods for measuring hate crimes against undocumented immigrants (Shively, Subramanian, Drucker, Edgerton, 2013). However, there was a significant increase in

hate-crimes against Latinos in the mid-2000s, 35%, with a slight downturn since 2010 (Mock, 2007) (Shively, et.al, 2013).

Methodology

Students at Bridgewater State University over the age of eighteen were asked to complete an online survey. The students were all undergraduate students at Bridgewater State University. The participants in the study completed a 21 question online survey. The survey was created using the online system Qualtrics. Qualtrics is an online research software utilized for surveys and other online research. The first eight questions were demographic information and the remaining questions focused on the participants' opinions on issues related to undocumented immigration. These questions explored participants' comfort level with or beliefs about the undocumented immigrant population, undocumented children, the economy, employment, the welfare system, and the citizenship process. Respondents were given the option not to answer any questions that they felt uncomfortable with. These questions were asked in order to better determine how students perceive the undocumented immigrant population.

Questions 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, and 19 measured the extent to which respondents held pro-immigrant sentiments, while Questions 13, 14, 15, 18, 20, and 21 were framed more as either anti-immigrant statements or myths about undocumented immigrants. See Table 1 for results of each question and Appendix I for a copy of the full survey. The survey questions utilized a Likert scale with answers being Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. No neutral option was provided to eliminate response ambivalence in participants. Obtaining the opinions of participants was the primary goal and providing a neutral option would not have been as effective in determining actual student perceptions.

After obtaining electronic consent, participants completed the online survey. The survey was distributed through Facebook postings with parameters that the participant must be at least 18 years old and a student at Bridgewater State University. The post asking for participants was made in Facebook groups for each class year currently attending Bridgewater State University. Within 48 hours, 233 responses were collected. Due to the limit of responses allowed by Qualtrics, the survey was closed with 236 responses after four days.

Results

A total of 236 students at Bridgewater State University participated in the online survey. Two hundred thirty-three students were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six, one student was thirty, and one student did not respond to the question. Of the 233 respondents between 18-26, 50 were 18 years old, 49 were 19 years old, 43 were 20 years old, 62 were 22 years old, 25 were 23 years old, one was 24 years old, one was 25 years old, and one was 26 years old.

Females comprised 78.7% of the participants and 22.3% of participants were male. No transgender participants participated in the survey. The question of gender was a write-in question and allowed students to self-identify their gender. Two hundred thirty students responded to their year in school: the first year students made up 28% of responders, sophomores made up 18%, and juniors and seniors each made up 27% of the responders. Of the 224 responses about political affiliation, 15.6% were Republican, 31.7% were Democrat, and 52.7% were Independent. Religious affiliation was also a write in question, and participants were highly concentrated as Catholic (36%), Christian (17.8%), and no affiliation (25.8%).

When asked about their comfort level with the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States (question 10), participants' answers of strongly agree or agree signaled an

immigrant-friendly response. Thirty-eight percent of participants answered with immigrant-friendly responses (7% strongly agree and 31% agree) and 62% of participants answered with opposing responses (42% disagree and 21% strongly disagree). Overall, the responses to this question demonstrated a discomfort with the number of undocumented immigrants residing in the United States.

When asked if undocumented immigrants contribute positively to the economy (question 11), 9% of participants strongly agreed and 33% agreed, while 41% disagreed and 18% strongly disagreed. Overall, more participants (59%) disagreed and had negative perceptions of how undocumented immigrants impact the economy. Question 12 was worded as a pro-immigrant stance on the right of immigrant children to have access to education. Twenty-six percent of participants strongly agreed, 39% agreed, 22% disagreed, and 14% strongly disagreed. This question demonstrates that the majority (65%) of participants may have a more pro-immigrant perceptions of undocumented children rather than their parents or other adults. Responses to Question 17 demonstrates a similar preference towards undocumented immigrant children. Seventeen percent of participants strongly agreed that children of undocumented immigrants should be allowed to remain in the United States regardless of their immigration status: 42% agreed, 32% disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed.

Respondents demonstrated a strong opposition towards undocumented immigrants accessing public assistance (question 16). Only 6% strongly agreed and 21% agreed that undocumented immigrants should have access to public assistance, while an overwhelming majority (72%) opposed undocumented immigrants receiving public assistance, as 36% disagreed and 36% strongly disagreed with the statement. When asked if undocumented immigrants should have access to health care (question 19), 12% strongly agreed, 42% agreed,

28% disagreed, and 19% strongly disagreed. These two questions demonstrate how 54% of participants believe that undocumented immigrants should have access to healthcare while 72% of participants believe undocumented immigrants should not receive public assistance. Of interest in this finding is that participants seem to delineate the rights of immigrants to receive health care versus the rights of immigrants to receive other forms of public assistance.

Participants were also asked several questions related to prevailing myths about undocumented immigrants. Participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the myth that undocumented immigrants “steal jobs” from American citizens (question 13). Fourteen percent of participants strongly agreed, 33% agreed, 41% disagreed, and 12% strongly disagreed. Participants were almost split on their perceptions towards undocumented immigrants and their impact on the U.S. labor market. Participants were presented with the myth that undocumented immigrants do not pay taxes (question 15) and 14% strongly agreed with the myth, 45% agreed, 31% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed. When asked if there was a system in place for undocumented immigrants to become citizens (question 21), 74% of participants incorrectly believed that there is a system in place.

Participants were asked if all undocumented immigrants should speak English (question 18) and if most undocumented immigrants cross the border illegally (question 20). Twenty-two percent of participants strongly agreed that undocumented immigrants should speak English, 36% agreed, 32% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed. In regards to most undocumented immigrants crossing the border illegally, 12% strongly agreed, 41% agreed, 40% disagreed, and 6% strongly disagreed. An overwhelming majority of participants disagreed (76%) with the notion that all undocumented immigrants should be returned to their country of origin regardless of the situation (question 14).

It is interesting that participants did not believe all undocumented immigrants should be deported, yet they are split on issues of how they affect the country economically and the benefits they should receive. Participants seem to have a notion that some undocumented immigrants should be allowed to stay in the United States while others should not. Specific situations seem to impact how students perceive undocumented immigrants. Overall, the data demonstrates a split in the student population's perceptions of undocumented immigrants. Respondents seem to have a slightly more positive view of undocumented children and a more negative perception of how undocumented immigrants impact the economy. The data also demonstrates that most students do not hold polarized views on the majority of questions. Most answers are clustered in the agree and disagree categories rather than the strongly agree and strongly disagree categories. A summary of responses are included in Table 1: Responses to all Perception Survey Questions.

Table 1.

Responses to all Perception Survey Questions

<u>Survey Questions</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>
Question 10	7%	31%	42%	21%
Question 11	9%	33%	41%	18%
Question 12	26%	39%	22%	14%
Question 13	14%	33%	41%	12%
Question 14	8%	16%	47%	29%
Question 15	14%	45%	31%	10%
Question 16	6%	21%	36%	36%
Question 17	17%	42%	32%	9%
Question 18	22%	36%	32%	10%
Question 19	12%	42%	28%	19%
Question 20	12%	41%	40%	6%
Question 21	12%	62%	18%	7%

When students were asked how they would refer to a person residing in the United States without legal status, students responded with a write-in answer. These answers varied from

immigrant-friendly responses to discriminatory responses. Some of the most pro-immigrant responses included “undocumented citizen,” “citizen,” and “an American.” A few anti-immigrant responses were “illegal alien,” “unnecessary,” “inconsiderate,” and “a landscaper.”

Table 2: Labels Used by Participants shows the responses all participants had to this question.

Table 2.

Labels Used by Participants

<u>Labels</u>	<u>Prevalence</u>	<u>View of undocumented immigrants</u>
Illegal immigrant	79	Not immigrant-friendly
Immigrant	44	Neutral
Illegal alien	20	Not immigrant-friendly
Illegal	18	Not immigrant-friendly
Undocumented	17	Neutral
Alien	13	Not immigrant-friendly
A person	6	Immigrant-friendly
Undocumented immigrant	6	Immigrant-friendly
Undocumented citizen	5	Immigrant-friendly
Citizen	5	Immigrant-friendly
Illegal Resident	2	Not immigrant-friendly
American	2	Immigrant-friendly
Undocumented worker	1	Immigrant-friendly
Unnecessary	1	Not immigrant-friendly
A criminal	1	Not immigrant-friendly
Inconsiderate	1	Not immigrant-friendly
Human	1	Immigrant-friendly
An individual	1	Immigrant-friendly
Living without legal status	1	Neutral
Landscaper	1	Not immigrant-friendly
His or her name	1	Immigrant-friendly
Non-citizen	1	Neutral
Illegal citizen	1	Neutral

The most prevalent answers by students were illegal immigrant, immigrant, illegal alien, and illegal. Three of these four top responses are not immigrant-friendly and demonstrate some level of anti-immigrant bias. The pro-immigrant responses and culturally competent responses were in the lower ranges of prevalence. The most anti-immigrant responses such as “landscaper” or “inconsiderate” were also in the lower ranges of prevalence. Of the 228 responses, I coded

136 as not immigrant-friendly or anti-immigrant, 64 as neutral responses, and 28 responses as immigrant-friendly or immigrant-inclusive.

Statistical Analysis

In this study, I hypothesized that the demographics of age, gender, year at Bridgewater State University, semesters at Bridgewater State University, major in college, political affiliation, religious affiliation, and race might have an effect on how students perceive undocumented immigrants. In the analysis of the data utilizing a one-way analysis variance (ANOVA), the demographics for race and religion showed no statistical significance in relation to any dependent variables. Therefore, no further analysis of these demographics will be discussed. The demographic of semesters at Bridgewater State University is not included in this analysis due to the variance in responses by participants, some of whom listed the number of semesters in school and some of whom listed number of years. Age, gender, year at Bridgewater State University, religious affiliation, and race had statistical significance at a level of .05. For the scope of this honors thesis, the following variables are discussed: political affiliation, colleges, and year at Bridgewater State University.

Political affiliation and comfort level

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated on participants' comfort level with the number of undocumented immigrants residing in the United States. This analysis compared whether the participants' political affiliations affected their comfort level. The analysis was significant, $F(2,222) = 9.976, p = .000$. Since the data was statistically significant, a Tukey Post Hoc test was performed to compare each condition to every other condition. Post Hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Republicans ($M=3.26$,

SD=.741) was significantly different than Independents ($M=2.82$, $SD=.809$) and Democrats ($M=2.51$, $SD=.876$). The Tukey HSD also indicated the responses of Independents and Democrats was significantly different. This demonstrates that Republicans at Bridgewater State University are more likely to be less comfortable with undocumented immigrants than both Independents and Democrats. Independents are more comfortable than Republicans and less comfortable than Democrats. Democrats are most likely to be comfortable with the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Political affiliation and the economy

A one-way ANOVA was calculated on participants' belief on whether or not undocumented immigrants contribute positively to the economy. This analysis compared whether the participants' political affiliations affected their belief about undocumented immigrants and the economy. The analysis was significant, $F(2,222) = 4.078$, $p = .018$. Post Hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Republicans ($M=2.91$, $SD=.887$) was significantly different than Independents ($M=2.74$, $SD=.828$) and Democrats ($M=2.45$, $SD=.907$). The Tukey HSD also indicated that Independents and Democrats are significantly different. This demonstrates that Republicans at Bridgewater State University are more likely to believe undocumented immigrants do not positively contribute to the United States economy than both Independents and Democrats. Democrats most strongly believe that undocumented immigrants contribute positively to the economy.

Political affiliation and education for children

A one-way ANOVA was calculated to determine if participants' political affiliation affected their belief that undocumented immigrant children should have a right to attend public schools. The analysis was significant, $F(2,222) = 9.897, p = .000$. Post Hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Republicans ($M=2.89, SD=.932$) was significantly different than Independents ($M=2.18, SD=.954$) and Democrats ($M=2.03, SD=.985$). Independents and Democrats are not statistically significant, $p = .559$. Republicans at Bridgewater State University are less likely to believe undocumented immigrant children have a right to attend public schools than both Democrats and Independents. Democrats and Independents at Bridgewater State University do not differ in their opinions on the topic.

The remaining results related to political affiliation are reflected in Table 3.

Table 3.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Political Affiliation

Variable	Df	F	n	P
Stealing Jobs (Q.13)	224	4.125	225	.017
Deportation (Q.14)	224	6.029	225	.003
Taxes (Q.15)	224	4.045	225	.019
Welfare (Q.16)	224	8.515	225	.000
Children Remain (Q.17)	224	14.814	225	.000
Healthcare (Q.19)	224	11.307	225	.000
Border Crossing (Q.20)	223	5.305	224	.006
Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.				

Table 3 demonstrates that questions 13-17 and 19-20 showed statistical significance in relation to political affiliation. The trends were consistent that Republicans were the least

immigrant-friendly in responses and Democrats were the most immigrant-friendly. In questions 13, 14, 17, and 19, there was no significance between Democrats and Independents, however, there was significance between Republicans and Independents. On questions 16 and 20 there was no statistical significance between Republicans and Independents, but there was significance between both parties and Democrats. On question 15, the only statistical significance was between Democrats and Republicans.

Year at Bridgewater State University and stealing jobs

In order to determine if year at Bridgewater State University affected participants' belief that undocumented immigrants steal jobs from the labor force, a one-way ANOVA was calculated. The analysis was significant, $F(3,227) = 3.400$, $p = .019$. Post Hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for first year students ($M=2.22$, $SD=.934$) was significantly different than seniors ($M=2.65$, $SD=.845$). First year students were more likely to believe that undocumented immigrants steal jobs from the labor force than seniors at Bridgewater State University. First year students also had a larger standard deviation in responses which could indicate a larger discrepancy in beliefs than seniors. Responses from sophomores and juniors did not show any statistical significance compared to each other, first year students, or seniors.

Colleges and stealing jobs

A one-way ANOVA was calculated to determine participants' belief that undocumented immigrants steal jobs from the labor force. This analysis utilized the independent variable of participants' major grouped by colleges at Bridgewater State University. The analysis was

significant, $F(4,225) = 3.406$, $p = .001$. Post Hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the Business college ($M=1.96$, $SD=.958$) was significantly different than the Humanities and Social Sciences college ($M=2.67$, $SD=.830$). No other colleges showed statistical significance in relation to this topic. This test indicates that students in the Business college are more likely to believe that undocumented immigrants steal jobs from the labor force than students in the Humanities and Social Sciences college.

Colleges and the economy

A one-way ANOVA was calculated on participants' belief on whether or not undocumented immigrants contribute positively to the economy. This analysis utilized the independent variable of participants' major grouped by colleges at Bridgewater State University. The analysis was significant, $F(4,225) = 3.279$, $p = .012$. Since the data was statistically significant, a Tukey Post Hoc test was performed to compare each college to every other college. The Tukey Post Hoc revealed that not all colleges were significantly different when compared to each other. Post Hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the Business college ($M=3.15$, $SD=.925$) was significantly different than the Math and Science college ($M=2.50$, $SD=.950$) and the Humanities and Social Sciences college ($M=2.54$, $SD=.891$). No other colleges showed significance. This analysis shows that students with a major in the Business college believe that undocumented immigrants do not contribute positively to the United States economy more often than students with majors in the Humanities and Social Sciences college or Math and Science college.

Colleges and undocumented immigrant children

A one-way ANOVA was calculated on participants' belief on whether or not children of undocumented immigrants should be allowed to remain in the United States regardless of their immigration status. This analysis utilized the independent variable of participants' major grouped by colleges at Bridgewater State University. The analysis was significant, $F(4,225) = 2.516$, $p = .042$. The Tukey Post Hoc revealed that not all colleges were significantly different when compared to each other. Post Hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the Business college ($M=2.77$, $SD=.863$) was significantly different than the Humanities and Social Sciences college ($M=2.22$, $SD=.859$). No other colleges showed significance. This analysis demonstrates that students in the Business college are less likely to believe children of undocumented immigrants should be allowed to stay in the United States regardless of their status than students in the Humanities and Social Sciences college.

Colleges and border crossing

In order to determine if colleges affect if students believe most undocumented immigrants cross the border illegally, a one-way ANOVA was calculated. This analysis utilized the independent variable of participants' major grouped by colleges at Bridgewater State University. The analysis was significant, $F(4,224) = 2.802$, $p = .027$. The Tukey Post Hoc revealed that no colleges were statistically significant between each other. The data demonstrates that colleges do impact how students perceive this question, but there is no statistical significance between colleges.

Summary of Results

The variables that showed statistical significance in relation to perception questions were political affiliation, college, and year at Bridgewater State University. The results for political affiliation demonstrate that overall, Republican students are more likely to believe the dominant myths surrounding undocumented immigrants and have a more negative perception of undocumented immigrants. Democratic students tend to be the most immigrant-friendly and Independents' perceptions of undocumented immigrants are in between those of Democrats and Republicans. Year in school was significant in relation to the dominant myths surrounding undocumented immigrants. First year students were more likely believe dominant myths than the seniors at Bridgewater State University were. Finally, the results related to colleges demonstrates that the perceptions of students in the Business college tend to be less immigrant friendly than those of students in the Humanities and Social Sciences or Math and Science colleges.

Discussion

College is a time for students to discover their passions and views, develop as leaders, and become positive contributors to society. My interest in undocumented immigration began as a sophomore in the class Social Work 270: Issues of Diversity and Oppression. In this class I discovered the dominant story and myths surrounding undocumented immigrants and had a shift in my own perceptions. We watched documentaries depicting the realities in which undocumented immigrants live along with reading articles to develop a further understanding. Since sophomore year, I have continued to infuse my interest in the subject into my social work classes by addressing undocumented immigration in research and policy papers.

My interest in how students at Bridgewater State University perceive undocumented immigrants began as a sophomore while aiding another social work class with their demonstration to end the “I” (illegal) word. During this community event, I heard students yell profanity and discriminatory comments, saw students take down posters for the event, and heard from personal friends their negative bias towards this population. I was shocked at the anger that the subject of undocumented immigrants could raise on the Bridgewater State University campus. As an orientation leader in the summers of 2013 and 2014, I encountered similar experiences with new first-year students. During the orientation program Be Educated Aware and Respectful, new students were asked to express an opinion on undocumented immigrants during an ice breaker game. Students often demonstrated a large split in opinion and very strong views and perceptions were shared. Because of these experiences and because of my own commitment to being an immigrant ally, I decided to explore how students at Bridgewater State University perceive undocumented immigrants for my honors thesis project. One of my primary goals in pursuing this research was to use the results to inform an action plan to increase cultural competency in students as it relates to undocumented immigrants. Below, I highlight key elements of that action plan.

The Strategic Plan of Bridgewater State University encompasses five key goals that are meant to propel the university forward to success (Bridgewater State University, 2015). Two of the goals identified by the plan are diversity and global awareness and social justice. These two goals illustrate the commitment of Bridgewater State University to increase diverse perspectives on campus and to instill an understanding in students that they are global citizens who can make an impact on their society. The core curriculum at Bridgewater State University requires students to complete classes in writing, logical reasoning, mathematics, spoken communication, arts,

humanities, natural and social and behavioral sciences, global culture, multiculturalism, the U.S. and Massachusetts Constitutions, and two seminars (Bridgewater State University, 2015).

Although these requirements include global culture and multiculturalism, there is no specific diversity or social justice requirement.

In order for students to become more engaged in and educated about issues of social justice and diversity, I believe there should be a requirement in the core curriculum. A suggested class to model this requirement after would be SCWK 270: Issues of Diversity and Oppression. This class educates the students about cultural competency, multiple forms of oppression, and how to be a contributing factor in social justice and equality. There is little taught at Bridgewater State University about the lives of undocumented immigrants. SCWK 270 outlines the truths behind immigration and educates students about the population. Having a class similar to this and required of all students could aid the university in achieving their goals as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

In addition to adding to the core curriculum, the Orientation sessions all students are required to attend as new students could be used to educate students further about social justice and diversity. Diversity is discussed in the Orientation program, but the issue of undocumented immigration is only briefly touched upon. Utilizing these sessions to have discussions about undocumented immigrants could benefit the university by demonstrating to new students that inclusivity and equality is valued on the Bridgewater State University campus.

Finally, programming that involves education surrounding undocumented immigration would strongly benefit the campus. Having personalized stories, such as that of Jose Antonio Vargas who spoke in the spring of 2015, would allow students to witness the first-hand issues that undocumented immigrants face. Individual stories that demonstrate personal struggle may

humanize the issue. In addition to speakers, programming that strictly involves education that opposes the dominant myths could change student perceptions. This programming could simply be an awareness project through posters, documentary showings, or physical demonstrations.

Increasing positive perceptions towards undocumented immigrants on the Bridgewater State University campus will create a safer and more accepting environment for those who may be undocumented and attending the university. Increasing positive perceptions will help to create more culturally competent students, global participants, and individuals who could aid society in a path towards social justice. Educating the campus community on the truth behind the dominant story surrounding undocumented immigrants either through the core curriculum, orientation, or programming is a great place to start.

Reference List

- Becerra, D., Androff, D., Ayon, C., & Castillo, J. (2012). Fear vs. Facts: Examining the Economic Impact of Undocumented Immigrants. *U.S. Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 39, 111-135.
- Bridgewater State University (2015). Bridgewater state university strategic plan. Retrieved from: <http://strategy.bridgew.edu/>
- Bridgewater State Unievrsty (2015). Core curriculum requirements. Retrieved from: http://catalog.bridgew.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=8&poid=1987
- Broder, T. & Blazer, J. (2011). Overview of immigrant eligibility for federal programs. *National Immigration Law Center*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nilc.org/overview-immeligfedprograms.html>
- Chomsky, A. (2007). *"They Take Our Jobs"*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Cohn, D. & Passel, J. (2009). A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States. Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends. Retrieved from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/04/14/a-portrait-of-unauthorized-immigrants-in-the-united-states/>
- Cohn, D. & Passel, J. (2012). Unauthorized immigrants: 11.1 million in 2011. Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends. Retrieved from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/12/06/unauthorized-immigrants-11-1-million-in-2011/>
- Congressional Budget Office (2007). The impact of unauthorized immigrants on the budgets of state and local governments. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/12-6-immigration.pdf>
- Esses, V., Brochu, P., & Dickson, K (2012). Economic Costs, Economic Benefits, and

- Attitudes Toward Immigrants and Immigration. *Analyses of Social Issues & Public Policy*, 12, 133-137. DOI: 10.1111/j.1530-2415.2011.01269.x
- Ewing, W. (2012). Opportunity and exclusion: A Brief History of U.S. Immigration Policy. Immigration Policy Center, 1-7. Retrieved from: http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/opportunity_exclusion_011312.pdf
- Goss, S., Wade, A., Skirvin, J., Morris, M., Bye, K., & Huston, D. (2013). Effects of unauthorized immigration on the actuarial status of the social security trust funds. *Social Security Administration*. Retrieved from: http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=14&ved=0CDMQFjADOAo&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.socialsecurity.gov%2Foact%2FNOTES%2Fpdf_notes%2Fnote151.pdf&ei=JHI9Vfb2IIq2sAWqyIH4CA&usg=AFQjCNFbmLSLDV5qKlj3wld0z_azJjE-vg&sig2=to06S_iTLdAnYINRx9Reog
- Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (2013). Undocumented Immigrants' State and Local Tax Contributions. Retrieved from: <http://www.itep.org/pdf/undocumentedtaxes.pdf>
- Jones, S., Furman, R., Loya, M., Acherman, A., Negi, N., Epps, D., & Mondragon, G. (2014). The rise of anti-immigrant policies: the analysis of three state laws and implications for social work. *Intersectionalities: A Global Journal of Social Work Analysis, Research, Polity, and Practice*, 3, 39-61. Retrieved from: http://www.academia.edu/9322582/The_Rise_of_Anti-immigrant_Policies_An_Analysis_of_Three_State_Laws_and_Implications_for_Social_Work
- Mock, B. (2007). Hate crimes against Latinos rising nationwide. *Southern Poverty Law Center*.

- Retrieved from: <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2007/winter/immigration-backlash>
- Ruark, E. (2013). Illegal immigration and agribusiness. *Federation for American Immigration Reform*. Retrieved from: <http://www.fairus.org/publications/illegal-immigration-and-agribusiness>
- Sampson, R. (2006). Open doors don't invite criminals: Is increased immigration behind crime drop? *New York Times*.
- Sampson, R., & Bean, L (2006). Cultural mechanisms and killing fields: A revised theory of community-level inequality. *The Many Colors of Crime: Inequalities of Race, Ethnicity and Crime in America*. New York: New York University Press.
- Seminara, D. (2013). New Pew Report Confirms Visa Overstays Are Driving Increased Illegal Immigration. *Center for Immigration Studies*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cis.org/seminara/new-pew-report-confirms-visa-overstays-are-driving-increased-illegal-immigration>
- Shively, M., Subramanian, R., Drucker, O., & Edgerton, J. (2013). Understanding trends in hate crimes against immigrants and Hispanic-Americans. *National Institute of Justice*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/244755.pdf>
- US Department of State (2015). Chinese immigration and the Chinese exclusion acts. *Office of the Historian*. Retrieved from: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/chinese-immigration>
- Valentino, N., Brader, T., & Jardina, A. (2013). Immigration Opposition Among U.S. Whites: General Ethnocentrism or Media Priming of Attitudes About Latinos? *Political Psychology*, 34, 149-166. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9221.2012.00928.x.

Wolgin, P. & Kelley, A. (2011). Your state can't afford it. *Center for American Progress*.

Retrieved from:

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:flUoTABUmXkJ:https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/07/pdf/state_immigration.pdf+&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us

Yang, J. (Producer) & Vargas, J. A. (Director). (2013). Documented [Motion picture]. United States: CNN Films

Appendix I: Full Survey

Perceptions of Immigrants

You are being invited to participate in a study about how college students view immigration. If you decide to participate, you will complete an electronic survey. Although you may not personally benefit from this research, this study is important because it helps us better understand college students' perceptions of immigration. There are no foreseeable risks, and you may refuse to answer particular questions or withdraw from this study at any time. No answers or information will be saved without you finalizing and submitting your survey. Deciding to withdraw from the study will not affect you in any way. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. If you agree to participate, please click on the link below to continue to the survey. You will have the option to refuse to answer individual questions and may change your mind and leave the study at any time without penalty.

Please only continue with this survey if you are over the age of 18 and you are currently enrolled as a student at Bridgewater State University.

Q1 Age

Q2 Gender

Q3 Year

- Freshman (1)
- Sophomore (2)
- Junior (3)
- Senior (4)

Q4 Semesters at Bridgewater State University

Q5 Major(s)/ Minor(s)

Q6 Political Affiliation

- Democrat (1)
- Republican (2)
- Independent (3)

Q7 Religious Affiliation

Q8 Race

Q9 I would refer to a person residing in the United States without legal status as

This survey chooses to refer to individuals residing in the United States without legal status as "undocumented immigrants". Please choose a response to the following statements based on your opinion.

Q10 I feel comfortable with the current number of undocumented immigrants residing in the United States.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q11 Undocumented immigrants contribute positively to the United States economy.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q12 Undocumented immigrant children have a right to attend public schools and receive an education.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q13 Undocumented immigrants steal jobs from American citizens.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q14 All undocumented immigrants should be returned to their country of origin regardless of the situation.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q15 Undocumented immigrants don't pay taxes.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q16 Undocumented immigrants should be eligible for public assistance dependent on financial need.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q17 Children of undocumented immigrants should be allowed to remain in the United States regardless of their immigration status.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q18 All undocumented immigrants should speak English.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q19 Undocumented immigrants should have access to health care.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q20 Most undocumented immigrants cross the border illegally to enter the United States.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q21 There is a system in place for undocumented immigrants to become citizens.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

By clicking on the "next" arrow you are agreeing to finalizing and submitting your survey answers. If you exit before clicking the "next" button, no answers will be saved.