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# Exploring Undergraduate Students' Attitude Toward Undocumented Immigration: Implications for Agricultural Education

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## **Keywords**

Undocumented immigration, undergraduate students, attitude, agriculture, education

## **Disciplines**

Agricultural Education | Agriculture | Communication | Rural Sociology

## **Comments**

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# Exploring Undergraduate Students' Attitude Toward Undocumented Immigration: Implications for Agricultural Education

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## Abstract

*Undocumented immigration has become a hot political topic. Considering the significant role undocumented immigrants play in U.S. agricultural and natural resources industry and the voting power of the undergraduate students, this study assessed undergraduate students' attitudes toward undocumented immigrant issues. Using a slightly altered Attitudes toward Illegal Aliens Scale, we found the undergraduate students in general had an undecided attitude concerning issues toward undocumented immigration in the U.S. We also found students' gender, political beliefs, and race played a significant role in the development of their attitude toward immigration issues. We recommend agricultural educators to integrate immigration issues and intercultural courses in their programs to help students better understand immigration issues and prepare students to work in the agricultural industry where they will inevitably encounter these issues. Future research should investigate factors that specifically shapes undergraduate students' attitudes toward immigration issues, such as past experiences with immigrants and media exposure.*

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## Introduction

An estimated 900,000 undocumented immigrants live in the State of Florida (Chardy, 2014). This population has played a significant role in Florida's agricultural and natural resource industries, where more than 50% of its farmworkers are undocumented immigrants (Maxwell, 2012). This remains consistent with the entire nation, where the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported the number of hired farmworkers was between 1 and 2.5 million for 2006, and only 22% was US-born workers, and a significant portion of the hired foreign farmworkers was undocumented (Gilbert, 2005; Kandel, 2006; Nisbet, n.d.). Two key political issues have influenced Florida residents' perspectives and attitudes toward undocumented immigrants in the past few years: drivers' licenses and in-state college tuition. In response to these political issues, immigration activists have launched a campaign urging the Florida State Legislature to pass a law that would allow foreign nationals without immigration status to apply for drivers' licenses (Chardy, 2014). Considering issues surrounding higher education, Florida Governor Rick Scott signed a bill to offer undocumented students in-state college tuition (Grovm, 2014), a politically controversial decision.

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Undergraduate students are a significant population, making up more than 20 percent of the voting population (Gendreau, 2016). In the 2016 Presidential election, Millennials – ages 18 to 29 – represented nearly 50 percent of the entire voter population (The Best Colleges, 2017); these new voting opinions have the potential to drastically influence US policy-making now and even more so in the future. Recently, even more young people are engaging in the political discussion surrounding immigration through two distinct forms: demonstrations and social media (Luntz, 2016). Following the conclusion of the 2016 Presidential Election, students at colleges across the country have organized and held rallies to pressure their institutions to protect its undocumented students (Svrluga, 2016). Such demonstrations have generated a multitude of response on social media, stimulating political conversation stemming across opinions, beliefs, and attitudes. Now more than ever, these forms of civic engagement and activism are intertwined with political discourse on social media (Brown, 2016). In the coming years, the biggest test will be presented to college students on social media, as they explore how to use this medium to determine the future of democracy and social justice (Brown, 2016).

The understanding, discourse, and activism surrounding immigration policy span beyond the impact on the lives of immigrants themselves, but also on the well-being of U.S. citizens, employment, national security, and the prosperity of industries employing undocumented immigrants (i.e. agriculture). Hence, ill-informed policy decisions can create severe consequences to agricultural industries due to the large number of immigrant populations working in U.S. fields (Rosenblum, 2009, 2011; Silver, 2012). Therefore, it becomes essential to create well-informed, engaged, aware, and knowledgeable new voters, who hold a significant influence on U.S. immigration policy and will inevitably encounter undocumented immigration issues in their workplace. The purpose of this research study aligns closely with the American Association for Agricultural Education's Research Priority Area 3: Sufficient Scientific and Professional Workforce That Addresses the Challenges of the 21st Century (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016). This section of the National Research Agenda identifies effective methods, models, and programs that will prepare people to work in a global agriculture and natural resource workforce as a necessary area of scientific focus (Roberts et al., 2016, p. 31).

## **Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

### **Attitudes toward Undocumented Immigration: Schema Theory**

This study sought to explore undergraduate students' attitudes toward undocumented immigration. The theoretical foundation that guided this study was schema theory (Piaget, 1952). The concept of schema was proposed by Piaget in 1952 to explain the intelligence of children. The theorist suggested that, since childhood, people organize information into units, attempting to adapt the external world into pre-existing units. Building from this foundational work, Fournier (2009) defined schemas as mental representations that an individual builds over time based on his or her life experiences, using them to establish social information into idea units. Nishida (1999) further explained that schemata were the 'pre-acquainted knowledge' that individuals stock in their minds. When an individual goes into a familiar situation, he or she will retrieve a stock of knowledge, feelings, rationales and behaviors that are associated with the situation. Thus, people's social worlds are "usually constituted within a framework of familiar and pre-acquainted knowledge about various situations" (Nishida, 1999, p.754).

The concept of schema has been applied to research topics within psychology, sociology, intercultural communication, and political science (Abelson, 1981; Barsalow & Sewell, 1985; Bower, Black, & Turner, 1979; Bryan, Dweck, Ross, Kay, & Mislavsky, 2009; Chang, 2009; Gregoire, 2003; Hajek & Giles, 2005; Nishida, 1999; Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008; Olson & Dweck,

2008; Solso, 2003; Timperly & Robinson, 2001; Turner, 1994). These studies have demonstrated that individuals process information and form their attitudes from their pre-existing lens rather than experiencing something completely novel. This process allows the individual to organize the situation quickly based on prior experience (Solso, 2003). On the other hand, new schemata can be formed, replacing old schema to interpret the situation when the situation is so new and overwhelming (Graber, 1988). In addition, different schemata become activated at certain times based on different social environments corresponding to experiences and expectations (Haidt, 2001).

Intercultural communication is frequently analyzed by schema theory about an individual's psychological reactions to unfamiliar environments such as cultural shock, uncertainty reduction, and value orientation (Nishida, 1999). Schema theory has also been used to explain issues related to immigration (Strauss, 2013). A significant amount of literature has documented individuals' positive and negative attitudes toward immigration issues. Positive attitudes have focused on showing humanitarian values to minorities (Cowan, Martinez, & Mendiola, 1997; Katz & Hass, 1988) and undocumented immigrants filling undesirable jobs in the labor market (Odera & Lamm, 2013). The humanitarian values discussed "liberalism and empathic responses to the need and aspirations of minorities, sympathy for minorities, and support of public efforts to improve the lives of minorities" (Cowan, Martinez, & Mendiola, 1997, p. 405), therefore showing acceptance of minorities. Additionally, Odera and Lamm (2013) found that people appreciate the contribution of undocumented immigrants, simply because this population fills the need of hard labor that tends to not be desirable among domestic workers.

Negative attitudes toward undocumented immigration can be summarized by prejudice theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000): realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes. Stephan and Stephan's (2000) studies demonstrated prejudice toward immigrants from Mexico, Asia, and Cuba in the U.S. Examples of realistic threats relating to perceived immigration issues are "crime, drugs, disease, job loss and economic costs for health education and welfare" (Stephan & Stephan, 2000, p. 28). Symbolic threats contain cultural differences such as "work, family, religious, and moral values" (p. 28) that are perceived differently and unfavorably by natives. Intergroup anxiety describes the perceived feeling of worry, anxiety, tension, and discomfort when interacting with minorities such as undocumented immigrants. Common negative stereotypes of immigrants include "dishonest, unintelligent, and clannish" (p.29).

Public opinion about U.S. immigration has shifted from a more liberal stance after World War II to a more conservative and negative position after the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendment in 1965 (Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996; Harwood, 1986; Morris, 1985; Odera & Lamm, 2013; Simon, 1985). Demographics have been shown to make a significant difference in people's attitude toward undocumented immigration. Espenshade and Calhoun (1993) analyzed southern Californian residents' opinions toward undocumented immigration and found that foreign born respondents who held higher wages and higher education tended to view undocumented immigration as less severe of an issue (Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996). Public opinion reports in the state of Florida (Odera & Lamm, 2013) showed that respondents have mixed feeling about issues with undocumented immigration. Respondents felt differently when asking about issues related to immigration, ranging from education opportunity for children of undocumented immigrants, to economic issues, government subsidies, and rights for the return of undocumented immigrants. For example, in regards to the Floridian economy, half of the study's respondents thought undocumented immigrants filled jobs that domestic workers are not willing to take, while 69 percent thought undocumented immigrants are a burden on the economy (Odera & Lamm, 2013).

## Agricultural Education and Undocumented Immigration

A significant lack of research exists among immigrant and migrant farm workers recently published within U.S. agricultural education journals (Beck & Bodur, 2015). Several scholars acknowledge that this lack of research and previous literature is not surprising, due to the controversial nature of the topic and the harsh realities of immigration (Beck & Bodur, 2005). Historically, agricultural education as a discipline has struggled with issues of inclusion and diversity in both secondary education and within the profession (Bowen, 2002).

However, a significant amount of research has been conducted within the field of agricultural education as it applies to cultural diversity at large. Through his research synthesis on culture within the *Journal of Agricultural Education*, Tubbs (2015) presented five categorical areas that outlined efficiencies and deficiencies in agricultural education research toward culture. He concluded that research within agricultural education related to culture and diversity has been quite limited, presenting mostly demographic conditions of culture (e.g. gender and ethnicity).

Hains et al. (2013) exposed pre-service agricultural teachers to different cultures. Through this exposure, participants indicated experiencing a deeper understanding of other cultures, recognizing a fundamental need to develop and shift their pedagogy to best address a diversity of needs in the classroom. Such cultural competency begins with teacher education programs, in order to enhance intercultural exposure and understanding for the future achievement of *all* students (Taylor, 2010). Similarly, Talbert and Edwin (2008) investigated how agricultural education programs prepared teacher education students to work with diverse populations. However, study results from university students involved with student teaching and early field experience showed mixed results.

Despite the lack of research among undocumented immigrants specifically, this population is significant to consider within the agricultural industry. Many scholars suggest that Latino farmworkers are key to revitalizing and invigorating our agricultural sector, our schools, and rural economies (Curbelo, 2006; Merrill, 2004; Mullinix, Garcia, Lewis-Lorentz, & Qazi, 2006). A study by Mullinix et al. (2006) examined immigrant Latino populations in central Washington State concluding that a majority of respondents would encourage their children to pursue agricultural careers if they had the appropriate educational preparation. The researchers provided a call to action for colleges of agriculture to appropriately serve this talented and dedicated population of future U.S. agriculturalists.

By involving and recruiting Latinos in agricultural education programs, educators and Colleges of Land Grant universities will best diversify their agricultural sciences and secondary agricultural education programs (Curbelo, 2006). Due to globalization, the U.S. agricultural industry must work collaboratively with immigrants in order to encourage the next generation of farmers and agriculturalists and revitalize family-based agriculture and rural communities that exist within the US (Mullinix, et al., 2006). Both universities and its students must be able to successfully navigate diversity in this globalized, intercultural industry, which works alongside a multitude of foreign-born and undocumented immigrants (Rodriguez & Lamm, 2016). Many educators would agree that the entire U.S. agricultural system has become significantly dependent upon immigrant labor. Having a direct impact on tomorrow's leaders of agriculture, it becomes essential for agricultural educators to facilitate a further understanding of immigration labor among students and fellow faculty.

Given the sensitive nature of immigration topics, coupled with the need for further discussion and consideration, it is necessary to explore not only the attitudes that individuals hold

toward undocumented immigration, but the schemata behind these attitudes. With that, agricultural educators and communicators can better inform undergraduate students on immigration related issues and develop effective messages that resonate with their experiences, creating messages that are overwhelming enough to overwrite old schemata to better inform their audience.

### Purpose and Objectives

The objective of this study was to assess undergraduate students' attitudes toward undocumented immigrant issues. Specific objectives were:

1. To determine undergraduate students' attitude toward issues of undocumented immigration.
2. To compare undergraduate students' attitude toward issues of undocumented immigration between gender, political belief, ethnicity and race, and year of college.

### Methodology

We conducted an online survey to examine undergraduate students' attitudes toward issues about undocumented immigration in the agricultural and natural resource industries. A survey was administered online through Qualtrics. The population of this study was undergraduate students at University of Florida. This population was chosen because of a large number of undocumented immigrants in Florida, its significance to agricultural and natural resource industries, and the land-grant university mission of teaching agriculture-related arts (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, 2012; Chardy, 2014; Maxwell, 2012.) We selected a sample ( $n = 189$ ) of undergraduate students from those enrolled in the Fall 2014 section of a large oral communication course from a Land-grant university in Florida. The oral communication class at University of Florida is offered to all students on campus. The composition of the students is diverse in demographics and discipline, which makes a reasonable representation of the population of the interest for this study. A total of 85 respondents out of 189 students completed the survey, generating a 45.0% response rate. Each student volunteered to answer the online survey consisting of a list of questions measuring attitude toward undocumented immigration, as well as demographic characteristics including gender, race and ethnicity, political belief, and year of college. We measured the attitudes toward undocumented immigrants by respondents' levels of agreement with 19 statements on a five-point Likert-scale. We slightly altered the list of statements from the Attitudes toward Illegal Aliens Scale developed by Ommundsen and Larsen (1997; 1999). Examples of the statements included, "Undocumented immigrants should not benefit from my tax dollars" and "All undocumented immigrants deserve the same rights as U.S. citizens." Each of the statements was rated on a five-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. In term of the real limits, 1.00 – 1.49 was considered strongly disagree, 1.50 – 2.49 was disagree, 2.50 – 3.49 was undecided, 3.50 – 4.49 was agree, and 4.50 – 5.00 was strongly agree. Eight of the statements were reverse coded and all 19 were summed and averaged to create an overall index score.

We analyzed the data using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. Likert-type items were treated as interval data (Clason & Dormody, 1994). Frequencies and descriptive statistics were used to fulfill objective one of the study. Inferential statistics including t-test, ANOVA, and Bonferroni tests were utilized to fulfill objective two of the study. We used a significance level of .05 for all statistical tests. We conducted Levene's test, Shapiro-Wilk test, Skewness, and Kurtosis to check if the assumptions of homogeneity and normality were met for the t-tests and ANOVA tests. The normality test was found violated when conducting an ANOVA test to examine the attitude of undocumented immigration among different political beliefs. Instead,

Kruskal-Wallis H Test was used to examine the attitude of undocumented immigration among different political beliefs.

**Results**

**Objective 1: Determine undergraduate students' attitude toward issues of undocumented immigration.**

Survey results revealed respondents were undecided in general concerning their attitudes toward undocumented immigration in the U.S. ( $M = 3.1, SD = .79$ ). Results of each statement of attitudes toward undocumented immigrants scale were listed in Table 1. The majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements: "Undocumented immigrants have rights too;" "Undocumented immigrants should not be discriminated against;" "Undocumented immigrants should be forced to go back to their own countries;" "Undocumented immigrants provide the U.S. with a valuable human resource;" "Undocumented immigrants should not benefit from my tax dollars."

Table 1

*Attitudes Toward Undocumented Immigrants Scale*

	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Undecided %	Agree %	Strongly agree %
Undocumented immigrants should not benefit from my tax dollars.	4.7	15.3	20.0	37.6	22.4
Our taxes should be used to help those residing without documentation in the U.S.	11.8	38.8	27.1	16.5	5.9
There is enough room in this country for everyone.	9.4	32.9	8.2	36.5	12.9
Undocumented immigrants are not infringing on our country's resources.	7.1	45.9	18.8	27.1	1.2
Undocumented immigrants are a nuisance to society.	18.8	42.4	28.2	10.6	0
There should be open international borders.	23.5	32.9	22.4	12.9	8.2
Access to this country is too easy.	12.9	34.1	27.1	24.7	1.2
Undocumented immigrants should be excluded from social welfare.	5.9	28.2	25.9	31.8	8.2
Undocumented immigrants who give birth to children in the U.S. should be made citizens.	3.5	30.6	23.5	30.6	11.8



Table 1 (continued)

*Attitudes Toward Undocumented Immigrants Scale*

	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Undecided %	Agree %	Strongly agree %
Undocumented immigrants cost the U.S. millions of dollars each year.	3.5	23.5	27.1	35.3	10.6
Undocumented immigrants should be eligible for welfare.	9.4	30.6	29.4	27.1	3.5
Undocumented immigrants provide the U.S. with a valuable human resource.	5.9	17.6	23.5	42.4	10.6
The government should pay for care and education of undocumented immigrants.	14.1	38.8	20.0	22.4	4.7
Undocumented immigrants should not have the same rights as U.S. citizens.	9.4	24.7	30.6	29.4	5.9
Undocumented immigrants have rights too.	0	1.2	12.9	63.5	22.4
Taking care of people from other nations is not the responsibility of the U.S.	9.4	36.5	30.6	18.8	4.7
All undocumented immigrants deserve the same rights as U.S. citizens.	10.6	29.4	30.6	20.0	9.4
Undocumented immigrants should be forced to go back to their own countries.	18.8	37.6	29.4	10.6	3.5
Undocumented immigrants should not be discriminated against.	0	8.2	22.4	41.2	28.2

More than half of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statements: “Our taxes should be used to help those residing without documentation in the U.S.,” “Undocumented immigrants are not infringing on our country's resources,” “Undocumented immigrants are a nuisance to society,” “There should be open international borders,” and “The government should pay for care and education of undocumented immigrants.”

No respondent strongly agreed with the the statement, “Undocumented immigrants are a nuisance to society.” No respondents strongly disagreed with the statements, “Undocumented immigrants have rights too;” and “Undocumented immigrants should not be discriminated against.”

**Objective 2: Compare undergraduate students' attitude toward issues of undocumented immigration between gender, political belief, ethnicity and race, and year of college.**

The second objective was to compare respondents' attitudes toward undocumented immigration between different demographic groups. The mean score of attitude toward undocumented immigration and the associated standard deviation are listed in Table 2. The large standard deviation of the very conservative group and the small standard deviation of other groups in political beliefs stood out. This may result from the low number of respondents in these two groups.

Table 2

*Mean Scores of Attitudes Toward Undocumented Immigration by Demographic Groups*

Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Male	23	2.83	.62
Female	62	3.19	.74
Political Belief			
Very liberal	6	3.82	.57
Liberal	27	3.50	.59
Moderate	29	3.04	.60
Conservative	18	2.35	.42
Very conservative	2	2.87	1.67
Other	3	3.07	.17
Ethnicity			
Hispanic	18	3.38	.62
Non--Hispanic	67	3.02	.74
Race			
White	50	2.85	.62
Black	5	3.85	.93
Asian	18	3.32	.47
Other	12	3.53	.91
Year of college			
Freshmen	5	2.42	.39
Sophomore	28	3.02	.72
Junior	37	3.27	.76
Senior	15	3.02	.62

## Gender

We conducted a *t*-test to examine the differences in respondents' general attitudes toward undocumented immigration between male and female demographics. Results showed that female respondents ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = .74$ ) had a significantly positive attitude toward undocumented immigration than male ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = .62$ ) ( $t(83) = -2.10$ ,  $p = .04$ ). Therefore, gender plays an important role for undergraduate students' attitude toward issues related to undocumented immigration.

## Political Belief

We conducted a Kruskal-Wallis H Test to examine the differences in respondents' general attitudes toward undocumented immigration between political beliefs (liberal, moderate, conservative, very conservative, and other). A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the attitude of undocumented immigration among different political beliefs,  $\chi^2(5) = 35.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , with a mean rank attitude score of 68.08 for respondents who identified themselves as very liberal, 56.37 for liberal, 42.05 for moderate, 16.75 for conservative, 39.74 for very conservative, and other for other. Pairwise comparison demonstrated that significant differences existed between those identified themselves as conservative and moderate ( $\chi^2 = 25.30$ ,  $p = .009$ ;  $M_{\text{conservative}} = 2.45$ ,  $SD = .58$ ;  $M_{\text{moderate}} = 3.04$ ,  $SD = .60$ ); between conservative and liberal ( $\chi^2 = 39.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $M_{\text{conservative}} = 2.45$ ,  $SD = .58$ ;  $M_{\text{liberal}} = 3.50$ ,  $SD = .59$ ); and between conservative and very liberal ( $\chi^2 = 39.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $M_{\text{conservative}} = 2.45$ ,  $SD = .58$ ;  $M_{\text{very liberal}} = 3.82$ ,  $SD = .57$ .)

## Ethnicity and Race

We used a *t*-test to examine whether or not the respondents' attitudes toward undocumented immigration differed between Hispanic and non-Hispanic respondents. Result indicated a significant difference ( $t(84) = 2.18$ ,  $p = .03$ ) between the two groups. Hispanic respondents ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = .63$ ) had a significantly positive attitude toward undocumented immigration than non-Hispanic respondents ( $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = .74$ ).

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to test the differences in respondents' attitudes toward undocumented immigration among different races (Asian, Black, White, and other). Results indicated a significant difference among different races ( $F = 7.07$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Post hoc comparisons using Bonferroni test indicated that respondents who identified themselves as white ( $M_{\text{white}} = 2.84$ ,  $SD = .62$ ) had a significantly negative attitude toward undocumented immigration than those who identified themselves as black ( $M_{\text{black}} = 3.85$ ,  $SD = .93$ ,  $p = .01$ ). Respondents who identified themselves as Asian ( $M_{\text{Asian}} = 3.32$ ,  $SD = .47$ ) did not show significant differences with black or white respondents.

## Year of college

We conducted a one-way ANOVA to assess if there was a difference among respondents from different years of college. Result showed no significant difference among freshmen, sophomore, junior, or senior respondents ( $F = 2.43$ ,  $p = .07$ ). Therefore, years of college can not differentiate undergraduate students' attitude toward undocumented immigration issues.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Overall, we found an undecided attitude toward undocumented immigration among undergraduate students. Undergraduate students in this large, southeast university had mixed attitudes about issues related to undocumented immigration, which aligned with the findings of other public opinion studies (e.g., Odera & Lamm, 2013). The majority of respondents agreed that undocumented immigrants had rights, they should not be discriminated against, they were a valuable human resource, and they were not a nuisance to society; however, respondents also agreed that they are infringing on the country's resources, should not benefit from the respondents' own tax dollars, the country should not open international borders and should not pay for their care and education, and they should be forced to go back to their own countries. The results indicated that undergraduate students showed respect for undocumented immigrants as human beings. However, the undergraduate students did not agree on their economic support. The results aligned with the theory of prejudice, which suggests that job loss and economic costs are closely related to the negative attitude toward undocumented immigration.

This study also showed polarizing sentiments toward rights and social welfare in regards to immigration. Respondents were completely split on whether undocumented immigrants should not have the same rights as U.S. citizens. The respondents were also split on their attitudes about whether undocumented immigrants should be excluded from social welfare.

Demographics of gender, ethnicity, and race, and political belief demonstrated significant influence in attitudes and beliefs toward issues involving undocumented immigration. Females held a significantly more positive attitude toward undocumented immigration than their male counterparts. Individuals who identified themselves as white held a significantly negative attitude toward undocumented immigration than those who identified themselves as black; individuals who identified themselves as Asian did not show significant differences with black and white respondents. Individuals who identified themselves as conservative held significantly more negative attitudes toward immigration issues compared to those who indicated themselves as moderate, liberal, and very liberal in their political beliefs.

Odera and Lamm's (2013) study of Floridian residents' beliefs and attitudes toward undocumented immigrants validated several elements presented in this study. Odera and Lamm (2013) showed that a majority of Florida residents believed that undocumented immigrants were a burden on the economy, while 31% thought undocumented immigrants were assets to the economy. These results validated the findings of this study, where a majority of undergraduate students believed that undocumented immigrants infringe on U.S. resources. The undecided split on whether respondents felt that undocumented immigrants filled unwanted American jobs or reduced good jobs for Americans also validated the results of this study, which proposed the uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of issues involving undocumented immigrants.

### **Recommendations**

The results of this study reflected undergraduate students' perceptions that although undocumented immigrants should have rights, most believed that this population was a burden to the U.S. economy. Ultimately, however, their attitudes varied among undergraduate students. Due to the complexities of these issues and the considerable impact on U.S. agriculture, it is urgent for the undergraduate students (new and future voters) to become better informed about these issues. The first steps to enhancing diversity and cultural competency into the field of agricultural education stem from first understanding what culture is, what the profession's culture is, and how cultural biases are held within agricultural education (Tubbs, 2015). Therefore, agricultural

educators should integrate immigration issues in their educational experiences and offer intercultural courses to help students better understand immigration issues to appropriately prepare students to work in the agricultural industry where they will inevitably encounter these issues. Agricultural educators should be aware of their students' perceptions of undocumented immigration issues and provide proper education about the connections between agriculture, (undocumented) immigration, and society. Integrating topics such as the history of immigration, the role of undocumented immigrants within the U.S. agricultural industry, and intercultural communication into agricultural education curriculum may be effective ways to educate undergraduate students in this topic.

Further research must be conducted to draw sound conclusions regarding undergraduate student perceptions toward undocumented immigration in the U.S. Based on the undecided attitudes found in this study, qualitative studies investigating what has helped shape undergraduate students' attitudes will be valuable in providing guidance for agricultural educators in developing immigration content-related lessons and programs. Such qualitative studies should focus specifically on the undecided items outlined in this study, such as social welfare for undocumented immigrants.

Based on schema theory, where individuals use prior experiences to analyze a situation, researchers should further examine how past experience with immigrants (documented or undocumented) and media exposure about immigration issues has influenced students' attitudes toward immigration. Such studies will help agricultural educators gain insights into what specific experiences students need to have in order to better understand issues related to undocumented immigration.

The undocumented immigration attitude scale used in this study mainly captured the realistic threats of immigrants (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). According to Stephan and Stephan (2000), other threats that may be related to attitudes toward immigration included the potentially different "work, family, religious, and moral values" (p. 28) held by immigrants and stereotypes of immigrants as being "dishonest, unintelligent, and clannish" (p. 29). Future studies should consider modifying the undocumented immigration attitude scale in order to best capture these aspects. Such a refined scale has the potential to deepen the evaluation of individuals' attitudes toward these issues and better inform educators about how to properly teach their learners.

This study was conducted in a southeastern university. Its results cannot be transferred to undergraduate students in other areas. To provide a more holistic view of undergraduate students' attitudes toward undocumented immigration, future research should replicate this study in other areas and regions in the U.S. Such studies will provide comparisons to these results and generate meaningful recommendations for agricultural education throughout the U.S.

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