

Student #2

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"In the Country We Love" Essay

The book "In the Country We Love", written by the actress Diane Guerrero and Michelle Burford and published in 2016, is a narrative by Diane who talks about her family's deportment from the United States to Colombia and how it affects her life. Even though Diane was born in the United States, her parents and her older brother Eric are undocumented immigrants from Colombia. Diane was just 14 years old when she came back from school and found out that her parents had been deported. With the support of her family, she continues her education and builds her own life in the U.S. After a period of time that was dominated by Diane's struggle with mental health, she succeeds in pursuing her dream as a professional actress.

I am going to take a closer look at the intersectional framework and how it is portrayed in the book. First, it has to be clarified what intersectionality is. The concept of intersectionality describes that people often suffer from multiple sources of oppression. For instance, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, and class intersect and overlap, which creates an individual experience of discrimination. One of the main aspects of the intersectional framework is intersectional pedagogy. It includes both the dominant and the subjugating narrative. The dominant narrative is the idea of people that are in the position of power and create systems. The subjugating narrative is about individuals and groups who have been marginalized and have less capacity to shape the systems. In the book "In the Country We Love", the existence of the dominant and the subjugating narrative represents a

main theme. In this case, the dominant narrative are white men who are working for the government. They are in the position of power by deciding about immigration policies and therefore who is allowed to stay in the country and who has to leave. They are the ones that have the power to show up at Diane's family and take her parents with them without any warning. The subjugating narrative is formed by the Guerrero's who have to accept the subordinate role.

That being said, the intersectional pedagogy has a connection to the dual perspective. The dual perspective discusses that we live in an unfair power structure in society. Certain groups of people are given privileges due to their gender, class, race, or sexual orientation. As portrayed in the book, Diane's family did not have these privileges since they are undocumented immigrants. For example, the Guerrero's must remain quiet and inconspicuous in order to avoid drawing attention. Every little mistake could be punished and that is why the family is restricted in their freedom. Moreover, due to their immigration status, the parents have to accept multiple low-paid jobs to provide for the family. Also, the book describes how Diane develops a dual perspective when going to college. Being born outside of society's dominant group, she experiences two different worlds. On the one side, she is part of a home culture with her family. On the other side, she experiences being around a dominant culture in Regis College. The majority of the people were white, religious, and Caucasian. Diane talks about how challenging it was to be in an environment that is different from her old environment.

Another theory from which I will look at the book's story is constructivism. After discussing how the theory is represented in "In the Country We Love", I will talk about the relationship to the intersectional framework. The idea of constructivism is that an individual describes their experience through a personal construct. A personal construct is an explanation of a series of events on how the individual sees the world. These constructs are

mostly formed in early childhood and adolescence and are carried throughout life. They are part of our personality and determine what decisions we are going to make in life. The fact that Diane creates an individual personal construct because of her family's history can be observed in the book. For Diane, growing up in a family with undocumented parents and being an orphan from the age of fourteen shapes how she sees the world. One instance which shows how Diane's story influences her personal construct, is the parent's persistence to become legal citizens. For multiple years, her parents were fighting to become American citizens. Although they were not successful, Diane learned from the mentality to not give up. Later, when Diane started her acting career, she had struggles to get jobs in order to earn a living. However, she did not give up. Diane continued going to castings and being patient so that she can pursue her dream as a professional actress.

When looking at both the intersectional framework and the constructivist theory, their interrelation becomes apparent. As mentioned above, intersectionality is the idea of a subjugating and dominant narrative. This is related to constructivism since growing up in a subjugating or dominant culture determines how our personal construct is formed. For instance, Diane would have had a different view on the world if she has been raised in an American, white family. Hence, the situation with her family as being part of a subjugating culture influenced her attitudes and beliefs.

In my opinion, even though Diane Guerrero is not a professional author, her story as growing up with undocumented parents is powerful and heartbreaking. What I found both surprising and shocking is how many children have to suffer from the American immigration system. Hearing that more than seventy thousand parents of US-born-children were deported is hard to visualize. There are thousands of children who have to be scared that they come home one day, and their parents will be gone. Diane was fourteen when it happened to her. When I was fourteen, I could not imagine being left alone and managing my

life without parents. This shows how much resiliency Diane displayed. She did not only have to adjust to a new environment when staying at her parent's friend's house, but also organize the financial situation by her own. One may argue that Diane did not have another possibility other than getting used to the new situation as an orphan, but I am of the opinion that she managed it really well without the help of her parents.

What surprised me about my response is that I do not know much about the situation of immigrants in the United States. Neither I am aware of the immigration policies, nor of statistics regarding US-born-children with undocumented parents. This again reminds me of my privilege. Since both my parents are legal citizens, I never had to worry about being taken away from my parents. My response shows me how much we live in our own bubble and do not spend enough time thinking about other people's stories.

Work cited

Burford, Michelle and Guerrero, Diane. *In the Country We Love*. Henry Holt and Company, 2016.