

Conducted for University of Maryland course IMMR 400 – Spring 2018

Instructor: Dr. Esther Kim Lee

Interviewer's (Student's) Name: Sophia Mattison

Interviewee's Name: Bruno Diaz (pseudonym)

Interviewee's Country of Origin: Mexico

Interviewee's Current Residence: Easton, Maryland, USA

Date of Interview: March 28th, 2018

Place of Interview: Easton, Maryland, USA

(Note: A few background noises will be heard throughout the interview that are not transcribed within the script.)

Sophia: It is March 28th, 2018 and I am here in Easton, Maryland with Bruno Diaz.

Bruno: Hey, what's up everyone? How are you guys?

Sophia: So, tell me about uh...you deciding to move to America.

Bruno: Ummm.. it, it's (scuttering) it wasn't something like that I had decided on like months in advance. It was just the spur of the moment kind of thing. Like, my father asked me uh if I wanted to spend some time here for summer break and I'm like "sure why not." Uhhhh, and then after awhile uhh maybe I wanna say three weeks after being here he offered me to live here, he.. He asked me to stay and um at the moment I wanted to say "no." I was just like I wanna go back, be back with my family and friends but um after I thought about it for a few days I'm like "it's a no brainer." I'd be learning English, I'd be in a city that doesn't stress me out- more like a town I mean. And um, yeah I just I saw better opportunities here uhh...more room to grow. Uh...rather than uh going through all this in Mexico so I think- I think like it was just like a spur of the like moment and then like (long pause) I think maybe a few days to think it over but uh...

Sophia: So when you, your dad asked you, you didn't think it'd be a permanent, I'd be living here kind of thing?

Bruno: Uh yeah! I initially I'm like "I'll just do my high school years and then I'll go back to college in Mexico umm then uhh I kinda liked it here more, everyone's more open-minded. There's more uh, liberty and uh and just the American life-style is, is a bit more pleasant. Uh, where I come from it's a, a big city, it's very violent um...and uh...I just didn't think that was the right thing for me and uh...

Sophia: Yeah, I looked up the town and there's a lot of deaths...

Bruno: Yeah...

Sophia: There's a lot of shootings!

Bruno: There, there was at one point there were more people dying in that city than in the Iraq war so...it's, it's pretty intense.

Sophia: That's insane.

Bruno: Yeah...

Sophia: Was your house in Mexico around that?

Bruno: Uh I mean, crime happens everywhere. Uh, but uh given that it's a big city it's like (pause) it's not always near you, I guess? Uh, the town.. The part of the city where my mom and I lived and my sisters uh it-it was pretty safe. Uh, pretty relaxed, pretty chill. But uh, every now and then you would hear these stories that like kind of would make you like walk on your toes a bit.

Sophia: Mhmm.

Bruno: Be careful, here and there uh, always lock your doors. Un-unlike here, you can leave the house and leave it unlocked. You-you cannot for that, do that in Mexico.

Sophia: Yeah. So, is there anything like you miss because it sounds like you didn't think that you were gonna stay here?

Bruno: Uh, I think I-I just miss my family more than anything. Uh, not being able to see them as often and uh and then the extended family as well, but besides that I don't think I miss anything.

Sophia: (laughing)

Bruno: Like for real, um I'm happy where I'm at and...

Sophia: Well don't you talk about wanting to go back?

Bruno: Yes, but that's just because I...there's been some bumps in the road, like when it comes to me finishing my education here so it's, it's uh always an opportunity that I have to go back there. Uh, I have a house where I can walk into and then uh and incorporating back into the lifestyle wouldn't be as hard as, as it would've been if I was younger or ya know?

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: So, it's always a choice. I talk about it a lot cause I-I do consider it but I-I-I don't think there's anything that I miss. I mean there would be thing and I think the truth would be the same if I left the United States like, I would just get used it, to the new lifestyle. You kinda just accommodate. I-I would miss the people but like...

Sophia: Yeah...

Bruno: Besides that I don't think anything else. I wouldn't miss, ya know?

Sophia: Do you have like an object from...

Bruno: From?

Sophia: Mexico?

Bruno: From Mexico? I...have a lot uh and I don't, I don't t-there in boxes right now and I didn't pull them out...

Sophia: No, you're fine.

Bruno: I have like um...I remember there was a time when I wanted to learn play guitar and a good friend of mine in high school like was teaching me and he, he gave me a few guitar picks and I still have those to this day. He was a pretty cool friend um, what else do I have? I have uh pictures from uh my family in there uh that's, that's about it. I tried to not put, put a lot of emotion on like material things cause those things can always get lost.

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: Uh, so...so yeah. But those are the only few things that I keep from back there. I kinda left everything when I moved here. I just hopped on a plane with uh...

Sophia: Did you have to get things shipped here?

Bruno: No uh, just documents. Uh, after I started school uh maybe some clothes that I didn't pack but besides that I don't...no everything just been seamless besides you know learning English. I was very able to assimilate into the culture pretty fast. You know, Juarez is a border city so it's, it's very Americanized in a way.

Sophia: Hm.

Bruno: Um, the TV you watched, the music you listened to um...it's, it's...American culture it embedded with-within to the border towns and yeah I thought that's what I-I has made it easier for me to adapt. And I like a lot people that come here from other countries can't really say that.

Sophia: Hm.

Bruno: But I guess I was lucky enough to, to come from uh...from a place that um allows me to thrive here.

Sophia: Do you like talk to your mom often?

Bruno: Uh yeah, I try to talk to her at least once a day even if it's just for like five minutes. Uh, sometimes I can't do that.. But uh like there's always communication.

Sophia: But do you guys ever Skype?

Bruno: Uh yeah! Every now and then. We Skype as well...probably like every week or two. Uh, uh...but yeah...

Sophia: Um, so you were talking about documents...was it difficult like getting visas and what not?

Bruno: Uh...it's a process so it's not difficult as much as it is time consuming. Like, it takes months if not years to get like...

Sophia: Hm.

Bruno: ...uh, visas or some sort of permits to allow you to stay in the country legally.

Sophia: So, yours is no longer active right now... correct?

Bruno: Ah, correct...correct...I came here legally. I didn't enter the United States illegally. It's, it's, it's there's paperwork to back that up but um, however, I overstayed my visit. And I never went back so...so that's where I'm um I'm uh, I guess in a "limbo" position. You know? Uh, I'm not...yeah...that's about it I don't know where I was going to say with that...

Sophia: Well is it affecting your schooling, or?

Bruno: Uh...yes and no. Uh there's other things that uh have an impact on that. Uh, sometimes it has to do with uh paperwork that we didn't fill out right or my dad didn't fill out right in previous years.

Sophia: Mmm.

Bruno: Uh, but umm, but besides that, I think uh the actions that I have taken to be here have not really affected uh much of uh...my plans.

Sophia: What do you mean by plans?

Bruno: Like, school and stuff. Like I mean, I've been able to get a license...to go to school. Uh, it's, it's just um the money, that's the only, the only issue. But besides that I know I can go to school and I've gone to school.

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: But uh, sadly...unfortunately it's money where like it stops you...

Sophia: yeah

Bruno: ...but uh we're always trying to find new ways and we figure it out and if we come up with a solution and then that doesn't work after a while we find another one and we just keep doing that.

Sophia: So um, have you ever visited the United States before your dad asked you to come here?

Bruno: Uhh, yeah...plenty of times. I had been to Albuquerque, Los Angeles, um...Disneyland, um...Missouri, Chicago, uh just a few, a few cities...you know? And then uh, then yeah...I think that that was in between me being like four or five until I was like probably like, ten. And then like, I went a three year period where we didn't visit the United States and then uh like to that extent because living in a border city you have a visa and then there's bridges. So, you can visit El Paso, Texas and we would visit that like... every other day or every other week. Uhhh, we-we used to go pretty often. That's where we would get our groceries, uhhh clothes, uhhh and all that stuff.

Sophia: Umm, soo when traveling like was security easy to get through?

Bruno: Um yeah, at that time yeah for sure, I'm pretty sure right now given all these um...uh like security concerns uh...uh I think it, it used to be easier you would just pay a toll uh on the Mexican side... uh walk or drive. And then um, and then you...you go through like a small security check if there's any reason, nothing difficult. Um, but I'm pretty sure now there's a little bit more, more security, more um maybe they check your bags more often...more precise. Uh, there's probably x-rays and cameras everywhere now.

Sophia: Yeah...

Bruno: ...trying to combat terrorism and uh other security concerns.

Sophia: Well along those lines, like, um, talk about...or tell me about um how you feel about Trump and his outlook on immigration and...

Bruno: Uh, I think he, he's...his outlook on that is very, is...is very messed up. To be honest, uh, I don't know w-w-where to start. Um, his rhetoric is just based on fear and uh that's what rallies his crowds, ya know?

Sophia: So...so, how did you feel when you heard that he was the only candidate running?

Bruno: From the Republican Party?

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: Um...I was shocked in a way. Uh, cause during the primaries and even leading up to...to the convent- uh to, to the primaries you, you, you had all these candidates who were speaking against Trump and they kind of post um like a lot of the- the senior members of the Republican Party were taken seriously until he clenched uh, the...the nomination and then uh after that happened it's like every Republican rallied behind him. Kind of, forgot-forgot about everything that they had said prior to that and just embrace Trump. Uh, kind of like ignoring their moral compass. Uh, something that you really shouldn't do when dealing with politics, you know? Umm, so yeah it was kind of surprising that-that- that despite all these allegations, despite like his...his ignorance about politics and about international relations, ya know? He still became the Republican candidate.

Sophia: So then how did you feel when he won?

Bruno: Uh, when he won I don't know it, it felt as it like as I-I had gone through a break-up like I had never felt like that like when it came to an election or something as trivial as this, you know? It, it, it just I don't know, like at that moment I realized how many people really don't like people like me or how like people with the same skin color as-as I do. I don't know. Uh, I live in a very conservative area and uh and if you walk down the street you wouldn't really notice uh, everyone's so nice and welcoming but, but this shows their true colors. You know uh, at that point uh you had seen the "grab them by the p" scandal, um mocking a disabled uh person, seeing all these uh nasty things about immigrants uh calling us "rapists, rovers" ya know? Uh, "gang members," umm despite all that they couldn't...they couldn't...not vote for him. I don't know they, they, they still sided with him. You know? And-and that- that was- that was awful. I felt very overwhelmed ya know, I just I don't know I was- it was awful.

Sophia: Did you contemplate going back to Mexico?

Bruno: Uh...for sure. A little bit um, but uh like....I way I see it is....itt would only like, his tenure would only last a little bit, you know? Uhh, right now it's only a year and two months into his presidency and like, like god damn how many things have happened! There's like, porn stars like with uh sexual abuse allegations...

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: ...hush money, uhh this whole Russia scandal thing which uh every week looks more damning...uhh yeah. Soo, I-I-I'm very optimistic in a way that th-there's no way that-that he's going to be there long enough to cause uh enough harm to my community.

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: ...so I um, I decided to-to stay through it and that's what I'm going to do.

Sophia: That's good.

Bruno: Yeah...cause I don't know, there's no way that he makes past this year...like no way.

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: I don't know, it's th-the Mueller investigation has like-like almost grabbing him by the neck. Like, he lost his best representation he had uh John Dowd, his lawyer. And uh I don't know, it's like...

Sophia: Well with deciding to stay here through that, have you thought about like fixing your visa or...?

Bruno: Well, it-it-it's a very long process that uh like uh obviously I would love to do it um but uh there's a ten year wait period. And within those ten years, I cannot be here.

Sophia: Oh...

Bruno: So if I wanted to do that, I would have to apply wait for my application to go through and then wait ten years outside the United States. And even then, there's nooo guarantee that I, that everything will be fixed.

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: So...

Sophia: Is the option then a green card?

Bruno: Uh, it for Mexicans it's a lot more complicated to, to access green cards. Again, you still have to wait those ten years. Uhhh, and uhhh...

Sophia: That's insane.

Bruno: It is. It is insane. Ah t-t-there's I think there...th-there might be a way in which you marry an American citizen but even then you still have to wait some time outside the of the United States.

Sophia: Mmm.

Bruno: And uhhh, you have to like prove that it's not a sham. That you like, that, that it's a real marriage. So, so it's, so it's complicated for sure but uh t-there's ways that people still get out of it.

Sophia: So, back to when you first came here. Was it difficult being in school where English wasn't your first language?

Bruno: Of course. Uh it was very difficult. Um, I mean not knowing a lot.. you know? Not being able to communicate, to express yourself uh but it...that only made me want to learn it even more.

Sophia: Hm.

Bruno: So I took the books. I watched TV in English. I listened to music in English, everything in English!

Sophia: Oh wow.

Bruno: And after a while, I'm like okay...I can understand it and I can write it. Uh, but my-my my speaking powers were not as-as polished. Uh, that took... that got better over the years. But uh, I think within a year I was able to like p-pay attention. Uhh, and uh and being able to write it. Uh, so...

Sophia: It only took you a year?

Bruno: Yeah! From like, I-I was in ESOL...which is the, which is stands for: English for...Foreign Language speakers? Something like that. EFL or ESOL, uh they are both the same. Uh, so I was in that class for-for two years: eighth grade and ninth grade. Um, by the time I was in ninth grade I had a pretty good grasp of the English language. Umm, and uh it...I made it a goal that was going to be my last year in that class and I did it. I...t-there's a test at the end of the year that you have to pass uh to, to be allowed not to be to-to not take that class again and I did it! And uh, and uh yeah after that I'm like okay now what's next? AP classes, let's do that!

Sophia: That's cool. And I know you say, you work at a Mexican restaurant and speak, like, English the best?

Bruno: Uh, yes. I...don't want to be cocky I guess, but I work at this Mexican restaurant and uh...without a doubt I-I'm one of the...I'm probably one of the t-the one that handles language the best.

Sophia: Hmm.

Bruno: I can express myself a lot more. I am more fluid with it and uh yeah. I don't know it's just, but then again I-I went to school here, a lot of the people that work there they didn't have that opportunity. They're all in their thirties or late twenties, you know. Uh, uh but yeah I yeah...

Sophia: So are you embraced more by like American culture or do you still listen to anything from Mexico or...?

Bruno: I mean, uh I....that's a hard to answer question cause uh I don't know like, everything that I surround myself with is uh when it comes to like: friends, music, everything. It's very Americ-American, you know? Like it-it-it's I'm living the American way of life. Uh, but at the same time I still haven't forgotten where I come from. So, I, I still keep in touch with uh current events in Mexico. I...I still speak in-in Spanish with my-my family an-and some of my Hispanic friends. Umm...but at the same time I-I do embrace the American lifestyle more and uh and-and I like it more. I mean I've been living here for the past decade almost.

Sophia: Yeah so what, so how old were you when you came here?

Bruno: I was thirteen.

Sophia: Oh okay.

Bruno: I am twenty-two now. So...so yeah I've been here for a while now. And uh, I don't know I just... I consider myself American by all means except for those nine digits, you know? And uh, but um I don't know. But I still keep Mexico very close to my heart uh my family there. I honestly i-if, if I had it my way I would never go back to Mexico but it's always an option, you know.

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: An-an-and and it's always good to have that back-up option.

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: Um, but uh I don't know if again, if I had it my way I would stay here. And you know, maybe move to Colorado. I don't know, D.C., New York? I don't know. Anywhere. Uh, but I don't know...right now Easton is pretty fine. You know...

Sophia: So, you agreeing with your dad, you believe that was the right decision?

Bruno: Uh, in retrospect yes, for sure. Uh, it was the best decision I could've taken. Uh, it was a hard one to put on a thirteen year old. You know, but uh I think I-I chose the right-right decision. Like, the right thing to do and uh I don't know just. I feel like, if I had stayed in Mexico, if I had gone to school there um and the experiences there I would not be where I'm at today or be who I am today, you know? Um...

Sophia: Do you still talk to any of your friends?

Bruno: Uh...not really. Not really, I kinda just moved on...

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: and I'm sure they have moved on as well. Umm, but uh... I-I lived in the moment. Like, I...I appreciate every moment that I have that I spend with my friends here. That I get to talk to my mom over the phone. It-it's hard keeping in touch with someone who you don't see often and for you- don't know when you're going to see next. You know? Umm...

Sophia: Well, how's the relationship with your dad right now?

Bruno: Ah, it's great. I-it's fantastic. Uh, I guess it wasn't as good before but we're closer than ever. Umm, I'm- I'm on my own now so I don't rely as much on him as I did before. And uh, I know he still supports me in every way he can. Uh, he helps me out whenever he can or whenever I need it. So, so yeah...

Sophia: So out of all the places you've been in the United States, like, what's your favorite? And you were just like I do NOT want to come back to Mexico.

Bruno: Uh, I mean Easton for sure. I-it's such a...chill place. Like, there's not much going on. There's not a lot of traffic when you go out. There's no, I don't know. There's no like grime from the city. It's just so easy going. And uh, and the pace of life is great. Uh, so I guess Easton is definitely one of my favorite places. It doesn't mean I want to stay here forever. Like, I want to move on eventually. Uh, Easton is a

place where I guess you would come here and retire. But-but right now at the moment, it's a great place for me at this time and place and I don't know. Yeah...I love D.C as well, it's fantastic...such a great city.

Sophia: Okay, my last question. So, like, immigrating...would you say it was very emotional like, draining having to go through certain things?

Bruno: Uh...

Sophia: And um, knowing that if you wanted to become a citizen here you'd have to wait ten years and like how does that affect you emotionally?

Bruno: Well, I can only speak for myself. Uh, I cannot speak for like the millions of immigrants that have come to the United States. Uh, I had it way easier just to come here.

Sophia: Yeah.

Bruno: just hopped on a plane and "tada". A lot of people can't say that. Like, a lot of people die on their way here. And that's something uh a lot of us they prevent it uh a lot of people flee their war torn countries, their- th-their poor way of life just to find the opportunities and they die trying. So, I guess coming here was not emotionally draining. It was refreshing in a way, you know? Like...but I guess when I moved here I didn't know I was moving here, ya know? Yeah, so, so there was no uh...

Sophia: Well, I guess I'm saying at that point did it start to get emotional? Like, "oh I'm going to have to call my mom all the time..."

Bruno: Uh, I mean no. I-I knew the consequences of-of what I was about to do. I was pretty aware of what it would mean to stay here. You know, to be handicapped in a way. Through-throughout most of your life. Uh, but that but just knowing that a lot of people are here that way and they...they go through it an-and they thrive in it. You know, I'm like I can do it!

Sophia: Mhm.

Bruno: and I've been doing it...you know and uh...

Sophia: good for you!

Bruno: yeah

Sophia: Any final thoughts?

Bruno: Any final thoughts? Uh, no not really. Just, Biden and Kennedy 2020!

Sophia: (laugh) Who?

Bruno: Biden. Joe Biden and Kennedy. 2020.

Sophia: Oh, I haven't heard of that.

Bruno: It's probably not a thing yet, but it should be. Those two should run.

Sophia: Alright, well thank you for letting me talk to you today.

Bruno: Cool...

End of Interview