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Cultural Citizenship and Coming Out on a College Campus: Undocumented Students' Responses to Everyday Immigration Enforcement

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Abstract: A study of the experiences of young undocumented immigrants as they transition into adulthood in Southern California, their obstacles encountered in the imposed condition of “undocumented,” even within the university experience, and innovative strategies adopted to deal with legal impediments. Using an ethnographic approach and interviews with college students, techniques such as “coming out of the shadows” and “everyday enforcement” are evaluated, as well as theories on practices of cultural citizenship, to demonstrate that undocumented students are claiming space and rights in their daily lives.

Key Terms: Undocumented students; Immigrants; Coming out of the shadows; Cultural citizenship; Enforcement; Identity; Higher education; Claiming space

Undocumented immigrant college students in Southern California are redefining citizenship by claiming space and rights on college campuses. Universities are not immune to practices of “everyday enforcement”¹ where citizenship is regulated in private, everyday spaces. Lacking formal identification but accepted to the university, undocumented students experience citizen-normative regulation throughout mundane educational practices and policies, like a required writing exam as well as access to internships and scholarships. But in spite of this tenuous membership, undocumented students have cultivated a sense of belonging and inclusion through the process of their college educations. Creating a student support group, as well as educating professors, staff, and other students about their status, has helped transform undocumented students into cultural citizens who are not only claiming rights but also reshaping them. While “coming out of the shadows”—as the undocumented status has been identified—is a strategy for claiming rights in the larger immigration reform movement, this strategy has long been used by individuals to combat everyday regulation practices in settings such as higher education.

Sitting across from Reina² during our interview, I sense her frustrations mounting the more we talk about missed opportunities because of her undocumented status. She has worked hard for her education, paying her tuition on her own by serving at a restaurant where she is

paid under the table. Reina’s father passed away when she was two and her mother decided they would move to the U.S. As a child, Reina and her family endured domestic violence by her now absent stepfather. She helps take care of her two younger sisters who are both U.S. citizens.

She is disheartened by her lack of ability to help other victims of domestic violence, since she cannot complete the necessary background checks to volunteer at shelters. Reina tried to work with someone she thought understood she was undocumented, but they turned her away at the last minute because of her legal quandary. Being a student, on the other hand, is a status that at times “overpowers” her undocumented state. “It’s almost like I can go into a crowd [not] as an undocumented person but as a student,” she says. But she still finds there are limitations to her potential:

It’s like having half an access. You can apply, go to college and there’s [sic] opportunities there; it’s not like you have no options, but sometimes I come across things that I really, really want to do.³

Other undocumented students struggle, like Reina, with having only partial access to the benefits of a college education. Nationally, an estimated 65,000 undocumented

students graduate from high school annually, yet only 10-20 percent go on to college (Passel, 2001; Passel, 2003; Pérez, 2009b). As undocumented students graduate high school and enter adulthood, seeking employment or higher education, they start to experience the effects of everyday enforcement—systemic oversight deployed through social rituals and expectations, as well as governmental and institutional rules that regulate citizenship in private, everyday spaces (Gomberg-Muñoz and Nussbaum-Barberena, 2014). As such, enforcement techniques that impede everyday life seek to “normalize” citizenship by regulating the conduct of individuals “in the interests of ensuring the security and prosperity of the nation-state” (Ong, 1996:738; Foucault, 1991).

Students like Reina, who decide to continue their education, must overcome citizen-normative practices that seek to exclude noncitizens through laws, systems, and processes. Undocumented students do not qualify for most scholarships, grants, or financial aid. They must commute to school without a driver’s license and have to find decent jobs that pay under the table or take false identification to help with tuition. Additionally, there are cultural and class barriers, like being a first-generation college student and learning English as a second language. As new adults, they struggle with issues ranging from “the economic to the intimate,” like grabbing a drink with friends without a valid ID or being able to rent an apartment without a social security number (Gomberg-Muñoz & Nussbaum-Barberena, 2014:4). Accepted by the educational institution but not Homeland Security, their educational membership is tenuous at best—often forcing them to navigate a precarious balance between their student and undocumented identities every single day.

Yet identity formation is a dialectical process where undocumented students are “being made” through nation-state regulatory practices and are “self-made” through their individual negotiation with power relations (Ong, 1996; Foucault, cited by Rabinow, 1984). While Reina observes the challenges of being an undocumented student, she also recognizes the societal acceptance she gains. Further examination of students’ narratives reveals how such negotiation occurs on a college campus. Students explain how formal and informal identification affect their own sense of self and belonging. When not able to obtain a driver’s license, undocumented students assert that a student ID can play a similar role. Undocumented students have successfully utilized a student ID in place

of a driver’s license or passport at a variety of everyday immigration “checkpoints,” from grocery stores to border crossings. Consequently, IDs inform how undocumented students interact with power relations in other aspects of higher education, such as with administrators and teachers seeking (whether intentional or not) citizen-normative behaviors. One such example is a university-mandated (by state or national standards) writing examination that requires formal identification undocumented students cannot obtain.

In the act of negotiating with administrators and professors to optimize opportunities in their education, undocumented students become cultural citizens, creatively generating social support in order to claim space and rights on campus and in their everyday lives. Students are able to transform regulation through the creation of an undocumented student group and ally program that provides spaces to negotiate their “self-making,” as well as advocate for changes in internship and scholarship programs and policies.

In order to successfully create change, students must “come out of the shadows” as undocumented to administrators, faculty, and classmates (Seif, 2011). Indeed, identity politics coupled with social support strategies utilized in the queer social movement have been implemented by undocumented students to achieve similar ends (Chávez, 2013). I argue that “coming out” in both public and interpersonal interactions is a natural and necessary response to the tenuous membership undocumented students experience in college. Suitably, techniques utilized in the larger social movement, like “coming out of the shadows,” were originally developed in these educational nuances.

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS AND EDUCATION

Over the last decade, a large body of research has been produced about undocumented students, those who grew up in the United States but were born elsewhere, and their intersections with institutional regulatory practices (Abrego, 2006; Flores, 2009; Gonzales, 2010a, 2010b; Frum, 2007; López & López, 2010; Greenburg Delgado & Harumi Mass, 2011; Pérez, 2009b; Seif, 2004).⁴ Plyler v. Doe (1982) guarantees a K-12 grade education for all children in the U.S. Consequently, undocumented students who grew up in the U.S. experience school and life similar to their documented peers. Motivated by their reasons (or their parents’ reasons) for immigrating and despite language, cultural, and familial barriers,

many undocumented students have excelled in their K-12 educations (Buriel, Pérez, de Ment, Chávez & Morán, 1998; Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado & Cortés, 2009; Gonzales, 2007; Rumbaut, 2005; Wignall, 2013).

While some students grow up acutely aware of their undocumented status, observing the impact on adult family members and familial socioeconomic conditions, other undocumented students grow up ignorant to their legal limitations. Though undocumented immigrant working adults regularly face everyday enforcement, undocumented youth have no equal experience of this, and often do not even learn of their legal status until they begin to apply for college or jobs (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011; Seif, 2011; Wignall, 2013; Quesada et al. 2014). Interacting with institutions that require formal identification, students begin to experience the segregating effects of citizenship and immigration laws (Seif, 2010; Wignall, 2013). When applying to college and for scholarships, students can experience shame, discrimination, and fear when they are not able to access the tools of higher education in a similar way to their peers (Pérez et al., 2011). A plethora of news articles, books and papers written by undocumented students reveal the prejudicial process and psychological turmoil that can accompany seeking college acceptance and funding (Manuel et al., 2012; Madera, 2008; Guerrero, 2014).

Yet, rather than giving up, undocumented students have sought support from a variety of places, including their parents, institutional agents, peers, campus support programs, and civic engagement (Pérez et al., 2011). Consequently, what students learn from citizen-normative marginalization in everyday college life and how they utilize these experiences to advocate for changes on campus provides unique insight into the undocumented student reality. Additionally, I posit that the successes students find on campus motivate and influence the larger social movement's techniques and strategies.

Alternatively, students who attend college are able to extend their sense of inclusion by means of educational membership rather than transitioning into their adulthood "illegality" (Gonzales, 2011). Universities offer a security blanket for a few more years until students graduate into their undocumented status. While college extends this inevitability, it also provides social capital, encouraging the students' hope for immigration reform. By excelling in school, volunteering, being active community members—all acts of model citizens—they hope to prove their

worthiness of true citizenship (Seif, 2010). The success of President Barack Obama's executive action of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) embodies the dialectal relationship of belonging experienced by undocumented students and their sustained civic engagement (Chávez, 2013). Equally important to their development as cultural citizens is the acquisition of the student ID, an institutionally issued ID from inside the U.S.

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS AND THE IMMIGRANT RIGHTS MOVEMENT

When looking at the broader social movement for immigration reform, undocumented youth have built strong community, state, and national organizations and have used "coming out of the shadows" as a way to claim space and rights in U.S. society (Chávez, 2013; Seif, 2011; Gonzales, 2008). In fact, by facing marginalization through their educational endeavors, undocumented students have turned to civic engagement as a way to cope with their pain and pursue their hope for change (Smiley, 2010; Seif, 2010; Pérez, 2008; Pérez et al., 2009; Pérez et al., 2011; Gonzales, 2010a; 2010b; 2011).

Undocumented students have sought inclusion through the passing of national laws such as the DREAM Act, as well as in-state laws regarding tuition and access to scholarships (Anguiano, 2011; Chavez, 2008; Gonzales, 2010b; Morales, Herrera & Murry, 2009; Pérez, 2009a, 2009b; Rincón, 2010).⁵ Students in California have led the way for even larger reform by advocating to end secure communities and ensure in-state driver's licenses for all undocumented people (Esquivel, 2011; Hurtado & Solchet, 2013).⁶ "Coming out of the shadows" in large public spaces through well planned campaigns that incorporate social media, demonstrations, sit-ins, marches, and civil disobediences have been successful strategies for claiming space and rights (Gonzales, 2008; Esquivel, 2011; Pavey & Saavedra, 2013; Seif, 2004). Yet we have also seen the reactionary responses to the reshaping of citizenship from states such as Georgia and Arizona with laws like the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act of 2010 and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011 that have sought to further oppress undocumented individuals. The documentation of this social movement has been imperative to our current sociopolitical existence and for laying the groundwork in the struggle for comprehensive immigration reform. Ultimately, the immigration reform

movement has asserted that citizenship is socially and politically constructed and thus, can be altered (Chavez, 1994; 2008; DeGenova, 2002). Strategies of the larger social movement like “coming out” and the everyday discrimination undocumented students face have been disjointed in current literature. In fact, such strategies are appropriated in everyday encounters with citizen-normative biases. The impact of seemingly mundane moments motivates students to participate and expand their rights in the educational institution as well as the nation-state.

EVERYDAY ENFORCEMENT

Citizenship is not only regulated in public spaces, but also in private, everyday ones (Gomberg-Muñoz & Nussbaum-Barberena, 2014). At a time when deportations are at their highest rates in history, the heavy hand of enforcement is felt in all aspects of life (Marchevsky & Baker, 2014). Gomberg-Muñoz and Nussbaum-Barberena (2014) describe the wide-reaching effects of enforcement:

For people without the right papers, immigration enforcement in the current period penetrates all aspects of life, from the public to the personal, from the economic to the intimate. While most unauthorized people in the U.S. have low objective probabilities of deportation, they nevertheless experience immigration enforcement in a thousand less visible ways. (4)

Consequently, laws that exclude undocumented immigrants from such things as public services, health care, driving, and IDs attempt to reify citizen norms through everyday interactions. As citizenship continues to be defined in small, daily interactions, immigrant communities are responding to the detestable effects of immigration enforcement with creativity, agency, and fervor (Gomberg-Muñoz & Nussbaum-Barberena, 2014). In fact, undocumented immigrants have been organizing to demand human rights in various aspects of life from rights for day laborers to building community centers (Flores, 2003; Quesada et. al., 2014). By discerning the dialectical relationships that are produced through everyday immigration enforcement within the educational institution, the students’ creative and practical responses to citizen-normative regulation can be appreciated.

CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP AND COMING OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Renato Rosaldo and William Flores (1997) have defined cultural citizenship as “the right to be different with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one’s right to belong” (57). However, one cannot assume that such identity is “unilaterally constructed” (Ong, 1996:738). Citizenship itself, as a long-standing “technology of government,” like many other policies, programs, and practices, is determined by “how one is constituted as a subject who exercises or submits to power relations” (Ong, 2003:6). Consequently, citizenship is not simply governed through laws, but constitutes a “technology” that is systematically regulated through intersections of identity, institutions, and belonging (Chavez, 1991; 1992).

William Flores (1997) notes that undocumented immigrants are “citizens as social actors—struggling not only to gain full membership in society, but also, to reshape it” (255). As social actors, they are able to operate with human agency that both reproduces and challenges the hegemonic power of society (Seif, 2011). Thus, cultural citizenship, as Aihwa Ong states, is “cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish the criteria of belonging” (Ong, 1996:738). The dialectical relationship establishes a complex sense of belonging and agency that allows undocumented immigrants to be part of a society in which he or she is not legally accepted (Rosaldo, 1997). Such implementation of cultural citizenship is utilized by undocumented community organizations across the U.S. to claim space and rights (Flores, 1997; 2003). Furthermore, legal immigrant groups, including refugees, are implementing cultural citizenship to avoid hierarchical categorization (Ong, 1996).

Undocumented students and the immigration reform movement are embracing “coming out of the shadows” to confront hegemonic notions of citizenship (Chávez, 2013; Seif, 2011). “Coming out” is the process of recognizing, accepting, and sharing with others one’s deviant identity in comparison to the “normative citizen.” Those coming out in the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer (LGBTQ) community experience coming out as ongoing due to the pervasiveness of heterosexism—the belief that everyone is or should be heterosexual (Rhoads, 1995; Friend, 1993; Lorde, 1985). Comparatively, undocumented

students experience coming out as ongoing because of the assumption of citizenship—that everyone is a citizen. While queer migrants experience “coming out” in multiple ways because of their intersectional identities, both straight and queer undocumented students must “come out” to expand their educational opportunities (Chávez, 2013).

Historically, the mainstream LGBTQ movement successfully utilized “coming out” for inclusionary means (Chávez, 2013). While, coming out “begins with those who are familiar, with whom such a story may be persuasive because they already have a personal relationship,” undocumented students must also “radicalize” their educational privilege by sharing their narratives in order to gain access and membership (Chávez, 2013:2161). Thus, coming out of “the closet” or “the shadows” elicits visibility politics, demanding not just inclusionary means, but reshaping sociopolitical impressions and practices (Chávez, 2013). As undocumented students (accepted in one institution but not another), they are redefining inclusion in U.S. society.

DATA AND METHODS

Ethnographic and interview data were collected through two years of research with an undocumented student support group at a university in Southern California. An estimated 300 undocumented students attend college where this research was conducted while undocumented students make up approximately 0.83 percent of the entire university system's population (Smiley, 2010). The support group had 20 to 50 rotating members. I conducted research from November 2009 to August 2011 using participant observation and informal interviews. I spent several hours each week at group meetings, study groups, outreach and advocacy events, community activist meetings, and social gatherings. As a graduate student myself, I was in a unique position as a participant observer to do this research and was privy to many conversations where students discussed their current experiences of citizenship regulation within everyday and educational spaces.

In addition to weekly gatherings, I attended meetings, rallies, marches, protests, conferences, retreats, parties, and performances. The participants include undocumented students who were both activists in the movement and those who were solely a part of the support group whose focus was to encourage and motivate undocumented students through their studies.

While a large part of my experience was observational, a crucial part was drawn from ten student interviews. I chose to interview students who were born in Mexico and with whom I had a high level of rapport. Not all undocumented students are from Mexico, but interviewing those that were provided a way to compare individual experiences from a particular country. However, Mexico's significance in this population should not be ignored since 76 percent of students who have applied for Deferred Action are from Mexico (USCIS, 2014). The students interviewed came to the U.S. between the ages of two and fourteen. When interviewed, they were between the ages of 19 and 27; two were in graduate school and the others were undergraduates. All came from mixed immigration status households, often having U.S. born brothers and sisters. They attended public high schools in Orange or Los Angeles counties and all attended the same university at the time of this research. On average, these students spent four years in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes while spending an average of four and a half years attending college bound programs. Each student lived at home with their families while attending college.

IDS, MEMBERSHIP AND COMING OUT

In an age where undocumented immigrants are fighting for driver's licenses and legalization, it is critical to understand the impact of not having identification. Driver's licenses and social security cards are integral “technologies of government” used to define citizenship. As students who are also becoming adults, the need for proper identification becomes increasingly necessary. Background checks and proof of valid licenses are required for normal life changes such as renting an apartment, getting a job, and volunteering (Smiley, 2010). Without one, students struggle to complete many of life's rites of passage (Gonzales, 2011; Chavez, 1992). More subtly, buying alcohol or groceries can be challenging because stores might ask to see identification. Going out to bars or clubs requires strategizing to determine which will accept a *matricula* or Mexican passport. In fact, many students struggle to obtain any sort of government issued ID even from their country of origin.

The implementation of e-verify has affected employment for many students working at fast food chains since it checks social security numbers. Students also report DUI/immigration stops as major economic and transit impediments; one student lost three cars to these

checkpoints. The ways in which identification seeps into everyday life are innumerable. With all of these concerns, it is no surprise that they see the student ID card as a huge benefit of being in college. Once students distinguish the power of a student ID, the advantages of being in college are compounded.

Gabriela is a 19-year-old undocumented student who lives at home with her grandparents and commutes to school by driving, even though she does not have a license. She talks about how helpless she felt when she was in a car accident because she did not have any sort of identification or insurance to exchange with the person who hit her. She admits that she is frustrated and embarrassed by her lack of identification. When grocery shopping, she avoids “Latino” stores and chooses to shop at “white” stores like Ralph’s because she feels they do not know what a *matrícula* signifies, and thus will not judge her. She even chooses which cashier she will go to, usually identifying young guys or girls who do not seem to care about identification. Here, Gabriela describes how she uses IDs:

And even at stores or any place where they ask for ID, I always try to show my school ID because I don’t want to show my *matrícula*. I’m just so like, “I don’t want to show it” ... I hide it in my wallet. Seriously I put it somewhere where it’s not visible at all, and unless, like, something really bad happens and I need to show it or something, I’ll pull it out, but I really don’t want to show it. I don’t really even want to tell people I have it sometimes.⁷

Gabriela’s sentiment towards her Mexican and student IDs shows how representative a piece of paper can be to one’s self-making. A student ID is not only a piece of paper, but an identity because being a “student” is someone the larger society can understand and appreciate. Additionally, being a student provides justification to work menial jobs even when students have graduated in the top five percent of their class, like Gabriela. Without being a student, their undocumented status becomes more recognizable to those around them. Furthermore, as a form of issued identification,

undocumented students are able to more deeply root their sense of belonging in society. In fact, less than 10 years ago, students like Gabriela could use a student ID to travel back and forth to Mexico, even though they were undocumented. Here, Gabriela recounts her last memory of crossing the border:

When I was 13, it was still easy, so I went with my aunt and she’s a resident here and her daughter and ... well, it was easy to go. When we came back, I came in a van with my best friend. And since they had always gone back and forth with her student ID ... so you just cross[ed] with your student ID.⁸

Consequently, the validation of a student ID enhances the motivation to seek inclusive practices within the higher education institution. As far as college goes, undocumented students are equal to their peers because they pay the same tuition and were accepted to the same university, a fact they remind themselves when they feel marginalized. Thus, institutional acceptance through the student ID emboldens undocumented students to come out and seek assistance. Unfortunately, in many circumstances a student ID will not suffice, leading to complicated and awkward situations.

WPE EXAM

The Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) is a test required by California State University Trustees to assess all students in the California State school system of their analytical writing efficiency. Generally, students must complete the exam before reaching 50 to 70 credit hours, and transfer students must complete it within their first semester of attendance (Munitz, 1997). The exam has become a site of “everyday enforcement” due to its requirement for a valid driver’s license or State ID.

The WPE is frequently used as an example by undocumented students as a university regulation they should advocate to change, along with other administrative policies. Students who already took the exam share with other students the types of identification they need and what to say to office administrators for the least amount of hassle. Marcela, an unreserved feminist, describes trying to register for the exam:

[When discussing issues with undocumented status in education] I think it's all linked to like paperwork and financial stuff. When I took the WPE, I walked up to them and I explained to them that I had to take the test, but they insisted that I had to get all these various forms of identification. I had my matrícula and my bank card but my bank card doesn't have my picture, so they insisted that I needed other forms. So I was just like, "Look, this is what I have. I need to take this test; otherwise, I won't be able to come back next semester because I'm already a junior." And she was being very hostile against me. And I was just like, "Look, please." I actually had to say please which I was really upset about because I know nobody was saying please to take that damn test.⁹

Marcela shows how a lack of identification put her at risk of being unable to complete the exam, which would have cost her education. For Marcela and other undocumented students, confronting administrators in these situations feels like they are sharing their deepest secret with complete strangers. Comparatively, another student, Faviana, recounts trying to take the exam:

Also here at school I remember, we're required to take the WPE. So for us to show our identification, obviously I don't have a California ID. So I had to go to the office, and there were these 2 ladies and one of them was Hispanic. And I just didn't know what to show them because I didn't have anything but the Mexican ID, the consulate ID. And I had like, a card from the bank, stuff like that. And one of them was inside. Oh, I had my old passport, which had already expired. And I just put a silly signature because I was like 13, 14 when I got it; so I changed my signature afterwards. So they were like, 'Oh you know, they're

[sic] different signatures.' They made a big thing out of it, and I was like, 'Oh my god.' They just made me feel really uncomfortable. I just wanted to get out of there.¹⁰

Faviana is a shy, quiet individual who hides her legal status from most everyone, including some of her closest friends. When the validity of her identification is questioned, Faviana is mortified by even the thought of having to explain her situation. While neither Faviana nor Marcela explicitly "come out" as undocumented, the citizen-normativity of the situation makes them both extremely uncomfortable and they perceive these interactions as involuntarily revealing their statuses. Blatant discrimination by institutional gatekeepers who assume citizenship necessitates undocumented students to justify their membership in an institution to which they are already accepted.

The WPE exam is just one example of everyday enforcement impeding with their educational careers. These instances are jarring and make students question their belonging, values, and ideas. Consequently, stories like Marcela's and Faviana's reflect programs and policies in place that regulate citizenship. These "technologies of government" permeate mundane moments of everyday life; yet they linger in the memories of students for years to come.

THE STUDENT GROUP: A SAFE SPACE

In 2004, three years after the passing of A.B. 540 (2001), the law that allows undocumented students to pay in-state tuition in California,¹¹ a student support group was formed on this urban campus. Here, students share their educational struggles with others who are going through similar experiences. The group is a reprieve, a safe space in the middle of campus where they can talk about both being a student and being undocumented. Faviana, a reserved grad student, describes the group like this:

What is the group to me? Well I do like it because like I just said, I felt like there was a connection. I felt identified with most of the members; I think we share something that we can't just share with anyone, and a lot of people wouldn't just understand our

frustration and a lot of the things we go through. So yeah, the group, it's kind of like a place where I can, [laugh] I know this is sort of weird but it's like, ok in your own room you can walk around naked, right? I mean no one is looking at you or you know, it's kind of like that. You don't hide anything. You can just talk about anything and people will understand what you're going through because they share a similar history [like] you do.¹²

For Faviana and others, the group is a safe space to be both undocumented and a student, discussing issues they experience at school and at home. As they share their stories with each other, they begin to identify areas of passive acceptance where they are accepted by the institution, but certain programs and policies have not yet altered to include all legal statuses.

Consequently, the group began creating their own resources and opportunities. They developed a scholarship program and tirelessly promoted fundraisers to help pay for their educations. Additionally, they started a scholarship blog to minimize search time for funding to which they qualified. They also created thirteen different leadership positions within the group to maximize their organizational experience. Thus, undocumented students are educational gatekeepers for each other by sharing strategies, creating resources, and supporting one another's educational and personal growth.

CLAIMING RIGHTS AND COMING OUT ON CAMPUS

Despite their efforts and successes with the student support group, undocumented students find that many aspects of college are still impeded by their status. As a "super senior" who has been attending a four year university for more than five years, Javier recalls his own challenge to pay his tuition on time and the judgmental reaction of an administrator when he paid his installment on the last day, 30 minutes before closing. He describes additional issues students were having with lack of administrator awareness:

So there were all these problems that we were encountering. When we went to ask for information about

internships and they were like, "What do you mean you don't have a social security number?" So we were like, we have to educate people; we have to tell people about this, we have to do something.¹³

As Javier points out, many institutional gatekeepers are unaware of the legal status issue and its wide-reaching effects. While most undocumented students "come out" to close counselors, teachers, or mentors to gain access to higher education, the everyday effects of regulation are only truly experienced when they enter adulthood (Pérez et. al., 2011; Gonzales, 2011). Consequently, students must claim cultural citizenship within the institution by coming out and educating others. Coming out is not a straightforward process; rather it is fluid, depending on the situation and purpose for divulging their status (Chávez, 2013). Hegemonic regulation of citizenship means that revealing their status is sometimes forced, like with the writing exam. When revealing their status in these situations, "coming out" is perceived as painful and embarrassing. However, when students choose to come out to someone on purpose, they are claiming the conversation, their identities, and their futures. As students challenge undocumented immigrant stereotypes by coming out to heedless college faculty and staff, they are hoping to "compel a change in attitude and possibly action" (Chávez, 2013:2219).

In response to students' needs, an ally educational program for university faculty and staff was developed. The training involves a half-day seminar, where students "come out" to professors and administrators, sharing the challenges they face while getting an education. The program functions similar to an LGBTQ ally program where stickers in faculty offices or on doors indicate that it is a safe space. Furthermore, sharing their stories has created real change on campus. During our interview, Javier tells me that after working with several faculty and staff through the ally program, the WPE exam no longer requires a driver's license or State ID, but will now accept alternative forms of identification.

While the ally group certainly widens the reach of safe spaces on campus, undocumented students still struggle with many policies and practices that regulate citizenship. Thus, students seek ways to impact such policies and implement more inclusive materials. Closing the gap between high school and college is a priority for students. For them,

tips to help achieve this would be to include information about applying for Assembly Bill 540 in all application promotional materials, as well as participating in student welcome programs. The undocumented student support group conducts outreach to high school students who are also undocumented, giving presentations in classrooms and college information sessions. In a given semester, the student group attends ten to fifteen high school outreaches in the area. By widely circulating their stories and achievements, undocumented students are claiming rights in their educational pathways and those of future scholars.

THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT BEGINS AT SCHOOL

As undocumented students near high school or college graduation, the imminent approach of undocumented adulthood is a constant source of stress and fear. While still included as student members of society, undocumented students appropriately “come out of the shadows” to demand change (Chávez, 2013). The implementation of student support groups and policy changes in higher education followed shortly after in-state tuition laws like A.B. 540 in the early 2000s. As a result, the increased pressure for immigration reform, especially surrounding undocumented students in higher education a few years later, follows undocumented students’ life trajectories.¹⁴ After years of students graduating with degrees that they cannot translate to employment and income, the need to claim space in the public sphere becomes necessary.

Enrique is an undocumented student pursuing his master’s in education. He also volunteers part-time at a grassroots immigrant rights organization. While Enrique experiences burnout from his bustling activist and class schedule, he recognizes the value in having highly educated members in the movement:

I commit to a lot of things, because I know that even just being there helps to give other people a different path. And doing the work and showing them that it can be done, that’s also part of doing the work . . . I’ve noticed that because we have a lot of educated people there and undocumented students who have degrees . . . that’s a huge resource and why they take us seriously.¹⁵

As degrees become social capital, so do the experiences of creating safe spaces on campus and improving access to resources. “Coming out” in everyday spaces to claim rights on campus forges a sense of cultural citizenship that extends well beyond higher education. Furthermore, like the LGBTQ movement, undocumented students must all “come out” or, “they are stalling progress at a crucial time” (Signorile, 2003:84 in Chávez, 2013:1958). As Flores (2003) notes, “Obtaining space, keeping it, and being free to use it as they see fit often require these groups to organize and make demands on society” (9). Consequently, higher education is a pivotal life transition that situates undocumented students to reshape citizen-normative narratives and policies.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Having grown up in the U.S., undocumented students have a strong sense of belonging to U.S. society. Despite the challenges undocumented students face getting into and completing college, they are able to establish membership and claim rights through their educational pathways. A student ID is a form of sanctioned membership which further compels students in their quest for full inclusion. By owning their visibility through student groups, an ally program, and altering university policies and practices, undocumented students are transforming higher education.

While cultural citizenship theory explains how undocumented students are not simply seeking to be a part of the dominant national community, but to reshape it in ways that are inclusive and respectful, it has not yet explained citizenship and membership on an individual, everyday level. As research on undocumented immigrant groups expands, so should cultural citizenship theory and its interactions with social capital, visibility politics, and intersectional identities. While everyday enforcement illuminates marginalization in daily life, it alone does not explain the outcomes of such interactions. Stemming from everyday enforcement realities, cultural citizens implore society to rethink citizenship and inclusion as socially and politically constructed.

While undocumented students navigate a tenuous membership in higher education, they are forced to do the work of the institution by seeking rights to educational opportunities. In interactions with school administrators, such as trying to take the writing exam,

students have discovered that coming out, educating, and organizing allows them access to otherwise restricted programs. In order to examine the full constraint of tenuous membership in higher education enforced by everyday regulation, research should be expanded to other cities and universities. In particular, cities that could provide comparable narratives include Chicago and New York, where the undocumented student social movement grew early and rapidly (Seif, 2011).

The implementation of strategies like “coming out of the shadows” on college campuses and their tactical extraction from the LGBTQ social movement should not be ignored. Literature surrounding the integration of queer politics in the immigration movement should include interpersonal structures like support groups and ally programs (Chávez, 2013; Seif, 2011). Pérez et al. (2011) suggests ways students can emotionally cope with their situation and how institutions can help, yet mundane programs and policies also need to be challenged to ensure inclusion. Faculty and staff in higher education should consider the role they play to include all student members in educational opportunities like identifying scholarships or internship opportunities that are less restrictive. Moreover, readers should consider that the implementation of student support groups and ally programs in universities and high schools across the nation could transform the narrative of inclusion and rights in the coming age.

As human rights organizations fight for comprehensive immigration reform, everyday enforcement in the lives of all undocumented immigrants should continue to be examined. Similar to undocumented students claiming cultural citizenship as student-members, undocumented adults can claim their own membership. Indeed, undocumented immigrants are claiming cultural citizenship in increasingly visible spaces (Quesada et al. 2014).¹⁶ Primary institutions like the economy, family, religion, and health care should also be considered as places to claim space and rights. While everyday, mundane spaces continue to collide with heightened citizen-normative regulations, the need to reshape policies and practices is compounded. As undocumented mothers and fathers of Deferred Action recipients take on their own marginalized status by “coming out of the shadows,” we are sure to see cultural citizenship constructed in new and meaningful ways.

ENDNOTES

- 1 “Everyday” in this sense does not mean that the students were experiencing this specific event every single day, but through routine procedures came into conflict with an educational requirement that assumes citizenship.
- 2 Throughout this paper pseudonyms are used in place of the undocumented students’ real names in order to protect their identities.
- 3 Reina, interview by author, August 11, 2011, Los Angeles County, California.
- 4 Roberto Gonzales does not use an accent in his last name.
- 5 Leo Chavez does not use an accent in his last name.
- 6 Secure communities is a Department of Homeland Security program that works with federal, state, and local law enforcement to identify immigrants in U.S. jails that are deportable under immigration laws. Fingerprints from jails are shared with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) who in turn share their database with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In this sense, ICE maintains a technological presence in all local jails, which creates fear in the community that local police are extensions of ICE (Immigration Policy Center, 2011).
- 7 Gabriela, interview by author, July 9, 2011, Los Angeles County, California.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Marcela, interview by author, July 6, 2011, Los Angeles County, California.
- 10 Faviana, interview by author, October 27, 2009, Los Angeles County, California.
- 11 Assembly Bill 540 (2001) allows students to qualify for exemption from out-of-state tuition if they attend a California high school for three or more academic years, graduate from a California high school or receive a GED, register or enroll at an accredited public institution of higher education in California, do not hold a valid non-immigrant visa (F, J, H, L, A, E, etc.) and fill out an affidavit stating that they will apply for residency as soon as possible.
- 12 Faviana, 2009 interview.
- 13 Javier, interview by author, November 4, 2009, Orange County, California.
- 14 May Day 2006 in Los Angeles was the single largest demonstration for immigration reform. This was an impetus for a large shift in the Immigration Reform Movement and increased visibility in the news. The

- Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act was first introduced to congress in 2001. At the end of 2010, the DREAM Act went for a vote in Congress where activists and undocumented students thought it would pass, but it failed to pass the Senate. Since 2010, visibility politics have played an even larger role in the Immigration Reform Movement (Rincón, 2010; Seif, 2011).
- 15 Enrique, interview by author, August 29, 2011, Orange County, California.
- 16 Documentaries such as “*The Vigil*” (2012) by Jenny Alexander and “*Documented*” (2011) by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and undocumented adult, Jose Antonio Vargas (who does not use an accent on his first name), depict ways undocumented adults are coming out while claiming space and rights in extremely visible ways.
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