

Speech or Silence: Undocumented Students' Decisions to Disclose or Disguise Their Citizenship Status in School

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This article provides ethnographic evidence of the ways in which undocumented students make decisions about when to share or withhold their migratory status during conversations with peers and teachers in one elementary school. It argues that an analytic focus on how and when elementary-aged students talk about migratory status during everyday school activities can deepen our understanding of the educational experiences of a population that often remains invisible to teachers and educational researchers. The findings suggest ways in which public school and university educators can foster educational equity and inclusion for undocumented students.

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While conducting an ethnographic study of the relationship between children's citizenship status and learning, I held routine meetings to discuss the project with the six Latina girls who formed the study's core. During one such meeting, I asked them what they thought of homework assigned during their sixth grade social studies unit on geography and immigration. The worksheet required them to answer four questions:

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1. (a) What countries does your family come from? (b) What continents does your family come from?
2. Who in your family moved to the United States (Grandma, uncle, Great-grandfather, and so on)?
3. How did your family come to the United States?
4. Why did your family come to the United States?

When I asked Lupe, a Mexican-born undocumented student, how she would respond to questions about what country she came from, she said, “What I think is that I would say from Mexico but when they ask me if I have paper I say yes.”¹ Ruth, an undocumented El Salvadoran student who had obtained her green card, felt differently about being asked about her immigration experience:

Yo me sentiría como . . . proud . . . porque veo que, yo siento que alguien le importa algo de otras personas y no es solo yo, yo, yo, yo. Sino que quiero saber de otra personas, de donde vienen, um porque vinieron acá si son inmigrantes, quien empezó la inmigración, porque vinieron, y todo.

I would feel like . . . **proud** . . . because I see that, I feel that someone cares about other people and it's not just me, me, me, me. But rather I want to know about other people, where they come from, um why they came here if they are immigrants, who started the immigration, why they came, and everything.

As the word *proud* suggests, Ruth did not share Lupe's same hesitation regarding the topic of immigration. On the contrary, she reported feeling much more comfortable answering questions that broached the subject of her country of origin and her migration experiences.

Lupe and Ruth have a lot in common: They were both born in Latin America, lived with their grandmothers until they left for the United States, and entered the United States as undocumented migrants. At the time of the study, they also lived in the same neighborhood and attended the same bilingual elementary school in Brooklyn, New York. However, there was one significant difference between them: Lupe remained an undocumented immigrant like her parents, and Ruth obtained her legal permanent resident status in 2011. This difference in migratory status meant that they faced a distinct set of risks when talking about their immigration experiences.

Throughout this study, Lupe and Ruth's understanding of legal status—and its attendant risks—shaped when and how they chose to talk about citizenship. This article focuses on their everyday schooling experiences in order to answer questions regarding when, why, and how they decided to talk and write about citizenship in school. The findings address two research questions: When do children talk about citizenship (and related topics) during the school day? What curricular activities foster or hinder these kinds of

discussions? By analyzing ethnographic evidence of everyday interactions during two parts of their school day—fifth-grade humanities classes and school-wide social-emotional learning activities—this article identifies and compares those moments when Lupe and Ruth disclose or withhold their legal status.

This study shows that children make deliberate choices about when and why to talk about citizenship at home and at school. They start making these decisions early in their educational trajectories, when they are as young as 10 and 11 years old, and these choices are significant because they both reflect and in turn affect student participation in school. Decisions to disclose or disguise migratory status are shaped by school pedagogy, and this article analyzes the relationship between teachers' assignments and students' expressions of citizenship. By examining Lupe and Ruth's interpretations of—and responses to—curricular prompts, educators and researchers can gain important insights into the educational experiences of young students who are undocumented. These insights are important for two reasons: First, because they show the complex ways in which younger students negotiate citizenship status in everyday school settings; and, relatedly, because they may counter the prevailing view among scholars and policymakers that children remain unaware of their citizenship status prior to adolescence.

Context for the Study: Citizenship and Schooling

The study of citizenship status among immigrant students attending U.S. public schools is in part a study of silence. This is one aspect of the legacy of the landmark 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court decision. This decision ruled that any child living in the United States (regardless of their or their parents' legal status) has the right to a K–12 public education. While the Supreme Court did not mandate a remedy to the problem of undocumented children being denied admission to public schools, *Plyler* has been interpreted as a kind of “don't ask, don't tell” policy (Mangual Figueroa, 2011). In order to protect all students' rights to enroll in public schools, state education departments instruct district administrators and educators not to inquire into the migratory status of the children and families they serve (López & López, 2010; Rabin, Combs, & González, 2009).

For example, in a 2010 memo to district superintendents and school administrators entitled “Student Registration Guidance,” the New York State Education Department explained:

While Plyler did not expressly address the issue of whether a school district may inquire about a student's immigration status at the time of enrollment, the decision is generally viewed as prohibiting any district actions that might “chill” or discourage undocumented students from receiving a free public education. Accordingly, at the time of registration, schools should avoid asking questions related to

immigration status or that may reveal a child's immigration status such as asking for a Social Security number. (pp. 1–2)

This memo—applicable to New York City, where this study was conducted—issues a statewide mandate based upon the federal ruling issued in *Plyler*. Two things are particularly notable about the memo: first, that the recommended approach to protecting the rights of undocumented students is to avoid any discussion of their status; and second, that the focus is on the process of school enrollment and data collection with no attention paid to the possibility of disclosure at other moments throughout the students' schooling experience.

The silence surrounding legal citizenship status in schools is pervasive, issuing both from the “don't ask” policies established after *Plyler* and the “don't tell” practices to which many undocumented children and youth are socialized. As Rabin et al. (2009) explain:

Plyler establishes a “don't ask” regime only, in which school personnel are not to inquire into a student's legal status. However, extra-legal social norms seem to have imposed the “don't tell” corollary, suggesting that undocumented students may face the threat of losing rights and entitlements should they make their legal status explicit. As a result, many undocumented students do not experience school as a place where status distinctions are truly irrelevant. Through the school day, they carry with them awareness that they must keep their legal status “invisible” or risk serious repercussions. (p. 58)

Even when educators uphold *Plyler* by not explicitly asking about students' and families' legal status, they may nevertheless create conflicts for children socialized not to talk about citizenship by posing questions whose responses inadvertently prompt disclosure. In a survey of public school teachers in Arizona, Rabin et al. (2009) found that teachers witnessed elementary-aged students struggling to complete family history assignments that elicited parents' immigration narratives. As the examples presented at the beginning of this article show, undocumented children and those from mixed-status families face everyday dilemmas posed by school assignments prompting them to recount their immigration experiences. Scholars have—with good reason—attended to the extraordinary courage of undocumented youth declaring their status in collective efforts to advocate for immigration reform; less attention has been paid to the experiences of children who are undocumented and/or part of mixed-status families and the ways that classroom decisions can activate anxiety over legal status. Even well-intentioned assignments can have a silencing effect.

These concerns about silence and schooling are all the more exigent because the undocumented foreign-born population now includes nearly 13 million individuals (Brown & Patten, 2014), with Mexican-born migrants accounting for more than half of the population (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Seventy percent of the children living in the United States with at least

one undocumented parent have Mexican-born parents (Passel & Cohn, 2011). In 2014, approximately 7.3% of all children enrolled in K-12 public and private schools across the United States had at least one undocumented parent (Passel & Cohn, 2016). New York City was one of six states with the largest undocumented populations in 2012—3.8% of New York State's population was undocumented and 5.5% of the students enrolled in schools across the state had undocumented parents (Passel, Cohn, & Rohal, 2014). Four of the six focal girls in this study—those from Mexico and El Salvador—had undocumented parents.

The relationship between citizenship and schooling is significant because families often view migratory status as integral to obtaining increased opportunities in the United States (Perez, 2009). Moreover, schools are civic institutions in which students' responses to people, ideas, and practices are formative in their sense of belonging and participation in the public life of the nation (Rubin, 2012). Ruth and Lupe's everyday interactions in school prove that they are indeed "trapped at the intersection of two systems in crisis: the public education system and the immigration law system" (López & López, 2010, p. 1). These two systems, albeit in different ways, continue to simultaneously integrate and isolate classes of children based on a variety of factors including legal migratory status. While most empirical research tracing the educational impact of migratory status has been conducted with adolescents and adults, research has shown that children develop complex understandings of citizenship status (Mangual Figueroa, 2012). By not talking about these experiences, educators and researchers may assume that children are unaware of the significance of citizenship and the very real risks that they and their family members face. In fact, children in middle to late childhood like those in this study make decisions about when and how to talk about citizenship status in school. Their silences can also be eloquent, indicating when children perceive it is too risky to publicize their immigration status.

Literature Review

Within the field of education, U.S. citizenship has tended to be viewed as a set of dispositions and actions that students can realize through political engagement (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). From this perspective, elementary and secondary students are presumed to be U.S. citizens, and legal citizenship is considered a "superficial characteristic" held by students who "are legal members of the nation-state" but may "not participate in the political system in any meaningful ways" (Banks, 2008, p. 136). Recently, however, researchers have become concerned with the central role that legal status plays in the educational experiences of immigrant students. New studies find that legal citizenship is integral to understanding contemporary schooling, suggesting ways in which citizenship status can lead to differential

educational outcomes for students (Dabach, 2015). The following sections provide a review of relevant literature from sociology and anthropology that has broadened our conceptualization of citizenship as well as a review of those interdisciplinary studies that demonstrate the significance of legal citizenship status for students and teachers.

Conceptual Framework: Cultural and Legal Citizenship

Scholars have worked to distinguish legal citizenship from what is described as cultural citizenship. Legal, or juridical, citizenship refers to status that can be applied for by individuals and/or assigned by the nation-state. In the United States, juridical citizenship is also known as *jus soli* citizenship and is acquired by birth (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakal, 2008). Cultural citizenship denotes an individual's sense of belonging in the nation, often gained through local participation in civic life (Rosaldo, 1996). These two kinds of citizenship—legal and cultural—are independent even though they can overlap. Studies of cultural citizenship examine bids for inclusion made by negotiating access to the everyday social, economic, and democratic life of a community through active “expressions” of belonging despite lacking legal rights (Rosaldo, 1996, p. 6). For example, Flores' (1997) study of undocumented communities in California included adults speaking out publically about health care rights, delivering performances representing community-wide concerns, and organizing protests decrying deportation.

Anthropologists and sociologists have highlighted the fact that neither legal nor cultural citizenship is a static category (Ong, 2005). For example, a person may lose or obtain legal status over time. This is true for at least two reasons: First, historically eligibility for U.S. citizenship has changed along with the regulatory agencies and policies controlling who is included in or excluded from the polity (Chomsky, 2014; Ngai, 2004). In addition, as Gonzales and Chavez (2012) argue, undocumented migrants live in a liminal space by forming an important part of a country that also excludes them from the mainstream economic, social, and political life of the nation. Ong (1996) warns that without attending to the power of the state, studies of citizenship may give “the erroneous impression that cultural citizenship can be unilaterally constructed and that immigrant or minority groups can escape the cultural inscription of state power and other forms of regulation that define the different modalities of belonging” (p. 738). She calls for a view of citizenship as a “dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society” that may be “at once specific and diffused” (p. 738). In this framework, legal and cultural citizenship are dynamic yet defined in relation to the hegemonic policies and practices of inclusion/exclusion enacted through the state.

In her introduction to the 2013 edited volume titled *Language Policies and (Dis)citizenship*, Ramanathan argues that we must conceptualize citizenship in “relational terms” since immigrants’ lives are simultaneously shaped by globalization, national policies, and local pedagogic practices (p. 1). Research like Ramanathan’s argues for moving beyond dichotomies of inclusion-exclusion towards a view of citizenship as a process—a set of beliefs and actions informed by top-down state policies and bottom-up civic participation that often takes place in educational institutions. This article shares this view of citizenship as a process both defined in relation to the state and enacted in those details of everyday interaction that are at once observable and ephemeral. By showing the intersection between students’ legal status and their participation in schools, the findings demonstrate the ways in which classroom pedagogy and students’ sense of legal and cultural citizenship shaped their choices to disclose or disguise their status. The following section reviews studies showing that citizenship status influences immigrants’ participation across institutions and affects their behavior across the lifespan. The section closes with a review of new studies focused on teacher’s roles in schools serving undocumented students.

Empirical Evidence: The Ripple Effects of Citizenship

Families

The effects of legal status are pervasive in two interrelated ways: An individual’s undocumented status limits her or his own access to institutional resources, and the resulting marginalization means that U.S.-citizen members of mixed-status households also receive fewer social services. Ochoa O’Leary and Sanchez (2011) show that anti-immigrant laws restricting access to reproductive healthcare in Arizona negatively affected the ability of citizen and noncitizen family members to obtain medical care. The authors conclude that there is a “ripple effect” in public policy where the exclusion experienced by undocumented family members leads to negative outcomes for all mixed-status family members. Yoshikawa’s (2011) study tracks the effects of parental undocumented status on children. U.S.-born citizen-children who are eligible for educational and health benefits often do not receive these benefits because their noncitizen parents fear deportation and are unfamiliar with and afraid to participate in U.S. institutions. Thus, relying on dichotomies between those who have or lack legal status may not help us explain the experiences of mixed-status families (Súarez-Orozco & Yoshikawa, 2015).

Even when families are granted the right to public services like education, their fear of the state affects their participation in schools and shapes their socialization of children at home. Valdés (1996) found that undocumented parents explicitly warned their children “not to give out information” while also censoring their own talk in public settings like schools

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(p. 63). In a qualitative survey of administrators and educators in Arizona, Combs, González, and Moll (2011) found that parents may not return school phone calls out of fear that disciplinary action may lead to deportation. In an earlier study of mixed-status families living in an emerging Latino community, I found that school correspondence meant to enlist parental participation—such as report cards bearing a “citizenship grade” or letters regarding “legal student absences”—can scare parents away by evoking legal citizenship and aligning school staff with immigration enforcement (Mangual Figueroa, 2011, 2013). Educators may misinterpret parental silence as a lack of interest, but nonparticipation can result from fearing public systems that criminalize immigrants.

Children

Comparatively little research examines the experiences of undocumented children or U.S.-born children in middle childhood who have undocumented siblings and parents—something that Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, and Suárez-Orozco call for in a 2011 review of the literature and something that this article hopes to redress. The few existing studies provide evidence that young children’s frames of reference are meaningfully informed by immigration contexts defined by border crossing (González, 2001). From their observations of elementary schools in Arizona, Combs et al. (2011) find that Latino children’s free play often involves immigration officers (*la migra*) instead of “cops and robbers.” Lavadenz (2005) reports tensions felt by Central American children in California who did not know how to respond to peers’ queries about where they were from. Gallo’s (2014) research on undocumented Mexican fathers and their U.S.-born children’s narratives of detention and deportation finds that children as young as 8 years of age witnessed encounters between their parents and police, advocated for their family member’s legal rights, and expressed preferences about staying in the United States or returning to Mexico in the event of deportation. In an ethnographic study of mixed-status families in the U.S. Rust Belt, I found that children ranging from ages 6 through 13 demonstrated their knowledge of family and community-specific norms for talking about legal and cultural citizenship. These schemas organized their understanding of their roles in domestic and in public institutions and shaped their thinking about what educational and social opportunities might be available to them based upon their status (Mangual Figueroa, 2012).

Adolescents and Young Adults

The transition from secondary to postsecondary education is a critical time for undocumented youth due to a “lack of legitimate paths towards higher education and professionalization” (Abrego, 2006, p. 226). In a study of undocumented youth over 18 years of age, Gonzales and Chavez (2012)

reported how young people are systematically excluded from full participation in society by being denied driver's licenses, financial aid for college, and work opportunities. Patel (2013) found that the damaging effects of immigration policy—raids, detention, deportation—forced some undocumented youth to become wage earners and caregivers for their families at the expense of pursuing secondary education.

Despite being excluded from many educational opportunities, forms of social integration, and traditional modes of political participation such as voting in elections, undocumented youth—like those in Perez's 2009 study of undocumented students attending community colleges and universities—participate in grassroots movements advocating for inclusion through legalization and educational opportunity via the Dream Act. In a study of undocumented activists in California, Negrón-Gonzales (2014) found that undocumented college students took a calculated risk in revealing their legal status during public actions, “casting silence as the dangerous choice” which would lead to further structural exclusion and social isolation (p. 273). These youth activists reframed vulnerability by taking the view that invisibility and exclusion are more harmful than collective actions that openly advocate for more inclusive public policies.

Research examining the effects of immigration reforms on the integration of undocumented youth into the U.S. economic and educational mainstream has shown that their ability to take advantage of these policy reforms correlates to other forms of familial and social capital. For example, Gonzales, Terriquez, and Ruszczyk (2014) demonstrated that individuals ages 18 to 32 who have comparatively high levels of formal education and robust social and familial networks were able to access a greater variety of opportunities made available by the 2012 federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program than their less advantaged peers. The findings presented in this article suggest a similar pattern: Children in mixed-status families that have benefitted from existing immigration reforms (finding a pathway to legalization like Ruth and her parents) seem better able to integrate into the social mainstream of their schools than those who remain undocumented (like Lupe and her parents).

Teachers

Teachers play an important role in creating classroom contexts in which undocumented students disclose or withhold their legal citizenship status. Qualitative studies conducted in schools serving undocumented students have looked beyond the official edict of national rulings such as *Plyler* in order to investigate how classroom teachers' dispositions and pedagogical decisions influence student participation. This small but growing body of literature suggests a continuum of teacher behaviors that includes discrimination toward undocumented students, ignorance regarding how to respond to

student disclosures of legal status, and inclusive pedagogy that explicitly encourages talk about legal citizenship status. This makes it difficult to issue a generic set of recommendations about whether and how teachers should approach the subject. This article seeks to contribute a deeper understanding of what is at stake for students when teachers attempt to explore issues of legal and cultural citizenship in the classroom.

Qualitative studies conducted at the secondary level have shown that teachers may conflate students' language proficiency or ethnicity with their legal citizenship status. In her study of civic education in California, Dabach (2014) observed the ways in which one social studies teacher mistakenly equated a perceived lack of English fluency with a lack of legal status. In a discussion about voting in presidential elections, the teacher explicitly stated that those students with limited English proficiency could not vote and would therefore be less motivated to participate in the lesson. Dabach argues that this kind of linguistic profiling undermines English learners' inclusion in school. In another example, Gonzales, Heredia, and Negrón-Gonzales (2015) found that secondary teachers in California—some who made statements that Latino students enrolled in English as a Second Language classes were destined for jail over graduation—influenced undocumented students' exiting school before completing their degree.

While xenophobic teacher talk actively serves to marginalize undocumented students, professional ignorance can also undermine the ability of teachers to support students lacking legal citizenship and/or growing up in mixed-status homes. In a 4-year study of a Boston public high school serving undocumented students in the aftermath of September 11, Jefferies (2014) found that educators' myths and fears led them to remain silent on the effects that increased surveillance and deportation were having on students. For example, the focal educators—teachers and administrators alike—believed that they would be obligated to act as mandated reporters of students' undocumented status, while others feared offending colleagues with differing political views by talking about immigration. He concludes that this “circle of silence . . . limits the kind of services that administrators can render to this highly vulnerable population” (p. 291). In another northeastern city, Gallo and Link (2015) found the same myths circulating at the elementary level, as teachers expressed fears of having to act as mandated reporters of legal status. The researchers found that when mixed-status family members faced deportation, children's social, emotional, and academic well-being were profoundly affected and support from teachers was idiosyncratic. At best, educator support was left to the goodwill and open-mindedness of individual teachers instead of forming part of a concerted school-wide effort.

In a more recent study, Dabach (2015) closely examined one social studies teacher's pedagogical decisions to explicitly talk about immigration,

legality, and deportation. The study involved in-depth observations during a social studies unit on civic participation that included writing letters to President Obama. Dabach tracked the ways in which the teacher broke mainstream norms of silence regarding talk about citizenship and examined students' responses to the class content and teacher's choices. Her data suggest something similar to the argument presented in this article: Undocumented students participated in content-area discussions without disclosing status while Latino students with legal status took explicit positions on the need for immigration reform. The findings presented here offer two additional perspectives on pedagogy: First, they further the notion that culturally relevant content-based academic work can be a place to engage in rich exchanges about citizenship; second, they demonstrate how students' own legal status informs the decisions they make about when and how to speak about citizenship in school.

Methods

Language Socialization

Language socialization research examines the culturally specific ways in which novice members of a community learn to become competent members of social groups (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Studying language use—spoken, written, and gestural, for example—reveals the ways in which individuals express their understanding of the roles and responsibilities expected of them. Since undocumented individuals make principled decisions about when and how to disclose their migratory status (Negrón-Gonzales, 2014), I collected data across a range of social contexts in order to examine how the focal children talked with various interlocutors about immigration and identity. Specifically focusing on students' expressions of their undocumented identities, as well as the moments when they *withheld* mention of their status, illuminates existing local norms surrounding the appropriateness of talk about citizenship in school contexts.

Schools are important sites for language socialization researchers who are interested in tracking the ways in which taken-for-granted cultural frames of reference are unearthed and renegotiated during moments of intercultural exchange (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002). Classroom interactions can position immigrant children as outsiders to the social norms of the school and society (García-Sánchez, 2014). Through linguistic and embodied communication, immigrant students demonstrate how experiences of marginalization negatively affect their sense of self and their relationships to peers and teachers (Cekaite, 2014). In the heterogeneous, mixed-status school that is the focus of this study, the tacit social norms that inform which students participate are constantly co-constructed and therefore

observable. Documenting these interactions provides new insights into which students remain silent at the expense of full inclusion in classrooms.

Ethnographers of language have noted that silence is a key interactional resource for rendering visible those unspoken assumptions that undergird classroom interaction. Classroom silence is sometimes understood as a cultural practice inherent to historically marginalized populations; this essentializing notion can reinforce deficit thinking that considers silence evidence of students' lack of interest in academic learning (Pon, Goldstein, & Schecter, 2003; San Pedro, 2015b). Assumptions about the significance of silence for racialized student populations can lead to moralizing judgments of those students as "good" or "bad" (Gilmore, 1995). In their respective studies of silence in secondary classrooms, Schultz (2010) and San Pedro (2015a) found that student silence can function as an agentic act of resistance to mainstream curricular and disciplinary practices that place racialized groups on the fringes of classroom learning. Talk that is absent or "out of place" can be productive; breaks in normative classroom conversation can prompt teachers and students to reflect on tacit identity categories—such as race and class—that are often taken for granted in everyday talk (O'Connor, *in press*; Rampton & Charalambous, 2016).

These important insights regarding classroom silence inform this article, which also seeks to extend our methodological and empirical understanding of silence in several ways. First, the aforementioned studies examine what I call "audible silences"—those which are recognized by interlocutors. In those cases, orienting to silence interrupts the flow of normative talk and creates possibilities for new forms of agency and reflection. In the present study, silence is often "inaudible" to others in the sense that it goes unnoticed during dense, multiparty classroom interactions or because it only becomes evident by reading multiple versions of student writing over time. Methodologically, the silences examined below only became "audible" to the author after multiple passes at coding audiorecorded and textual data iteratively over time.

In the studies reviewed above, silence is interactional but not topical. As a result, the silence can be experienced collectively because it is in clear opposition to the expected conventions regarding talk in classrooms. Here, the silence is related to a subject matter—legal citizenship—whose absence from classroom exchanges is generally assumed. Unlike the teachers in this study, who all reported not knowing their students' legal status, I held privileged information as an ethnographer that attuned me to listen for particular moments of disclosure or its absence. Finally, in some cases the metapragmatic discourse that surrounds silence—for example, when Lupe mumbled under her breath that she would not stand or write during a classroom activity—may transform that silence into a gesture of refusal linked to the undocumented student's calculation of the risks attending disclosure. Here, as in the studies reviewed above, silence is agentic, but instead of

being an act of student resistance, it may be an act of survival in which students protect their families by not revealing their legal status.

The School: Students and Teachers

The school-based component of this study that is the focal point for this article was conducted in 2013–2014 at the Spanish-English dual-language program at the Elementary School for Bilingual and Global Learning. This school is located in a neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, that has been defined by immigration from Latin America and China since the middle of the 20th century. Despite the nearly equal numbers of Latin American and Asian residents, this neighborhood school primarily served the children of Latino immigrants. During the 2013–2014 school year, the student population was more than 90% Latino, 91% of the students received free and reduced lunch, and 46% of the students were classified English Language Learners.

The focal elementary school was selected because of the high matriculation of Latino families with a range of migratory statuses that mirrored neighborhood and city immigration patterns. Given the study's focus on how undocumented status differentially affected student learning, I began by building relationships with school administrators and teachers who could connect me with mixed-status families. As a former New York City public school teacher and as a bilingual Puerto Rican woman born and raised in New York City, I was able to establish trust with teachers and staff who understood that my goal was to gain insights that could support children's learning. Still, relationship building took many months; I was new to the community and I differed from potential participants in one crucial way: As a U.S.-born Puerto Rican I hold birthright citizenship, whereas many mixed-status family members at this school did not.

Given the sensitive nature of information regarding legal citizenship and the fact that the school did not collect data on immigration status, it was initially difficult to identify potential focal participants. By asking school staff about immigration patterns in the neighborhood, I learned that families in this community were not migrating as much as in previous years. On par with national trends, growth in the Latino population in this part of Brooklyn was due largely to the birth of U.S. citizen-children of undocumented parents (Passel & Cohn, 2011). It followed that fewer undocumented students enrolled since most Latino children were U.S.-born.

After several months of visiting the school community, I learned that the school's ESL teacher held important clues regarding students' immigration experiences. On the home language survey completed upon enrollment—and used by the ESL teacher to determine eligibility for instructional language support—parents provided their child's birthdate, first date of enrollment in the school system, and place of birth. Based upon the

migration patterns described above, it was possible to infer which students were most likely to be undocumented. That school year, the fifth-grade dual-language class was the only one with a critical mass of students born outside of the United States. Coincidentally, this group included only female-identified students.

In the weeks that followed, I obtained informed consent from the six focal students, their peers, and a set of focal teachers. I contacted the parents of the five immigrant girls and confirmed that none of them held U.S. citizenship. The group included two students from Mexico, one from El Salvador, and two from the Dominican Republic. In order to obtain equivalent representation from each country of origin, and in order to include a comparative case, I also recruited one U.S.-born child of undocumented El Salvadoran parents. I obtained consent from the fifth-grade classroom teacher, the social-emotional learning and science teachers, and other key adults including the school guidance counselor.

Ethnographic Data Collection

Ethnographic observation took place between January and June 2014, beginning at 8:00 am when the school day began and continuing until 2:30 pm when the school day ended. Based on preliminary visits conducted in the fall of 2013, data collection occurred on Wednesdays because the students' schedule included two subjects in which discussions of citizenship, identity, and belonging were likely to take place: social studies and social-emotional learning. The focal teachers responsible for this content, including the fifth-grade classroom teacher who taught social studies and two additional social-emotional learning teachers, welcomed the opportunity to learn more about their immigrant students and believed that participation in this study could support their teaching. While the fifth-grade classroom teacher had already designed the social studies curriculum, one of the social-emotional learning teachers invited me co-plan a unit focused on transitions to middle school. However, the data analyzed in this article draw exclusively on children's responses to course content planned in advance of the study.

During my visits, I used a "combination of modalities of being with others and observing them that is referred to as *participant-observation*" (Duranti, 1997, p. 89, emphasis in the original). My dual role in this study was contingent upon the social context and negotiated with participants from one moment to the next. I carried a marble composition notebook with me throughout the day and participated in all of the classroom activities that the children did. My notebook mirrored the ones they used to complete in-class assignments, and we often carried our books through transitions from working at desks, to sitting cross-legged on the floor, to walking quietly through the hallways. All of the teachers in the school were addressed by a gendered salutation (Mr. or Ms.) and first name. The children in this study called me Ms. Ariana. In this way,

the students signaled that I was both an insider participating in their routine schooling activities and an outsider who they considered more of an adult than a fellow student. This flexible positioning gave me multiple opportunities to listen to and record interactions while also eliciting students' own interpretations of classroom activities and assignments.

This intensive period of ethnographic data collection involved over 30 visits to the focal school, resulting in a data set that include field notes, artifacts of teachers' curricula by content area and student work produced in those subjects, and over 200 hours of recorded talk in the school setting. In order to collect a large corpus of recorded interaction, I asked the focal girls to wear iPod touch microphones during the school day. Audio recording began at 8:14 am when first period began, and the girls would wear the iPods and microphones during all of their classes, and often through lunch and recess as well. I hypothesized that smartphones would be familiar devices to children in families where transnational relationships were facilitated by the use of mobile technologies like telephones and tablet computers. This was true in the focal site, reflecting a national trend in which smartphone access in the foreign-born and Spanish-dominant community dramatically increased between 2009 and 2012 (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Patten, 2013). The portability and familiarity of these devices were central to ensuring that the recording process only minimally affected students' everyday interactions.

Analyzing and Presenting the Data

The first step in data analysis was to organize the vast amount of audio recorded data and artifacts of student writing. This task involved three activities: digitizing and organizing the audio files chronologically; creating a detailed tape log for each audio file including the interlocutors and topics discussed; and transcribing sequences of data focused specifically on mentions of legal citizenship within the school day. Digitized data were entered into a qualitative language-focused software program called Transana that facilitated close analysis of participants' talk and triangulation across data sources. Codes were created and informed by the existing literature as well as the data itself, leading to a process of analytic induction that involved scanning for recurring topics and themes and for grammatical patterns in the participants' speech (Ochs, 1996). An initial coding schema was devised with first level categories focused on legal and cultural citizenship and subcodes added during fieldwork. See Appendix A for a detailed description of the process of identifying relevant silences in the data.

Once I coded the data for legal and cultural citizenship, I transcribed those excerpts using Conversation Analysis conventions (Schegloff, 2007). These conventions focus analytic attention not only on the speakers but also on the responses of their interlocutors. This is especially important in

this study of the situated and interactional nature of teachers' prompts and students' and peers' responses. A student response may include further talk about citizenship but it may also include silence. A close reading of the transcripts highlights both types of responses and their significance. Written excerpts of data, such as student work samples, were coded to facilitate a close reading of students' narratives and the development of their ideas over time. Students in this study returned to significant topics like citizenship throughout the school year, meaning that later excerpts helped to shed light on previous ones. See Appendix B for an analysis of the possibilities and limitations of transcribing silence in ethnographic data.

The data presented in the subsequent Findings section are both representative of and exceptional within the larger corpus of data collected. Lupe was one of two girls in the focal sample who were undocumented during the study. Lupe's behavior is representative of the other undocumented student, Monika, who also remained silent on issues of legal citizenship in school. In contrast, Ruth was the only student to experience a change in legal status—obtaining legal permanent resident status in 2011—and she spoke explicitly about legal status in the classroom. Both Lupe and Ruth were active contributors to the academic and social life of the classroom, which makes their decisions to remain silent even more significant. Reconciling their different choices offers important insights into young undocumented students' experiences of schooling.

Findings

The data presented here include student writing samples and transcripts of classroom interactions collected between October 2013 and June 2014 of Lupe and Ruth's fifth-grade academic year. A longitudinal perspective is essential because narratives about identity are recursive and become more complex over time (Ochs & Capps, 2002). A comparative analysis across school activities highlights the ways in which teachers' pedagogy shapes students' decisions to speak or remain silent about citizenship. The five examples shared below are organized in two chronological learning sequences that illustrate the contrast between students' disclosure of legal status during academic content classes and their decisions to withhold information during social-emotional learning activities. Table 1 shows the five ethnographic examples organized by curricular topic, date, modality (written or spoken), and focal student.

In Sequence 1—which involves content-specific language arts and social studies classes—topics of study included identity, belonging, and social change. These topics were aligned to the New York State content standards and inflected with the interests and perspectives of the five fifth-grade teachers who co-planned the units. For example, the fifth-grade curriculum included four interdisciplinary thematic units: Geography and Community

Table 1
Data Examples by Learning Sequence

Learning	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
Sequence 1:	October 2013	February 2014	May 2014
academic content classes	Personal narrative Student writing Lupe: <i>La Mala Maestro del Primer Grado</i> Ruth: <i>Frontera</i>	Persuasive essay Student writing Lupe: <i>Injusticia</i> Ruth: <i>What are you willing to stand up for?</i>	Asserting an opinion Classroom talk Lupe: “What causes will you defend?”
Learning Sequence 2:	Example 4	Example 5	
social-emotional learning activities	March 2014 Defining diversity Classroom talk Lupe: “I’m not writing nothing”	June 2014 Diversity panel Classroom talk Lupe: “I’m not standing up”	

Building (September–October 2013); Westward Expansion (November 2013–January 2014); the Civil War (February–March 2014); and finally, Resistance, which focused on Abolition and Civil Rights (April–June 2014).

In Sequence 2, students broached themes of identity and inclusion in the social-emotional activities in which they participated. At the time of the study, the focal school collaborated closely with a nonprofit educational organization to provide children in all grades with opportunities to engage in social-emotional activities focused on themes of respect, peace, and community. These activities were led by two different teachers and were both grade-specific and school-wide. Each grade met with one social-emotional learning teacher for a 45-minute period per week; the fifth grade students studied topics related to diversity on a weekly basis. During the school-wide activities, another adult facilitator organized child-led classroom visits that engaged students in conversations about bullying and conflict resolution. I recorded student learning during two thematic units in this area: Diversity (January–March 2014) and Bullying (May–June 2014).

The teachers’ pedagogies in the academic content classes and social-emotional learning activities were distinct. The content area classroom teacher engaged students in the study of diverse literary genres and prompted them to examine their role within contemporary and historical struggles for equality. However, she never explicitly asked them to talk or write about their immigration experiences or to disclose their citizenship status. In contrast, during social-emotional learning activities that focused on diversity and

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bullying, teachers and peers explicitly discussed topics related to students' immigrant identities—such as border crossing and country of origin. The examples show that when teachers engaged children in content-specific lines of inquiry that were rigorous and recursive, undocumented students' expressions of citizenship became more complex and personal. Yet when teachers and peers asked undocumented students to explicitly broach immigration-related topics, they tended to refuse participation.

Sequence 1: Content Area Classes

Example 1

Ms. Daniella started the fifth-grade language arts curriculum with a unit on personal memoir writing. The open-ended prompt that she gave students invited them to write about a moment in their life that they found significant. Students were instructed to employ particular narrative conventions such as reported speech or dialogue, adverbs marking temporal transitions (such as *then* and *when*), and descriptions of affect. However, they were not encouraged to share a memory related to a particular theme or topic. The format for the writing assignment was teacher-led but the content was completely student-directed.

Lupe and Ruth's memoirs, written in October 2013, exemplify the ways in which they expressed their immigrant identities throughout the year. Both girls developed narratives that were meaningful to them, stories that they would recycle and expand upon throughout the school year in other writing assignments and during class discussions. Yet the contrast between these two stories is striking. On one hand, Lupe recounted an experience of working to overcome a teacher's low expectations without mentioning her nationality or immigration experience. On the other hand, Ruth described the day that *coyotes* (the colloquial Spanish term for escorts hired to help individuals cross the U.S.-Mexico border without legal permission) brought her to the United States, where she was reunited with her mother. Let's begin with a close reading of Lupe's memoir.²

Lupe chronicled a negative schooling experience that took place on this side of the U.S.-Mexico border without making explicit reference to her immigrant identity. Her "bad teacher" story can be broken into five sections, each representing a key turning point in the narration. The bilingual story begins with an exposition in Spanish where Lupe introduced the temporal frame—earlier in elementary school—and two key characters including herself and her first-grade teacher. Notably, Lupe switched into English for the second section wherein she presented the problem: Using reported speech, she quoted the teacher's negative expectation that Lupe would fail her exams and not progress from first to second grade.

Lupe: La mala maestro del primer grado (The bad first grade teacher)

1	<i>Cuando yo era chiquita en primer grado. A mi me toco Ms.-Capilin.</i>	When I was little in first grade. I got Ms. Capilin.
2	She was a mean teacher. The hole school year pasted. At the almost last of the school year. My teacher said she thinks I'am not going to pass.	She was a mean teacher. The hole school year pasted. At the almost last of the school year. My teacher said she thinks I'am not going to pass.
3	So <i>yo pense como que piensa que no voy a pasar. Mi mam penso lo mismo. Entonces fui a la escuela de verano. Y lo mismo de la maestro de la escuela de verano me toco mis Capilin. Mi mama dijo que me cabiaran de maestra. Despues Ya benian los exámenes. Yo todo el verano me la pase estudiando para pasar los exámenes. Cuando pase los exámenes pase de grado!</i>	So I thought how does she think that I am not going to pass. My mom thought the same thing. Then I went to summer school. And the same thing of the teacher in summer school I got mis Capilin. My mom said to change my teacher. Then Already the exams were coming. I spent the whole summer studying to pass the exams. When I passed the exams I passed the grade!
4	<i>En segundo año me dieron un diploma de mejor estudiante del mes! Y les isieron ber mi diploma a la maestra que pensaba que no iba a pasar con buenas calificaciones!</i>	In my second year they gave me a diploma of the best student of the month! And they made her see the diploma to the teacher that thought I wouldn't pass with good grades!
5	<i>Despues ai nada asi me paso denuevo. Hora me siento contenta de mis esfuerzos.</i>	After that nothing like that happened again. Now I feel happy about my efforts.

The English conjunction *so* provided a latch between the second and third sections of the story, connecting the problem in Section 2 with the action following it in Section 3. Section 3, written once again in Spanish, outlined the actions that Lupe and her mother took to address the problem of Ms. Capilin's deficit thinking. When Lupe enrolled in summer school her mother requested a new teacher, and Lupe studied intensively to pass her exams. Sections 4 and 5 concluded with the triumph of proving the teacher wrong: In Section 4, Lupe described excelling in second grade, receiving a student-of-the-month diploma, and sharing it with the teacher. Finally, in Section 5, Lupe claimed to have never experienced anything similar again and asserted pride in herself and her schoolwork.

Lupe's invocation of the "bad teacher" is significant for at least two reasons. First, while the story does not include an explicit reference to juridical citizenship, it does imply a set of concerns about obtaining cultural citizenship by successfully completing traditional milestones of educational

progress. For the undocumented students and parents in this study, schools were often sites for the assertion of belonging. Second, the “bad teacher” story opens a window onto the discrimination that Lupe and her family experienced in the United States. The story recounts an experience with one particular teacher at one specific moment in time but does not vilify educators in general. As Dabach aptly expressed in her own critical analysis of teachers working with undocumented students, “the purpose is not to hold up an example of less-than-desirable teacher practice for its own sake, but to understand the contours of tensions that are deeply embedded within society” (2014, p. 42). Lupe and her mother had trusting relationships with teachers at the focal school, and this story—which reappears in Examples 2 and 3—is meaningful because it is a metonym for the rejection and redemption they faced in U.S. society.

In contrast with Lupe’s story, Ruth’s memoir explicitly describes her experience of crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. By providing vivid details of being detained along the way, Ruth disclosed that she was an undocumented migrant upon arrival in the United States.

Ruth: Frontera (Border)

1	<i>Cuando yo cruze la frontera primero me llevaron a una casa para que descansara.</i>	When I crossed the border first they took me to a house in order to rest.
2	<i>Despues agarramos una troca y empezamos a recorrer. El sol estaba más caliente que agua hervida.</i>	Then we grabbed a truck and started the trip. The sun was hotter than boiled water.
3	<i>2 días despues en la frontera alguien vino corriendo y a la misma vez gritando—¡¡la patruya viene!!—Todos empesamos a correr. Yo y la muchacha no corrimos caminamos rapido. El policia nos agarro. Nos dio agua, un sandwich de queso y jamon.</i>	2 days later on the border someone came running and at the same time screaming—the police are coming!—We all started to run. I and the girl didn’t run we walked fast. The police grabbed us. They gave us water, a ham and cheese sandwich.
4	<i>Y despues nos cepararon y fuimos a un lugar quenos cuidan mientras alguien viene para recogernos.</i>	And then they separated us and we went to a place where they take care of us while someone comes to pick us up.

These four sections are excerpted from Ruth’s longer narrative of crossing the Mexico-U.S. border. In Sections 1 and 2, Ruth identified two other groups of people that shared the journey with her. These included the *coyotes* that took her to a rest stop (Section 1) and a group of people who boarded a truck seeking safety on the U.S. side of the border (Section 2).

In Section 3, Ruth provided the most explicit reference to her undocumented status. By detailing the experience of running from and being caught by the police, she signaled her failed attempt to cross the border without a U.S. visa or passport. *La patruya*, the police, play an active role in the narrative: They detained Ruth and others, provided food, separated them, and held them until they were released to a family member. This formative experience shaped Ruth's writing throughout the remainder of the school year, and she referred to it in subsequent assignments as well.

Example 2

In February 2014, four months after Ruth and Lupe wrote their personal narratives, Ms. Daniella prompted them to write about those social causes they were most willing to fight for. This was one of the opening activities in a social studies unit on resistance and social change in which the class studied protest movements beginning with abolition through the present. Lupe and Ruth's statements echo the personal memoirs that they wrote in the second month of school. These narratives demonstrate the ways in which cultural and legal citizenship are meaningful schemas for students, and the narratives provide evidence of how these frames of reference became activated and more complex as they learned about collective action and social change.

Lupe: Injusticia (Injustice)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | <i>Una cosa que puse en mi lista era la injusticia entre los estudiantes latinos. Porque solamente porque sean latinos no pueden pasar de año.</i> | One thing that I put on my list was the injustice between latino students. Because only because they are latinos they can't pass the grade. |
| 2 | <i>I mi me paso lo mismo pero yo me defendi. Y cuando yo lo ise muchas mamás tambien lo isieron. Cuando yo me defendi ise algo para esa Injustisia.</i> | And this same thing happened me but I defended myself. And when I did it many moms also did it. When I defended myself I did something for this Injustice. |
| 3 | <i>Yo pienso que en este país no debería de ocurrir cosas así. Además en este país todos somos libres. lo que no puedo quier es que muchas personas de el gobernador visitan a las escuelas para a ver como las maestras los tartan y como estudiamos y no se dan cuenta en realidad d lo que sta pasand. Es injusticia lo que pasa con los estudiantes latinos.</i> | I think that in this country things like that should not happen. Also in this country we are all free. what I can't believe is that a lot of people from the governor visit the schools to see how the teachers treat them and how we study and they don't notice the reality of what is happening. It is injustice what happens with the latino students. |
-

In this example, Lupe's narrative shifted from recounting personal outrage and accomplishment to focusing on the potential for individual action to inspire social change. In the first narration titled "bad first grade teacher" (Example 1), Lupe described her own vindication after passing her first grade exams when her teacher said that she would be unable to do so. In this retelling, Lupe linked her individual experience to a broader phenomenon of anti-Latino discrimination in U.S. schools and positioned herself as a leader fighting for educational equity. Lupe's deictic choices indicate that she shifted between including herself in ("this same thing happened to me but I defended myself," in Section 2) and distancing herself from those students who face discrimination "because they are Latinos" (Section 1). Lupe described the power of advocacy, claiming that *muchas mamas* (many moms) were inspired to speak out once they had seen her do so. Her sense of cultural citizenship was much more visible in this text than in the first one: Lupe closed with a critique of the existing political process by calling on politicians to gain awareness of equity issues facing Latino students.

Ruth's bilingual statement of a meaningful social cause shared two key features with Lupe's: first, it had also become self-referential by this point in the school year. Her personal memoir of being detained at the border (Example 1) served as an important antecedent to this writing sample on immigration and injustice. Second, this writing sample shifted from focusing on individual experience to broader issues of policing, migration, and the role of the state.³

Ruth: What are you willing to stand up for?

- 1 "Im willing to stand up for," the immigration. Because alot of familys bring other members from there familys. BUT when they cross the border there are cops "PATRULLAS" guarding the "U.S.A. territory." And if the cops see the persons coming the cops deport "deportan" the people.
 - 2 And sometimes the cops send the persons back. But also, sometimes if there is someone that is 21 or less the cops gives that child a chance to cross the border but sometimes when you're an adult they could send you back or send you to jail! But when you are gaved another chance you go to another house that it is like a daycare, and they take care of you while someone from your family and that has the citizen from here goes picks you up, and signs sheets.
 - 3 And then when you get picked up you and whoever is helping you get your papers VISA make and sign a bunch and bunch of papers. And to tell this state a "sorry" because of what you did and if they forgive you, you'll keep going with the papers. But if they don't forgive you, you will not presit on the papers.
 - 4 And this is why I want to stand up for the goberment to stop deporting.
-

In Section 1, Ruth identified a fundamental tension between immigrant families' attempts at reunification across national boundaries and the presence of a police force whose job is to ensure that migrants are unable to successfully cross the border of the nation-state (or "U.S.A. territory"). In Section 2, Ruth switched from making "I" statements into a more "authorial voice" characterized by an absent narrator telling an unnamed reader ("you") about the perils of being detained at the border. Consistent with the tone and register of the speeches that the class had been studying from the Civil Rights Movement, Ruth returned to making a personal "I" statement as she called on the government to end its deportation practices.

It is important to note that at this point in the school year, Ruth's mother had just submitted her application for legal permanent resident status. Ruth's legal status had changed from undocumented to permanent legal resident in 2011. But days prior to writing this statement, she had met with her family's immigration lawyer as her mother completed her own legalization application. The act of *pidiendo perdón* (asking for forgiveness or a pardon), as Ruth called it, included a statement of the hardship that the family faced in El Salvador and the conditions that led them to immigrate to the United States without legal permission. The firsthand experience of witnessing her mother's petition for legal resident status informed Ruth's writing of Sections 3 and 4, in which she specifically described the process of being pardoned by the state.

Example 3

In this final retelling of the "bad teacher" story, Lupe recounted her narrative to the class when Ms. Daniella elicited the students' descriptions of social injustices that were important to them. This was another opening activity within the same social studies unit described in Example 2—the focal teacher switched between verbal and written modes of expression in an effort to include all students—and this verbal exchange took place just a few weeks after Lupe wrote the statement presented above.

On this afternoon in March, Ms. Daniella called the students to the meeting area of the classroom where they conducted their morning meeting and met to discuss important issues relevant to the entire class. She explained the significance of the activity, saying, "*La reunión de hoy es serio porque todo lo que nosotros hagamos ahora hasta el fin del año va ser basada en la actividad que hacemos hoy. Vamos a decidir que causas queremos defender. Qué es lo que realmente nos pone cómo bien apasionados que queremos luchar por esta causa.*" ("Today's meeting is serious because everything we do from now until the end of the year will be based on the activity we do today. We are going to decide what causes we want to defend. What it is that really makes us very passionate so that we want to fight for this cause."). Ms. Daniella signaled the start of the brainstorm with the question: "*¿Qué tipos*

de injusticia existen en el mundo hoy en día?” (“What kinds of injustice exist in the world today?”).

Lupe first asked if she could share two injustices. She clarified whether the injustice had to be located in the United States and Ms. Daniella replied “no,” referring Lupe to the prompt’s intentional use of the phrase *en el mundo* (in the world). Lupe described her first injustice: Latinos, specifically her grandmother, faced injustice when their applications for travel visas were denied. Lupe described her grandmother as a retired teacher in Mexico whose application for a travel visa to visit family in the United States had been rejected seven times. Lupe explained that the outcome of this injustice was for her grandmother to *perder el ánimo* (lose hope) for reuniting with her family. Against this backdrop of concerns about migration, education, and family, Lupe’s oral retelling of her personal memoir is particularly significant. She explained,

Otra es, aquí nosotros y los que pueden, los que tienen oportunidad de venir de allá y aquí. Aquí no les dan oportunidad a veces. Es que yo el primer año yo sufrí porque un injusticia que algunos Americanos, o cosas así que no les gustan los Latinos, y son maestros como muchas. Yo me, mi mamá, se dio cuenta y yo también que una vez había esta maestra no quería que lo pasara solamente porque yo era la única Latina de la clase.

The other is, here we and those who can, those who have the opportunity to come from there and here. Here they don’t give them opportunities sometimes. It’s that me in my first year I suffered because an injustice that some Americans, or things like that don’t like Latinos, and are teachers like many. I, my mom, realized and me too that one time there was this teacher that didn’t want me to pass it just only because I was the only Latina in the class.

This oral retelling of the “bad teacher” story contains both familiar and unique attributes within Lupe’s narrative trajectory. This version has a pattern similar to the written versions in Examples 1 and 2, focusing on her and her mother’s efforts to prove Lupe’s academic abilities in school. The significant difference is that this is the first time that Lupe explicitly linked the story to her identity as an immigrant student. Here, she opened with the concession that she was one of “those who had the opportunity to come from there” and ended by saying that she was the only Latina in the class. In mixed-status communities such as this one, references to “coming from there to here” may be read as indicating legal status since children born in their country of origin tend to lack U.S. citizenship (Mangual Figueroa, 2012). This example places being undocumented and being Latina in parallel. Rereading Examples 1 and 2 in light of this exchange shows that concerns about legal status and cultural citizenship had been present for Lupe throughout the school year.

Through scaffolding written and oral prompts that were open-ended but tied to rigorous and relevant curricula, Ms. Daniella had created a classroom space in which her students could personally identify with the topic of study while linking their unique experiences to a broader social context. The writing process was carefully planned across the personal memoir and persuasive essay units but students were encouraged to identify those memories and causes that they wanted to write about. In turn, they developed deeper understandings of the subject matter and took positions without having to single themselves out as belonging *to* or speaking *for* a particular social demographic. This created an intellectual context in which undocumented students like Lupe could think through and express the significance of legal citizenship status on her own terms. Lupe and Ruth's personal statements about immigration and education became more robust as they undertook their yearlong inquiry of resistance and social movements.

Sequence 2: Social-Emotional Learning Activities

Examples 4 and 5 represent typical activities from the school's social-emotional learning curriculum. This curriculum focused on conflict resolution through the development of shared principles for respectful behavior among peers. Students at the focal school participated in grade-specific classes and school-wide activities focused on recognizing and celebrating diversity within the school community. The curriculum was designed and implemented by two teachers, and the social-emotional lessons were independent from, yet at times complementary to, the ideas that students addressed in their content classes. Two pedagogical features distinguish the social-emotional activities from the content area assignments. First, the social-emotional learning activities were conducted orally. When writing assignments were included, they were completed collaboratively and required face-to-face conversations among the students. Second, the verbal exchanges that took place in the social-emotional learning activities required students to provide extemporaneous responses to teacher prompts (unlike the content-area classes in which they had multiple opportunities to prepare drafts of writing and develop ideas over time). A close look at Lupe's participation—evidenced by her decision to write or not write, to stand or remain seated—highlights those moments in which undocumented students had to choose whether to broach subjects related to their legal status within these social-emotional learning activities.

Example 4

Ms. Rivera had developed a unit on diversity that spanned several months. Her weekly, 45-minute meeting with the fifth grade class included several routines: silent meditation meant to foster thoughtfulness, reading the day's guiding question from the whiteboard to orient students to a shared

goal, and using various formats (ranging from whole-group to small-group conversations) to promote interaction. On this day in March 2014, Ms. Rivera had written the following question on the whiteboard: “What does diversity mean to me?”

After the whole class meditation, Ms. Rivera directed students to work in groups to create a semantic web defining the word *diversity* in response to the day’s guiding question (Figure 1). For students in this mixed-status, mixed-race classroom, skin color, national origin, and language were some of the first ideas to emerge. What follows is a transcript of a minute-long small-group brainstorm that included Lupe and three peers. As her peers raised topics linked to legal and cultural citizenship, Lupe had to make real-time decisions about the risks associated with engaging those subjects. Lupe held the marker and wrote down her group’s ideas. Note her response in turn 21, when she refused to write an idea on the group poster.⁴

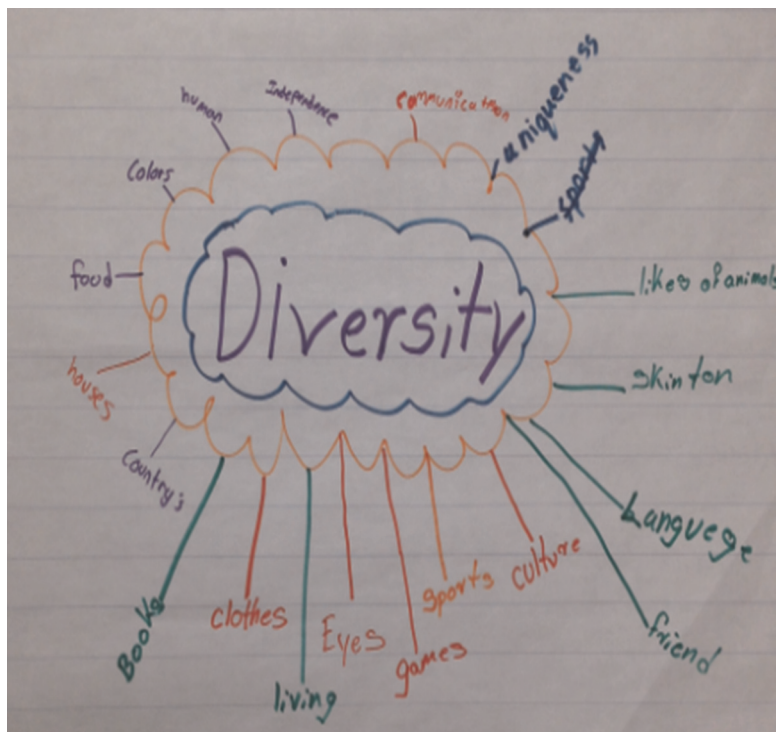


Figure 1. Diversity word web.

- 1 St1: Countries, COUNTRIES. Don't write IMMIGRANT! Write COUNTRIES!
→ 2 Lupe: CULTURES instead
3 Tchr: Cultures, cultures, cultures
4 Lupe: Cu::ltu::res
5 St2: Uniqueness
6 Lupe: Someone have this
7 St: I'll rewrite it, rewrite it
8 Lupe: Countries. I have another one. Um. Likes?
9 St1: Colors colors.
10 Lupe: I already put SKIN TONE.
11 Tchr: Colors? U::m
12 Lupe: Colors over there
13 St2: Colors TOO
14 Lupe: I already put COLORS!
15 St 2: You can discriminate by saying I don't like blue either
16 Lupe: That's WHY, I put COLORS
17 St1: Border. Cause some people cross the border. And some people DIDN'T.
18 St2: Independence.
19 St3: Yah, independence.
20 Tchr: Sh:::
→21 Lupe: Chill I won't put that. I'm not putting that. I'm not writing nothing. I don't wanna write anything.
22 St: Independence
23 Tchr: Use another color
→24 Lupe: GAMES!
25 Tchr: Use another color, use different colors
26 St2: Language. Immigration.
27 St1: Oh yah uh write language. Somebody write language.
28 Tchr: Language
→29 Lupe: I'll write language

In order to define *diversity*, Lupe and her peers generated a list of words representing group member differences along demographic lines (country of origin) and personal preferences (favorite color). Some of these concepts carried particular significance in relation to legal citizenship, and since Lupe was charged with writing them down she was especially vocal about those she wanted to include on the poster. In turn 1, a student offered the idea “countries,” which Lupe initially resisted, writing down “cultures” instead; she finally wrote down “countries” in turn 8. After a negotiation of the phrasing for skin color or tone, a student offered up the idea “border” (in turn 17) and distinguished between those who “crossed and those who didn’t.” In turn 21, Lupe rejected this conversation altogether, ending it by saying that she would not write these ideas down. She switched to a more neutral and potentially inclusive topic like “games” (turn 24). When a peer offered two additional terms—“language” and “immigration” (turn

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26)—Lupe agreed to write the word “language” while ignoring the word “immigration” (turn 29).

This exchange is notable for two reasons. First, it signals the relevance of immigration for the children in this classroom. Of the 11 discrete terms listed by the children in this exchange, seven related to immigration: “country,” “immigrant,” “culture,” “border,” “language,” “immigration,” and “skin tone.” Second, it shows how students relate to those topics in real time classroom interactions. In this example, Lupe responded negatively to being asked to write about crossing the border. Instead of writing the phrase “crossing the border” and risking engaging in a more lengthy conversation on the subject, Lupe chose not to write and registered her refusal into the microphone. In doing so, she explicitly demonstrated her meta-awareness regarding which topics she felt comfortable discussing in school.

Example 5

This final example details a social-emotional learning activity that took place in June 2014, near the very end of Lupe and Ruth’s fifth grade school year. This exchange took place during one of the school-wide “diversity panels” in which teachers and students traveled from classroom to classroom giving first-person testimonies about bullying. On this day, three student panelists from a third grade class gave their testimonies of having been bullied for their gender, height, and weight. The panel was intended to promote acceptance and respect, emphasizing that no one should be mistreated for being different.

After the student panelists shared testimonies and took questions from Ms. Daniella’s students, Ms. Anabelle—the social-emotional learning teacher—led a closing exercise focused on diversity “so we can really see how different we are.” She asked that students rise when their country of origin was called. What follows is a transcript of the opening lines of the activity.

- 1 Ms. Anabelle: I’m gonna do this very quickly. I’m gonna name some of the countries that we come from. Oka::y?
- 2 St 1: And STAND UP
- 3 Ms. Anabelle: Stand up if you are from Mexico.
((Sound of chairs dragging across the floor.))
- 4 St 2: Ruth, *párate*
stand up
- 5 Ruth: I’m not from there, I’m from another country.
- 6 St 2: You’re not from Mexico?
- 7 Ms. Anabelle: Okay, look around and sit. Quietly, sit. Sit.

Ms. Anabelle’s emphasis on conducting the activity quickly (turn 1) and quietly (turn 7) suggests that she believed this process of self-identification with a particular nation-state would be fairly straightforward for the students.

At this point in the year, the members of Ms. Daniella's class knew—or thought they knew—a lot about each other's cultural backgrounds, and many were active participants in deciding who should stand and when. When students began to rise in response to Ms. Anabelle's directive in turn 3, one student was surprised not to see Ruth stand. When the peer instructed Ruth to do so (turn 4), Ruth stated that she wasn't from Mexico but did proclaim that she hailed from another country (turn 5).

At this point the children began to take ownership of the activity to ensure their representation. One child called out "African-American!" and others shouted "Ecuador," "Nicaragua!" Another child called out "United States," but Ms. Anabelle rejected this label because "that's what we have in common." At this point it became clear that Ms. Anabelle assumed that all students were born in the United States and that she meant "from" to indicate heritage instead of birthplace. Student 1, who in turn 2 instructed everyone to STAND UP, affirmed Ms. Anabelle's position by stating "we were all born here." Lupe's microphone captured her mumbled response—"not really, not all!"—and a child sitting close to her echoed loudly "not all!" In an effort to be responsive, Ms. Anabelle offered a new category: "not all born here." Approximately 30 turns later, the activity ended with this exchange:

- 31 Ms. Anabelle: Not all born here. Stand up
32 St 3: This is why they're called immigrants
33 Lupe: Duh
34 St 3: Stand up if you're an immigrant
→35 Lupe: Puh. I'm not standing up
36 Ms. Anabelle: Hello:: can we have one voice. So stand up if you were not born in this country. Not born in this country.
(Sound of chairs dragging across the floor.)

Lupe's refusal to stand in line 35 is notable. Here, as in Example 4, the audiorecorder captured evidence of Lupe's metapragmatic commentary. In this case, she refused to participate in an activity that explicitly broached the subject of birthplace. Attempting to resume control of the exercise after the children had begun to participate in the roll call, Ms. Anabelle ended with one final call for immigrants to stand (turn 36). While Ms. Anabelle's intention was to end the diversity panel with an activity that recognized and was inclusive of all students from diverse backgrounds, Ruth and Lupe's different responses indicate that students experienced the activity in different ways. Lupe's nonparticipation suggests that this type of discussion actually served to marginalize rather than increase undocumented student participation. In contrast, Ruth's willingness to publically state that she was not from Mexico but, in fact, from another country of origin provides evidence of the pattern shown throughout this article: Because of Ruth's

acquired legal permanent resident status, she was more comfortable talking about and participating in classroom exchanges directly focused on immigration and her own national origin.

The way this exercise—intended to foster inclusion—in fact alienated certain students is revealing. Educators may assume that students will feel comfortable talking about their identity during activities meant to elicit multicultural perspectives designed to honor their culture and experiences in school. By creating a situation in which students would have to publically identify with a home country that might then raise questions about nationality and citizenship, Ms. Anabelle inadvertently turned the activity from one of celebrating diversity into one that generated student fear of revealing their differences in legal status.

Discussion

The findings suggest at least four important issues arising from Ruth and Lupe's narratives. First, students' legal citizenship status affects what they feel they can disclose about themselves and their families. Second, curricular material can support students in developing more robust reasoning about citizenship and its relation to broader historical and political contexts. Third, classroom pedagogy may have the unintended consequence of prompting student talk about citizenship or causing them to feel silenced. Fourth, closely examining student narratives may tell us more about the risks that students face and the resilience that they exhibit than we might notice at first glance.

Ruth and Lupe shared many important characteristics such as identifying as Latina and growing up in bilingual mixed-status families. The cultural strengths generated in the immigrant contexts of their homes and community served as an important backdrop to the talk and writing that they shared in school. However, they differed in one critical way: Ruth and her mother obtained permanent legal resident status and were no longer undocumented while Lupe remained undocumented like her parents. As a result of this difference, Ruth was able to share her immigrant experience without the same set of risks that Lupe felt acutely. In a school setting where classroom topics were often laden with concerns about immigration, there was more at stake for Lupe because the possibility of deportation was more proximal for her than for Ruth's immediate family. The data suggest a pattern: Lupe preferred nonparticipation in classroom activities that positioned her as an immigrant and risked a disclosure of her undocumented status, while Ruth actively asserted her immigrant identity and shared her border-crossing narratives when the opportunity arose. These findings contribute new insights regarding the "unique immigration-status socialization experiences" of children growing up in the United States (Suárez-Orozco & Yoshikawa, 2015, p. 103) by showing that elementary-aged students are cognizant of their legal

status and demonstrate their socialization to norms of silence or speech based upon citizenship. Young students' varying legal statuses make a meaningful difference in how they participate in schooling activities.

The school curriculum also influenced students' decisions about when and how to disclose their legal status in school. Ms. Daniella and her fifth-grade teacher colleagues collaborated extensively throughout the course of the school year to design the interdisciplinary units described in this article. They developed a socially exigent humanities curriculum that required students to engage meaningful questions about social justice and the students' role in enacting social change. At the same time, the teachers allowed students to choose subtopics of personal interest and to write in a register in which they felt most comfortable. Enlisting students in academic coursework linked to relevant social issues can provide students with opportunities to make connections to their lives (Nieto & Irizarry, 2012) while allowing them to exercise their own discretion about what to reveal and when. The teachers developed a spiraling curriculum in which topics were recursive, granting students the time to return to and expand upon their ideas over time and across genres.

And yet, some of the pedagogy described in this article had the unintended consequence of silencing rather than facilitating undocumented students' expression in school. It is notable that the undocumented students in this study were also the most silent during those social-emotional learning activities that required them to define or declare those aspects of their identity that made them unique. Lupe explicitly chose nonparticipation—*not* writing and *not* standing—in the activities focused on diversity that were intended to honor and enlist all students in the class. There is an important inversion here: Undocumented students expressed their identities in complex ways during academic work that did not require them to affiliate with particular demographic categories. In contrast, these students withheld their identities during those moments when they were most explicitly asked to declare them.

This article has shown that when teachers prescribe modes of participation—such as sitting or standing—during identity-focused activities, they may inadvertently alienate the undocumented students in their charge. Yet, when teachers ask students to write or speak using an authoritative register but not necessarily using “I statements,” they are able to develop increasingly complex arguments about citizenship that ultimately reveal aspects of their own subject position. The study of immigration invariably forms part of a rigorous social studies or humanities curriculum. The ways in which teachers make reference to legal citizenship in the course of these lessons will, this study has shown, affect students' level of comfort and participation. In the examples examined above, even the most well-meaning teacher might, in an effort to promote inclusion, request information or use language that students experience as exclusionary. Teachers' assumptions about which pedagogies students will find most culturally relevant may be based on static notions of culture that do not account for the

dynamic set of factors, including citizenship, that shape students' participation in school (Paris & Alim, 2014).

Given the important yet elusive nature of silence, what should educators listen for during everyday classroom conversations in mixed-status communities, and how can we work together to decode these exchanges? Schultz (2008) calls on teachers "to listen deeply to both talk and silence. Above all, inquiring into silence might lead to classrooms where engaged and equitable participation are defined as broadly as possible" (p. 221). In order to understand the schooling experiences of undocumented students and those growing up in mixed-status families, we must first learn to listen to those "audible silences" that stop classroom conversation as well as those "inaudible silences" that indicate a strategic refusal to participate. In Lupe's case, her refusals to write and stand were even more striking given her high level of social and intellectual involvement in the school community. Her refusal to participate was agentic and provides evidence of the protective stance she took when topics of legal citizenship were invoked. We must also attune ourselves to those silences that may be hardest to hear: those that take place during noisy classroom moments and those that pertain to topics of conversation, such as legal citizenship, that are already presumed to be absent from everyday school talk. Both Lupe and Ruth demonstrated the connections among their educational and immigrant experiences, a relationship teachers and researchers must attend to within contemporary schooling.

Conclusion

This article contributes to a growing conversation about the ways in which educators can work in solidarity with mixed-status communities. As educational researchers and teacher educators, we bear a particular responsibility to better prepare educators who can support their immigrant students, regardless of their legal status (Gallo, 2014; Gallo & Link, 2016). One approach is to develop professional development programs that enlist teachers in moving from nonexistent or idiosyncratic attempts at supporting undocumented students to intentional advocacy across these students' educational trajectories (Dabach, 2014). In order to do so, we must begin to examine the implications of the *Plyler v. Doe* ruling; being one step removed from the public school provides us with a unique opportunity to do so.

The small but growing literature on teacher education to support undocumented students calls on teachers to gain and disseminate two types of knowledge. One area of professional growth involves what *teachers need to know* about their students, including the historical and political context of teaching immigrant students, the diversity of students' experiences based upon language, race, and citizenship, and those educational resources available to undocumented students (Gallo, 2014; Jefferies & Dabach, 2014). The second involves pedagogical strategies for demarcating *the kinds of*

knowledge that teachers sanction in the classroom. For example, teachers can use humanizing (not criminalizing) language when referring to undocumented students and can normalize “illegality” by broaching the subject of immigration reform in classrooms (Jefferies & Dabach, 2014). This calls for viewing citizenship as a fund of knowledge and resource for classroom learning (Gallo & Link, 2016; Mangual Figueroa, 2011).

The underlying assumption guiding these recommendations is that educators should talk with students about legal citizenship and migratory status. Yet, there may be risks involved in calling on all educators to engage in this dialogue (Dabach, 2014). The goal for researchers who participate in teacher education must be to prepare sensitive and well-informed teachers. These teachers will be capable of centering the experiences of undocumented students and those growing up in mixed-status families while also enacting meaningful pedagogy and professional responsibility. Teacher educators can bring undocumented students’ voices into teacher preparation programs by assigning readings akin to the work cited in this article and by drawing on the growing Internet presence of undocumented student activists across the country.⁵ Including these perspectives can prompt conversations about how teachers can support students without placing the onus on undocumented students to disclose their status.

At the same time, we can engage preservice teachers in rethinking the relationships between academic learning, citizenship education, and identity development. We might question, for example, whether teachers’ explicit mentions of racial and linguistic identity markers always lead to the most inclusive classroom environments. The lessons learned in this article can help us to reimagine the boundaries of when and how students make meaningful connections in their learning and can prompt creative conversations about how and when students might become most engaged in school. This would necessarily require collaborations among university colleagues, K–12 educators, students, and families learning from one another. It is essential that we create support networks that endure beyond semester-long learning experiences, because this work involves risk taking for students (Negrón-Gonzales, 2014), for teachers (Dabach, 2015), and for schools (Jefferies, 2014). We can learn from the bravery of undocumented students in our classrooms as we continue to engage in this work alongside them and their families. The presidential inauguration and the executive orders on immigration signed into effect as this manuscript went to press only add to the urgency of this work.

Appendix A: Coding for Silence

Two phases of coding revealed that citizenship was relevant to routine schooling interactions both when it was explicitly spoken about and when it was omitted from everyday conversation. In the first phase, written and

spoken mentions of citizenship were identified. These mentions included, but were not limited to, the use of terms such as *citizenship*, *papers*, *birth-place*, and *nationality*. For example, during a lunchtime conversation in which Lupe and Ruth recounted childhood memories to me, Ruth stated, “*tengo papeles . . . fue que mi papá me pidió*” or “I have papers . . . it’s that my dad applied for them.” This phrase was coded as an instance of talk about legal citizenship because Ruth used the metaphorical phrase of having or lacking papers to explain that her father had applied for her to obtain legal resident status since her arrival from El Salvador.

The first phase of coding also revealed subtle references to citizenship status that involved statements about legal as well as cultural citizenship. For example, I double-coded the following excerpt of Lupe’s writing as an instance of cultural citizenship and legal citizenship: “here we and those of us who can, those who have the opportunity to come from there and here. . . . Here they sometimes don’t give opportunities.” Given my observations in the school setting and my reading of the longer narrative from which this excerpt was taken, I knew that the pronoun *we* indicated that Lupe was implicitly referring to her own experience crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. I therefore coded these data as an instance of legal citizenship based upon previous research showing that children in mixed-status families use deictic language such as “coming from here to there” when referring to geographic locations that index their citizenship status (Mangual Figueroa, 2012). Drawing upon the existing literature (Rosaldo, 1996), I also coded the relationship between migration and opportunity as an instance of cultural citizenship because Lupe was connecting her personal experience to a set of broader social concerns.

During the second phase of coding—which involved coding for topics related to citizenship by teachers and peers (not only the focal students who had been the focus of phase one)—it became clear that explicit talk about citizenship could also be accompanied by moments in which focal students did not refer to citizenship but could have. These absences shifted my attention from talk about legal status to instances of silence surrounding it. Silence became relevant in two modes of classroom exchange: face-to-face classroom exchanges and written samples of student work. In the first mode, students refused to participate in face-to-face classroom activities in which the topic of citizenship had been broached by teachers and peers. Interestingly, this kind of silence was accompanied by meta-pragmatic commentary in which the focal student explicitly stated that she would not broach topics related to legal citizenship. This is evident in Example 4, when a peer suggested writing the word *border* on a group poster and a focal student choose not to write the word while simultaneously stating, “I’m not writing nothing.”

The second mode of silence was evident in student writing and was traceable in the development of student narratives over time. This is

exemplified across Examples 1 and 2 in the written iterations of Lupe's "bad teacher" story that included no mention of legal citizenship status. Only after extensive and iterative coding of Lupe's multiple narratives was it possible to interpret Lupe's talk in Example 3 as involving a subtle reference to her family's legal status.

Appendix B: Transcribing Silence

By taking a Conversation Analysis approach to the analysis of talk and interaction, I was attuned to moments of speech as well as silence throughout the process of coding and transcription. By focusing analytic attention on interactions unfolding in real time and by using symbols that represent both linguistic and paralinguistic resources, I found that silence is visible within the Conversation Analysis transcript. Conceptually, silence is understood as an absence defined in relation to preceding talk. Schegloff (2007) refers to this as a set of "relevance rules":

Noticing that someone in particular is not speaking constitutes a claim of sorts that this is a relevant absence (as set against the non-speaking of everyone else), and turns on some relevance rule that makes it so—such as a prior speaker having selected the noticed one as next speaker. The turn-taking organization, then, constitutes (among other things) a set of relevance rules. (p. 20)

In this framework, silence is typically represented according to its length. For example, a five-second pause in conversation may be represented with the seconds written in parenthesis, such as (0.5). This is helpful in rendering visible silences in everyday talk when the silence is both audible and traceable to a previous utterance that makes the silence relevant.

However, this convention may also be limiting on two ways: first, because it is only usable when there is an "audible silence." When, in a multiparty exchange, other speakers continue talking, one person's silence may go unmarked. Transcription conventions signal when an utterance is interrupted (with a dash or an equal sign, with the latter signaling an utterance continued several turns later) or when an idea is completed over many turns (using brackets). However, talk that is withheld intentionally by the speaker may go unnoticed as other ongoing talk continues to unfold. Second, this coding process assumes that the analyst knows what social norms and what topics should be relevant (and therefore can constitute a notable absence if not heard). However, within the context of *Phylar*, teachers and researchers may not know that legal citizenship is a presupposed area of concern for children who may or may not make it relevant within everyday interaction. Coding for citizenship in the classroom requires identifying those "inaudible silences" produced in the midst of speech in addition to those more easily identified silences that transpire when a conversation is halted.

Notes

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¹All of the proper nouns referring to the focal students and school are pseudonyms.

²The four student writing samples in Examples 1 and 2 are presented in a side-by-side translation. They are divided into numbered sections for analytic purposes: identifying key turns in the narrative and making cross example references easier to follow. The original text, including any orthographic or grammatical errors, is printed in italics (for Spanish) on the left hand side. The author's translation appears on the right. The translation attempts to recreate the students' fluency by representing grammatical errors and changes of tense. However, spelling errors in the Spanish original were not reproduced in the English translation. Lexical items representing phonetic approximations (*mam* for "mom" or *troca* for "truck") and code switching (such the English token *proud* mixed into the original Spanish) are identified in bold to highlight the students' translanguaging practices.

³This is the only student writing sample for which I do not provide a translation because Ruth provides her own translation of the Spanish, placing it in quotes alongside the English.

⁴The transcripts of student speech in Examples 4 and 5 draw on Conversation Analysis conventions in three ways: First, I number the lines for reference during analysis in order to draw our attention to the situated phenomenon of how ideas unfold over the course of an interaction. I include arrows to identify key analytic moments. Second, I use all-capital letters to signal speech louder than the surrounding talk. Third, I use the colon to represent elongated speech (e.g., cu:::ltu:::res) to indicate when the speaker emphasizes a particular idea or opinion.

⁵Tatyana Kleyn and her collaborators use documentary film and curriculum development to provide rich insights into the lives of undocumented students and those growing up in mixed-status families; these materials, available at www.livingundocumented.com and www.unavidathefilm.com, can also serve as resources for teacher educators and researchers.

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