¡Ya basta con la ciudadanía restrictiva![1]: Undocumented Latina/o Young People and Their Families' Participatory Citizenship

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ABSTRACT: This article describes a community-based participatory action research project (PAR), "Voces Diversas e Importantes" [Diverse and Important Voices] that the intergenerational Family School Partnership (FSP) collective enacted to support citizenship participation and increase the possibilities undocumented Latina/o students and families have for transforming practices and perspectives within the school context and community. In this PAR project undocumented young people and their families challenge the notion that legal citizenship alone provides educational rights and equity. Central to this study is how participants troubled and disrupted the racialization and gendered components of citizenship as well transformed their participation into leadership practices that leveraged organizational changes and heightened positive educational pathways for young undocumented students in the high school.

KEYWORDS: family engagement, racialized and gendered citizenship, participatory action research, resistance

This research is based on a larger corpus of qualitative data that focuses on undocumented Latina/o immigrant young people and their families' educational concerns and experiences within U.S. public schools. This part of the research describes the collective actions taken by undocumented young people attending Hopeful High School[2] and their families in order to transform their civic participation and strengthen academic opportunities. Between 2007-2010, I spent limitless hours in and out of schools talking and building relationships with district officials, school administrators, and teachers; however, the majority of my time was spent in the community developing reciprocal trusting relationships with undocumented Latina/o students and their families. A lot of our time together was

spent in the local community recreation center discussing their educational concerns and their roles, as conceptualized within schools, and eliciting ideas on how to actively enact their family engagement ideas within and outside of the school. The students' ESL teachers and the school district's equity department supported this research, but the research itself was conducted in collaboration with undocumented Latina/o students and their families through an intergenerational community-based participatory action research (PAR) collective, Family School Partnership (FSP). I founded and direct FSP that serves to support and address the educational and community concerns and outcomes for historically marginalized students and families residing on the west side of Salt Lake City, Utah.

In this article, I describe an FSP community-based participatory action research project, "Voces Diversas e Importantes" [Diverse and Important Voices] that the FSP collective enacted to increase undocumented students and their families' school engagement and educational access. More specifically, this project aimed to support school participation and increase the possibilities of undocumented students and their families having roles in transforming practices and perspectives within the educational institution and community (Alvarez Gutiérrez, 2014; Cahill, Alvarez Gutiérrez & Quijada Cerecer, 2015). In this PAR project, undocumented young people and their families challenge the notion that legal citizenship alone provides educational rights. FSP's collective objectives for the "Voces Diversas e Importantes" project include: (a) Informing the school community of FSP participants' feelings of exclusion and sharing the ways they would like to participate in the school context; and (b) Incorporating and legitimizing their voices through participatory actions that promote educational access. These objectives are embedded in the complex and nuanced levels of racialized and gendered citizenship, which have been heightened given the anti-immigrant climate. Central to this study is how the participatory actions of undocumented students and their families transformed into leadership practices that leveraged organizational participation (i.e., school committees) and provided educational pathways that had not been readily available (i.e., student organizations) for students in the high school prior to the PAR project.

This research emphasizes and contributes to the importance of understanding how a collective group of historically marginalized Latina/o undocumented young people and their families transformed citizenship identities and participation through inclusionary actions that interrupted exclusionary school practices. In this study, I conceptualize citizenship as participatory (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006) to describe how undocumented young people and their families collectively transformed their school engagement because theoretically and practically participatory citizenship offers an "extended connotation of both, citizenship and participation, from the experiences of excluded individuals" (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006, p. 14). The lives of undocumented young people and their families are characterized by the legal and social contradictions that arise from growing up in the United States, while still facing everyday obstacles to being full participants in U.S. schools and society (Abrego, 2006; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2013). Some of these obstacles

include persistent inequalities based on immigration status, class, race, gender, and historical patterns of discrimination, to name a few.

Participatory Citizenship

For many undocumented FSP co-researchers, fear escalated when anti-immigrant bills were introduced and passed nationally during the time of this study. Approximately 141 out of 1,600 bills passed into law in 26 states (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011), including Utah's HB 497—Utah Illegal Enforcement Act (2011), were modeled after Arizona's SB 1070 (2010). Such anti-immigrant bills heightened undocumented residents' anxiety over the possibility of being reported to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency by schools while increasing the already widespread fear and anxiety of being deported. These anti-immigrant bills and xenophobic sentiments targeting undocumented Latino immigrants continue to magnify. Lawmakers in 43 states across the United States approved 171 immigration-related laws and 117 resolutions related to immigration in 2014, a 7.5% decline since 2013; however, the anti-immigration trend against Latinos, particularly Mexicans, continues throughout the country (NCSL, 2015). These national anti-immigrant sentiments impact undocumented students and their family households as well as school contexts. Despite these collective experiences, participatory citizenship highlights "multiple versions of citizenship, multiple identities and conflicts and contestation to be real" (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006, p. 12), thus acknowledging intergroup as well as intragroup conflicts. These intergroup and intragroup conflicts are important to note because they disrupt the notion that marginalized communities, in this case undocumented Latinos, practice communitarian and harmonious relationships. Instead relationship conflicts highlight how immigration status, class, race, gender, and historical patterns of discrimination impact the way citizenship participation is received and practiced in the host country/community.

Ideas of participation in political and social contexts are closely interrelated with citizenship in the United States. According to Mohanty and Tandon (2006),

> It is thus the principles of universality of equity, which citizenship aspires to translate into action. However marked by caste, class and gender, citizenship privileges the better off; that is, some people are always equipped both socially and materially to actualize their citizenship rights than others. (p. 9)

This tends to be the case for undocumented students and their families within educational institutions. It is critical to note that participatory citizenship aims to change the existing relationship between marginalized citizenry and those who are in positions of power. Participatory citizenship can be conceptualized as both a "discourse and a set of practices about the inclusion of the excluded groups"

(Mohanty & Tandon, p. 10, 2006) such as undocumented young people and their families' participatory citizenship within schools. Important to note is that the theoretical position of participatory citizenship is to transform citizenship into a set of actual practices that modify the exclusion of historically marginalized populations (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006). Overall, participatory citizenship includes a set of practices that are fluid, racialized, and gendered; thus it becomes important to have an understanding of how these intersections impact undocumented communities' perspectives of citizenship practices within schools. Equally important is to pay closer attention to how undocumented communities' actions have the potential to disrupt and transform educational exclusionary practices.

Setting, Participants, and Methods

Salt Lake City and Hopeful High School

Salt Lake City (SLC), Utah, is located in the Rocky Mountains with close to 200,000 residents. SLC is more ethnically and linguistically diverse than the entire state, with over one third (34.4 percent) of the city's population being ethnically diverse. In the 2010 Census there were 64,114 ethnically diverse people counted in the city, and Latinas/os accounted for nearly two thirds (65% = 41,637) of these residents (Downen & Perlich, 2013). State demographics report that 1 in 7 are Latino and 36.2% of immigrants in the state are naturalized citizens. The city's residential areas are segregated by ethnicity and income, with the majority of minorities and working class communities residing on the west side of Salt Lake City (District 1 and 2). Salt Lake's west side is often labeled as the "high crime" and dangerous area in the city by many residents who do not dare cross westward of the railroad tracks, because they fear the hostility they may encounter in the heavily populated community of immigrants and people of color residing in the area (76% of Latinas/os). While the state of Utah has been notorious for passing anti-immigrant policies (e.g., HB 497, *Show me your Papers Please*), it is also one of 18 states that have provisions allowing in-state tuition for undocumented students (HB 144). It should be noted that Senator Orin Hatch of Utah was one of the authors of the DREAM Act that often contradicts Utah's tenacity in implementing HB 497, a copycat law modeled after Arizona's HB 1070.

The young people and their families in this research were associated with and attended Hopeful High School, one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse schools in the city. More specifically, the student enrollment at Hopeful high school, at the time of the research, was approximately 2,500 of which 63% were minority students. Of these 41% were Latinos and 73% were labeled as "economically disadvantaged." Graduation rates in the state are reported at 86%. In the SLC school district, the graduation rate is 77%; however, the graduation rates for Latinos who are also identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) at

Hopeful High range from 61 to 72%. The graduation rates for students in high schools with low numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse students range from 95 to 98% graduation rates. However, Utah state officials hope to reach a 90% graduation rate across the state by 2020.

Participants

The youth and family co-researchers for this part of the PAR study consisted of 15 co-researchers, all of whom identified as being of Mexican descent. Nine of the co-researchers were high school students (5 females, 4 males) whose mean age was 16. Six (4 females, 2 males) of the co-researchers were family members (i.e., parent, aunt, uncle, stepfather, grandparent) whose mean age was 39. All co-researchers for the "Voces Diversas e Importantes" project identified themselves as being undocumented in the United States.

Participatory citizenship is an exceptional way that undocumented young people and their families counter the racialized and gendered roles prescribed to them within the high school and community. This PAR project focuses on how citizenship is informed by notions and actions of participatory citizenship.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

PAR methodology was utilized for this study and drew upon a larger corpus of data. "PAR commits at once to human rights, social justice, and scientific validity" (Torre, Fine, Stoudt & Fox, 2012, p.182) and has fundamental criteria that inform most projects: (a) collective commitment to investigate an issue or problem; (b) desire to engage in self- and collective reflection to gain clarity about the issue under investigation; (c) a joint decision to engage in individual and/or collective action that leads to a useful solution that benefits the people involved; and (d) the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process (McIntyre, 2008). Using PAR as a methodology is critical for the "Voces Diversas e Importantes" project as PAR forefronts the voices of the undocumented young people and their families, which are critical in understanding how participatory citizenship can transform their participation in educational contexts.

The analysis on the data focused upon the intersections between the dominant immigration discourse and the everyday experiences of Latina/o undocumented immigrant students and their families at Hopeful High School. Data analysis was conducted using an exploratory cyclical process. During the first spiral, the co-researchers (young people and families) and I coded interviews that took place during the project. In these interviews, young people and their

families expressed their challenges with school exclusion which led to participatory citizenship discussions. The interviews were transcribed, and we identified salient themes, patterns, and relationships. Mapping was also used to ensure that the thematic analysis was clearly defined. During the second cyclical process of the data analysis, the co-researchers and I participated in focus groups to discuss and agree on the co-constructed thematic categories and share our interpretations. This collaborative process provided a space for the co-researchers and me to discuss our understandings of the data and re-construct knowledge. As a result of this collaboration, new practices of awareness were co-constructed with the co-researchers (youth and their families).

Voces y Acciones Colectivas[4]

The undocumented young people and their families expressed feelings of inadequacy and lack of safety, explaining that they were treated as if they were 'illegally' in the school and could be deported at any time. In addition, students and families expressed feeling excluded because they were not represented on the staff, faculty or administration, thereby making it difficult for them to communicate with anyone in the school who was bicultural, understood cultural nuances, and spoke Spanish. Although Latinos and other minority groups represent more than 50% of the student population at Hopeful High School, they often felt like invisible entities within the school. FSP worked closely to support immigrants' leadership skills within schools while simultaneously mobilizing actions to address their concerns (e.g., anti-immigrant laws, school tracking, graduation rates, deportation and higher education). The participatory action research project, The "Voces Diversas e Importantes" project consisted of the following phases:

1. Identification of pressing concerns and development of research questions;
2. Interviews and video recordings; and
3. Implementation of action plan(s) that promote change as it pertains to the FSP collective.

The culturally engaging PAR project not only focused on informing the school community about the different aspects of their experiences as undocumented immigrants in the school, but also provided opportunities to gain the necessary tools to make changes that would benefit the collective. Prior to discussing the details of the PAR project, undocumented students and their families' experiences were the main source of information and central in learning the specifics of their concerns within Hopeful High School.

The next section of this article elaborates on the school and community contexts as they relate to the racialization of participatory citizenship. A section on gendered discourses on participatory citizenship **(**Allexsaht-Snider, Buxton& Harman, 2012) follows, concluding with the specific actions of the FSP collective

on the “Voces Diversas e Importantes” project.

Racialized Participatory Voices

The macroclimate across the country, Utah included, during the time of this research was profoundly hostile to Latinas/os, particularly towards undocumented immigrants. As noted earlier, citizenship doesn’t take into account the particular disadvantages certain groups such as low-income households, women, undocumented persons, and non-English speakers have to negotiate to avoid exclusion. Rather, citizenship is often referred to as a universal concept that assumes all citizens of a particular nation-state are equal before the law, despite noteworthy research asserting that citizenship in the United States has been racialized (Pérez-Huber, 2009; Rocco, 2014; Rosaldo, 1993). More specifically, when doing research and theorizing about participatory citizenship, researchers must be aware that Latinas/os experience particular types of racialized exclusion that should be taken into account. Rocco (2014) argues:

> A configuration of social, cultural and political processes by which specific perceived visible differences are imbued with racial significance and meaning that then are incorporated as racial hierarchy both within macro level economic, state and cultural institutional structures and within the interstitial noes of quotidian experiences and relation taking place in the sites of civil society. (pp. 114-115)

The racialization of participatory citizenship is apparent by house bills that passed into law that racially profiled Latinas/os regardless of documentation status across the country (i.e., Alabama’s H.B. 56, Arizona’s S.B. 1070, Georgia’s H.B. 87, and Montana’s referendum L.R. 121) and in the state of Utah. The racialization of participatory citizenship in Utah heightened with the passing of HB 497 which was modeled after Arizona’s SB 1070 (see Alvarez Gutiérrez, 2013) that would permit local law enforcement to act in lieu of ICE, while other times discussions included the possibilities of issuing temporary work visas to the undocumented immigrants. The conversations within the FSP collective couldn’t avoid the macro anti-immigrant climate across the country and state. More specifically, FSP co-researchers felt that HB 497 was racially profiling and discriminating them subjectively for fitting the stereotype of what an undocumented Mexican *looks like*. Many FSP participants expressed how these anti-immigrant sentiments were threatening their well-being in the community and started to note that undocumented students and families were being excluded within the school context.

Despite the racialization of the collective’s documentation status, they produced a video documentary project titled “Voces Diversas e Importantes,” in order to disrupt and defy the exclusionary racialized participatory citizenship they were granted in the community and school. The video interviews were converted into short testimonies that were shared with the school community and at a few

of our scheduled meetings. The collective's questions in the interviews consisted of the following:

1. What is your experience and knowledge of anti-immigrant laws across the country and in the state of Utah?
2. How have these anti-immigrant laws impacted you and your family?
3. Have you experienced some of these anti-immigrant sentiments within the school? If so, please explain with examples.
4. What do you think we can do as a group to change how the school views our participation as active participatory citizens?
5. What would you like the school to know about us undocumented families at Hopeful High School?
6. Have you been treated differently due to your sex? If so, how?

Latina/o immigrant young people and family members powerfully illuminate the way(s) in which participatory citizenship is not only a legal status but also a measure of the relative equity of the social actors as well as the quality and practical explanations of the common good (Oboler, 2006, p. 4). The following are short synopses from the testimonies shared by the collective.

Jon Carlo, Arturo's father, said:

> *La ley nueva (HB 497) es descriminatoria. Nos pueden detener simplemente porque parecemos indocumentados, que muchas veces significa ser mexicano y hombre. Nos descriminan por ser mexicanos y esto pasa en todos los lugares que trabajamos, vivimos y estudiamos. Siento que esta ley se extiende en la escuela por el modo que tratan a los estudiantes y familias mexicanas. Queremos participar mas en la escuela pero tenemos miedo que nos vayan a reporter [immigracion]por quejarnos de los maestros. Aunque dicen en la escuela que quieren que participemos, la verdad no es esa porque ya hemos tratado. Hijo diles lo que te paso. Diles.*
>
> The new law (HB497) is discriminatory. They can detain us simply because we appear to be undocumented, which many times means being Mexican and male. They discriminate against us for being Mexican, and this happens where we work, live, and study. I feel this law is extending itself into the school by the way Mexican students and families are treated in school. We want to participate more in school but we are afraid that they will report us [to ICE] for complaining about teachers. Even though they say in school that they want us to participate, the truth is not so because we have tried. Son, tell them what happened. Tell them.

Arturo, a high school junior, followed his dad. Jon commented:

> *Si, tiene razon mi papá es porque somos Mexicanos y notamos que si nos tratan diferente dentro y fuera de la escuela. Los maestros, no todos, porque unos son bien buenos pero otros se les nota que prefieren no tenernos en clase. Se le perdio a mi maestro una pluma especial y fue a donde todos los muchachos mexicanos estabamos sentados y pregunto*

> *cual de nosotros fue el que le robo la pluma. El resto de la clase se rio. Se siente feo. Prefiero poder ser parte de la clase, que me traten con respeto.*
>
> Yes, my father is correct it is because we are Mexican and we notice how we are treated differently in and out of school. The teachers, not all, because some are really good, but you can tell in some of their faces that they prefer not to have us in class. My teacher lost a special pen and he went over to the table were all of us male Mexicans sit together and asked which one of you stole my pen. The rest of the class laughed. It made me feel bad. I prefer to be part of the class, in which they treat me with respect.

Another student, Emiliano immediately followed up with:

> *Me da miedo caminar a la escuela porque me pueden parar sin alguna razon. Soy mas moreno que otros asi que a mi me ven sospechosamente simple por ser mas obscure y ser hombre. Otros miembros de mi familia tambien pueden parar o los pueden sacar de su trabajo y probable no los volvemos a ver. Estas leyes anti-imigrantes nos afectan emocionalmente, son parte de nuestra vida, nos tratan como si fueramos invisible pero a la misma vez somos muy visible porque estas leyes son hechas para descriminarnos.*
>
> I get scared to walk to school because I can be stopped without any good reason. I am darker than others so they view me suspiciously simply because I am darker and a male. Also, other family members can be stopped or taken out of their job and we may not see them again. These anti-immigrant laws affect us emotionally, they are part of our life, we are treated as invisible but at the same time very visible because these laws were written to discriminate against us.

Jon Carlo, Arturo, and Emiliano describe the racialization of anti-immigrant laws, particularly HB 497 (2011), which target Latinos who appear to be undocumented, regardless of country of origin and documentation status. They all expressed that racial profiling is at the center of limiting their participation due to the fear that HB 497 has caused them in and out of the school context. All three also fear being racially profiled and detained because of the arbitrary stops that police are allowed to practice with HB 497. All three participants mention how stereotypes are integrated into the decisions that law enforcement make on racially profiling someone, and this impacts the home, work place, and school context. Explaining with more detail in relation to school, Sandy, an eleventh grader, shared the following:

> *Cuando estoy en la escuela siento que los maestros nos separan del resto de la clase para no tener que hablarnos mucho. O sea, nos pone mero atras de el salon y todos en la misma area. No sabe el maestro que somos indocumentados, pero nos trata con coraje. Se le nota en su modo de ser con nosotros. El maestro de historia regularmente menciona que la inmigracion illegal es un problema muy grande y nos ve a nosotros. Una*

> *vez nos pregunto, cual de ustedes es ilegal? Muestra tus papeles! Nos hace sentir mal, pero no decimos nada porque sabemos que nos trata diferente por ser mexicanos…pero me gustaria poder participar en la discusion en la clase. Yo se bastante en la escuela ahora necesito la oportunidad de compartir lo que se.*
>
> When I am in school I feel that teachers separate us from the rest of the class so that they don't have to talk to us much. That is, he puts us way in the back of the room in the same area. The teacher doesn't know we are undocumented, but he treats us with anger. It is notable in the manner that he interacts with us. The history teacher regularly mentions that illegal immigration is a big problem and then looks over at us. One time he asked us: which one of you is an illegal? Show me your papers! That makes us feel bad, but we don't say anything because we know that he treats us differently because we are Mexican…but I would like to be able to participate in the class discussions. I know a lot in school, now I just need the opportunity to share what I know.

Del Carmen followed Sandy's comments with:

> *En esa misma clase me preguntaron si yo era documentada o no. A nosotros los Mexicanos nos tratan diferente, nos tratan con menos respeto. Siento que es porque somos Mexicanos. Cuando tenemos preguntas en clase, nos hace esperar mucho la maestro y aveces ni viene a ayudarnos.* We want to learn and just need some help.
>
> In this same class they asked me if I was documented or not. They treat us, Mexicans differently; they treat us with less respect. I feel it is because we are Mexican. When we have a question in our class, the teacher has us wait a long time and sometimes doesn't come to help us. We want to learn and just need some help.

Victoria, a mother of a female junior shares the following:

> *Queremos participar mas en la escuela, pero aveces no sabemos como y aveces siento que si estmos incluidos en la escuela pero otras veces sentimos que estamos excluidos porque somos Mexicanos indocumentados. Y las leyes nos atacan y siento que estos ataques salen en el tratamiento que nos dan en la escuela. ¿Como te dire? Somos incluidos pero excluidos a la manera que dicte la escuela.*
>
> We want to participate more in school, but sometimes we don't know how and sometimes I feel that we are included in the school but only as the school dictates. Other times I feel we are excluded because we are undocumented Mexicans. The laws attack us and I feel that these attacks come out in school. How can I tell you? We are included yet excluded in according to the way the school dictates.

The experiences of Sandy, Del Carmen, and Victoria speak to what Rocco (2014) refers to as "exclusionary inclusionary" citizenship participation:

> A type of belonging that regulates and restricts the degree and nature of participation in the primary institutions of society. Latinas/os have been included in various aspects of U.S. societal institutions but always on a limited or restricted basis…and as perpetual foreigners (p. 6).

The exclusionary inclusionary citizenship participation in and out of schools is evident for undocumented families. Given this limited access to participatory citizenship in and out of the school, young people and families were clear in their interviews how they were limited in their participation but also how they wanted to participate within the school. FSP co-researchers' testimonies reflect the racialization experienced by students and families and highlight Rocco's (2014) four central tenets to participatory citizenship for Latinas/os: (a) members and societal cohesion; (b) patterns and strategies of inclusion and exclusion; (c) forms of belonging; (d) racialization of Latinas/os. Rocco's four tenets foreground the voices of undocumented young people and their families, which become essential for a better understanding of how undocumented communities link the micro experiences with the macro experiences in and outside of school.

In addition to citizenship being racialized for Latinos, it is also gendered and is constructed in exclusionary inclusionary ways since females are often excluded and patronized due to male privilege as explained in the next section.

Gendered Citizenship

"Sociohistorical notions of 'man' and 'citizen' have historically augmented one another" (Roy, 2005, p. 2) while often excluding women from the "national-cultural and juridico-political identities as citizens" (Roy, 2005,p. 2). Within this sociohistorical context, citizenship continues to be gendered as women have been often excluded from the sphere of politics and distanced from resources and opportunities such as education, property ownership and the like, thus placing women in the perimeters. For example, it is important to note and understand how gender helps in constructing the negative perceptions of immigrants, and how criminality, violence, cartels, and gang activity rely upon notions of masculinity and violence of females. For females, the liminal gendered roles that are inscribed culturally have jeopardized identities, rights and identities of belonging, and worth. In and outside of the United States, violence against women continues to be often considered a family matter that should be resolved by families at home rather than through the legal system, thereby leaving women and children in positions of vulnerability. Conceptualizing violence against women within these limited perspectives has propelled approximately 68,000 unaccompanied children and many women traveling with their children to seek asylum in the United States in order to escape violence in their home countries (i.e., Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala). Gendered citizenship is interrelated to racialized citizenship as many of these children and women have been denied asylum in the United States because they are not considered

qualified for asylum despite fleeing violence in their home countries. Gloria, the mother of three female students shared her perspective:

> *Nosotras, las mujeres tenemos que trabajar cinco veces mas que los hombres, pero aun asi no nos dan el respeto que merecemos. Yo conosco a muchas mujeres que se encuentran solas con sus hijas/os sin ayuda de nadie y sobresalen pero sufren mucho. Mira todos los ninos y madres que tratan de escapar la violencia en El Salvador y Guatemala. Ellas si sufren pero como son mujeres, Latinas y indocumentadas, no las valorecemos igual que a otras mujeres de otros lugares.*
>
> We women have to work five times as much as men, and even then we do not get the respect we deserve. I know a lot of women who find themselves alone with their daughters and sons without any help but even so, they get ahead but suffer a lot. Look at all the children and mothers who are escaping the violence in El Salvador and Guatemala. They suffer but since they are women, Latinas, and undocumented, we don't value them the same as women from other places.

Choco, an older sister to one of the female sophomores, stated:

> *En este pais, las mujeres Latinas y indocumentadas no nos ven con mucho respeto. Solo somos trabajadoras de limpieza que cuidamos a sus hijos, pero no mas. Ser mujer Latina es dificil porque siento que no tenemos mucho poder porque somos exluidas pero avecs si somos incluidas y con mucho poder.*
>
> In this country, Latinas who are undocumented are not given much respect. We are only workers who clean and care for their children but that is it. Being a Latina is difficult because I feel we don't have much power because we are excluded but sometimes if we are included we have more power.

Gendered citizenship also becomes evident from the actions taken by various agencies in the United States. More specifically, a high number of mothers are being separated from their children through the detention and deportation process. In the last decade, approximately 100,000 U.S. citizen children have experienced their parents/guardians' deportation, particularly mothers (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014). The process of detention and deportation is very covert. Most families, particularly females, are unaware of their children's and/or family members' whereabouts once placed in the private detention center. Mothers are typically detained approximately 370 miles away from their homes, and outside communication is not permitted (Wessler, 2011), thus making it impossible for them to show up in court to respond to the unfit accusations reported by the courts. These actions often lead to separation of families and result in children being adopted without the mother's consent. This practice should be outlawed, and ICE and Child Protective Services (CPS), along with family court judges, should make it a policy to provide

the necessary legal mechanisms to keep mothers and their children together regardless of their documentation status.

Within school contexts, females are perceived to be the main advocates for their children. Hence, when not able to attend school meetings or events, females are critiqued without an understanding of the circumstances that prevented the woman from participating in the school function. Females are also generally held liable for the challenges young people may have in school and labeled as unfit caretakers when challenges for young people arise. Equally important to note is that achievement for female students in general, and in particular for undocumented female students, is not to foster academics but rather to continue to hold gendered roles as explained earlier. Schools often continue to gender academic expectations, which are an easy way to blame the female students for their academic challenges.

Within the FSP collective, members noted that the conversation was often male-dominated, which we addressed in our early meetings. One male student asked the group if anyone had comments or questions. Another male student answered; the females sat quietly while the males took over the conversation. Carla, a high school senior, calmly interrupted and asked us to stop to think about who was talking and who was not. The men continued to talk amongst the collective and Carla, an eleventh grader, cleared her throat loudly and said:

> *Pienso que necesitamos aclarar que no solo los hombres tienen derecho de dar sus opiniones. Todos tenemos derecho en este grupo, asi que hay que establecer reglas sobre nuestras platicas. Tenemos que dar oportunidades a las miembros que no han podido decir nada. Las mujeres tenemos derecho de ser escuchadas.*
>
> I think we need to make a clarification that not only men in the group have a right to give their opinions. We are have a right in this group, so let's establish rules that will guide our discussions. We have to give opportunities to members who haven't been able to say anything. We women have a right to be heard.

Participants were alert and took note of the gendered roles by making sure to call on one another when one person was taking up too much air space. What was such a taboo to say out loud about gender and age became friendly ways to keep each other accountable. Usually the group would say to one another: "Quieres hacer todas las decisiones? [Do you want to make all the decisions?]" Or "jovenes, le toca a los jovenes [Young people it is your turn, young people.]" or "Que hablen las damas, le toca a las damas." [Ladies, please talk, it is your turn ladies]" As we re-read the transcripts for the sessions, females and males agreed that the females felt bit intimidated by the males in the room because the males in the group had all had attended some college, and the females did not think they knew enough. The female guardian/family members in the collective had only had the opportunities to attend school until the 8th grade. These gender roles were interrupted by our conversation and most importantly brought up by the young females in the group. Despite the dynamics in the group, there was an

acknowledgement that the undocumented males were targeted by law enforcement more so than females.

The "Voces Diversas e Importantes" project concluded with short testimonies that focused on the experiences of young people and their families with exclusionary practices in the school and community. This PAR project was first shared during an evening at the community recreation center where our meetings took place. The showing in the community had approximately 65 attendees, three of whom were teachers and a few administrators. One of the administrators thanked the students and families after viewing the video and stated the following:

> I had no idea that this is what you all were experiencing in the school. I really would like to talk with you about getting involved in the school decision-making. We value your experiences and opinions.

The lack of attendance during the school showing signaled to the FSP collective that their participatory citizenship was not as important to the school community. One of the main findings was that although schools express that they want historically marginalized families to be more engaged in schools, the truth is that they are often exclusionary in their practices, practices clearly noted by the FSP collective. Following the evening of the testimonies, the administrator never followed up with the families or young people. One of the young people said:

> *Yo creo que solo dijo eso porque los maestros y familias estaban alli. Pero no creo que lo dijera seriamente por otra parte debería venir para hablar con nosotros, pero no hizo.*
>
> I think he just said that because teachers and families were there. But I do not believe that he was saying it seriously otherwise he would have made time to speak with us, but he did not.

One of the family members, an older sister, said the following:

> *Parece que los administradores son como politicos, dicen lo que queremos escuchar pero no hacen nada para mejorar la situacion.*
>
> It seems that the managers are like politicians, they speak to what we want to hear but they do not do anything to improve the situation.

Overall, however, the FSP collective of undocumented young people and their families felt empowered because they created some change in how they were viewed by mainstream teachers and administrators and voiced how they would like to participate in the school context. They felt good about conducting their testimonies and sharing them with the community and school. However, this was only the first part of the "Voces Diversas e Importantes."

A second part of the "Voces Diversas e Importantes" project was to go into the community and participate in the anti-immigrant marches that were happening across the country, specifically those in Salt Lake City. The collective decided that this would be their way of protesting their restrictive participatory citizenship. The entire group wanted to protest together, but they had

reservations due to safety concerns, especially concern over the males in the group and other community members they would recruit to join the group in the march. At the end of the day, group members, including young people, were intimidated about participating in a protest that could lead to deportation. Carolina, a 16-year-old freshman said:

> *No creo que tenemos miedo ir a las protestas, sino que tememos de los riesgos que tomamos de ir. Digamos que algo salga y le llamen a la policia y ellos le llaman a immigracion, y se llevan a uno o varios de nosotros? No vamos a saber done estamos y todo para que?*
>
> I don't think we are scared to go to the protests, I think we are afraid of the risks we are taking by going. Let's say that something breaks out and the police are called in and they call immigration, and they take one or several of us? We won't know where anyone would end up and for what?

Chava, a 17-year-old senior followed up with:

> *Veo tu punto de vista, pero si no hacemos algo, no vamos a saber como es ser parte de la historia, parte de cambiar la historia. Yo creo que todos deberiamos ir juntos y hacer que nuestras voces se escuchen, deberian escuchar que no nos sentimos bien sobre las leyes que quieren ligalizar para tratarnos como crimines. Vamos! No hay que temer!*
>
> I see your point, but if we don't do something we won't know how it is to be part of history, of changing history. I think that we should all go together and have our voices heard, they should hear we are not feeling good about the policies they want to use to treat us as criminals. Let's go! Let's not fear!

Damian, a 10th grader replied to Carolina and Chava:

> *No me quiero quejar, pero hemos trabajado tanto y aprendido tanto en nuestro grupo sobre las diferencias en como trata la policia y son vistas las mujeres que a los hombres. Hombres indocumentados son los primeros que son deportados porque nos tienen mas miedo a nosotros. La mujeres tienen menos de que preocuparse cuando estemos afuera. Asi que no pienso que vale la pen air a la marcha porque no sabemos lo que puede pasar y no quiero que deporten a mi Tio, como a mi papa, abuelo y tia. Yo voto que no asistemos a la marcha!*
>
> I don't want to complain, but we have worked and learned in our group that there are certainly differences between how men and woman are treated and seen by the police. Undocumented men are the first to be deported because they are feared the most. Females have less to worry about while out there. So I don't think it is worth going to the march because we don't know what will happen and I don't want my uncle to be taken away, like my dad, grandfather and aunt were. I vote no to attending the march!

Xochilt, a junior who is 17, shared:

> *Punto bien dicho Damian. En fin del dia, no importa si eres mujer o hombre, sit e llevan, estas separado de tu familia y nadie puede hacer nada para sacarte. No quiero que mi familia se separe como la familia en nuestra vecindad que vimos en las noticias, donde deportaron a su esposo, y ahora quieren deportarla a ella y a sus hijos que son ciudadanos.* Terrible.
>
> Excellent point, Damian. And at the end of the day, regardless of the gender, if you are taken away, you are separated from your family and no one can do anything to get you out. I don't want our family to be separated like the west side family we saw on the news, where they deported her husband, and now they want to deport her and her U.S. children. Terrible.

Catalina, a mother of two high school females, added:

> *Estos son preocupaciones reales, para poder platicar sobre como participar como ciudadanos y las protestas, pero esto nos afecta seriamente. Si nos separan, y nos deportan, nadie va a saber donde estamos y cuanto tiempo antes de que nos deporten. Asi que hay que pensar la decicion que tome nuestro grupo.*
>
> These are all real concerns, so we can talk about participatory citizenship and protests, but these affect us more seriously. If we are separated and or deported, no one is going to be able to know where we are and how long before we get deported. So let's really think about what we decide for the group.

Although they wanted to be in solidarity and they were willing to face racist attacks, they feared that their participation in the march could affect their livelihood and family safety. The group agreed that protesting was an act that they wanted to be part of to bring solidarity to the community and with others who were in similar situations, but they felt that they wanted to contribute in ways other than protesting. So instead, the collective made phone calls to local representatives, wrote letters to the governor and legislators, and attended a couple of legislative sessions together. It was a powerful experience to hear the collective share how they felt they were participating citizens despite their lack of documentation. Students and family members reported that the collective made their relationship stronger and more respectful as they were having conversations that they otherwise may have not been having or taking actions together in and out of school.

Conclusion

The PAR project completed by the intergenerational FSP collective was remarkable in making specific changes to how undocumented students were included in the larger sociocultural context, provided information and tracked within the school. The FSP collective over time became respected and acknowledged among the school administrators, educators, school district, and

university; it, in particular, was highly valued among the Latina/o community. The participants took risks in navigating unfamiliar terrains, the U.S. public school system, in order to empower students to pursue higher education. As noted from the group narratives, citizenship participation is racialized and gendered; however, it can be disrupted through knowledge and actions. The FSP collective took direct actions and high-stakes risks to be culturally and civically engaged in an unwelcoming school climate. It was clear that deportation and separation of families were major concerns for the families; however, the group took risks to ensure that students were provided with as many educational opportunities and pathways for success. The group shared that the people in the collective were their adopted family because they didn't have blood relatives close by. The group often referred to our meeting as a *refugio* (safe haven) where they could bring friends and neighbors to talk about real concerns that were impacting their lives (i.e., worker rights, evictions, law enforcement, housing, job applications, deportations, and the like). I was the link that served between the community and public resources, referring the group to various organizations in the city that could assist them.

This research extends our current understandings of how undocumented students and their families *together* experience participatory citizenship in U.S. high schools while still disrupting their often marginalized positions through their role as active agents of change by refusing to be silenced and be treated as invisible. More specifically, the research illuminates how undocumented young people and their families refused to be invisible but rather take actions against exclusionary practices and enact transformation in the way they participated in schools and communities. Exclusionary practices such as being silenced in the high school context were oppressive until the group of undocumented participatory activists disrupted their invisibility and exclusionary positions within the educational. When young people and their families are given clear and positive messages about their worth and abilities they succeed; when young people and their families are bombarded with undeserved and exclusionary messages, they may internalize that they are outsiders and undeserving, thus believing it is normal for them to be surveilled. However, the results of the PAR project suggest that undocumented young people in high school and their families are actively seeking ways to disrupt their invisibility within the educational system through participatory citizenship, inquiry, and action.

Notes

1. Direct Translation: Enough with restrictive citizenship.
2. Pseudonyms are used to protect all participants in school and community contexts.
3. The author resides in this area.
4. Translation: Voices and collective actions.

Acknowledgment

I extend my gratitude to the FSP collective for their dedication to transform participatory citizenship and continuously teaching me unconditional familial support. Also thank you: University of Utah graduate students, UITE students, Department of Education, Culture and Society, University Neighborhood Partners, Bennion Center and for the unconditional support of Drs. Kathleen Christy, Martha Bradley and Theresa Martinez.

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