

Breaking the Silence: Facing Undocumented Issues in Teacher Practice

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Abstract

This conceptual article addresses the need for educators to interrupt status-quo silences surrounding the role of immigration status in schools—an issue that disproportionately impacts Latina/os. In this article we: (a) articulate the need for teacher education to address the impact of undocumented status in school settings; (b) present ethnographic vignettes of teachers who navigated these issues drawing from two qualitative studies; (c) synthesize understandings related to teaching undocumented youth; (d) highlight emerging areas of focus based on our research; and (e) outline continuing tensions in how teachers address documentation status. This article serves as an entry-way to bridge the lived circumstances of undocumented youth in schools, teacher practice, and aspirations for more equitable schooling.

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Introduction

In the midst of long-standing patterns of inequality in Latina/o education, language issues are becoming more visible in policy reforms and in teacher education literature (e.g., Bunch, 2013; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Addressing language issues continues to be a vital need in increasing educational access. And, yet, in our ethnographic work in immigrant Latina/o school settings, we noticed how addressing youth's language issues was a matter of high visibility, while immigration status was largely invisible, but profoundly shaped youth's educational experiences and outcomes. Due to the gap we have seen in schools and within teacher education, we argue that current silences come at a great cost—particularly in light of the emerging research on the impact of documentation status on students' learning and trajectories (Allard, 2013; Gallo, 2014; Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). In initiating a conversation on a topic that has been traditionally omitted from discussions of teacher education, we simultaneously highlight the disproportional impact of migration status on Latina/o communities while also noting undocumented status' impacts in other immigrant communities. We also note the significance of addressing these issues, especially within teacher education because pre-service teacher education is one place where issues of diversity are at least partially taken up—at times more so than in school settings—despite the ongoing need throughout teachers' careers (Faltis & Valdés, in press). Here we call attention to the need for educators to interrupt status-quo silences surrounding undocumented issues.

In this article we: (a) articulate the need for addressing undocumented status; (b) present ethnographic vignettes of teachers who navigated these issues drawing from two qualitative studies; (c) synthesize understandings related to teaching undocumented youth; (d) highlight emerging areas of focus based on our research; and (e)

outline continuing tensions in how teachers address documentation status. Through this conceptual article, our aim is to raise visibility and begin conversations about the place of undocumented status in teachers' practice. Teachers will have a greater impact on youth's life trajectories if they become more knowledgeable about documentation status issues in ways that allow them to better serve youth—especially given the prevalence of documentation issues within immigrant Latina/o communities.⁷ Before continuing, we provide additional information about the impacts of undocumented status in schools and present the conceptual orientation for this article.

Undocumented Status in Schools

An important subset of the growing number of immigrant youth in U.S. schools is undocumented. These are young immigrants who were born outside the U.S., who came here alone or with their parents and who reside here without permanent resident visas or any other kind of longer-term residence or work permit (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Being undocumented represents a set of challenges for students, their parents, and teachers, which greatly impacts students' ability to enroll in school, stay in school, graduate, and have access to higher education opportunities (Abrego, 2006; Jefferies, 2014a & 2014b).

Out of the estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants residing in the United States (Passel & Cohn, 2009), undocumented youth enrolled in K-12 education constitute an estimated 2 million (Congressional Budget Office, 2007). Due to the *Plyler v. Doe* ruling (1982), undocumented youth have legal access to a public education from kindergarten through high school. In the *Plyler* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that withholding education from this population, and in any way posing a threatening environment in school, violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (López & López, 2010). More than thirty years after this landmark ruling, which explicitly marked the public need for educational access for undocumented youth, their educational outcomes lag far behind those of their documented and U.S.-born peers: 40% of undocumented youth (ages 18 to 24) have not completed high school, a statistic far higher than their counterparts who are documented immigrants (15%) or U.S.-born residents (8%) (Passell and Cohn, 2009). Furthermore, only 25% of undocumented youth enroll in college (Nienhusser, 2013). Clearly, undocumented populations face challenges that go beyond the focus of linguistic and cultural issues that many documented immigrants confront.

This article highlights the need to break normative silences regarding documentation status in teacher education precisely because teachers' roles are significant as they are the ones who interact daily with youth—either developing sophisticated pedagogies and ways of being responsive to undocumented youth, or conversely, continuing the silencing that already exists for youth facing great obstacles in our society. After discussing our conceptual orientation, we present ethnographic vignettes from teachers and students who navigated undocumented status in two urban contexts in different U.S. cities. Rather than providing recipes or best practices, our goal is to begin a conversation and surface issues in relation to teacher practice and undocumented youth and families. Given the dearth of research on the intersection of teacher practice and undocumented student status, we call for increasing awareness for the need of such work with great sensitivity. By initiating this conversation in relation to teacher education (rather than concluding it definitively), we hope to provide an avenue to break silences about undocumented youth in schools.

Conceptual Orientation: The Construction of “Illegality”

In discussing a population that is often constructed as “illegal” and undeserving of societal inclusion (Jefferies, 2009; Chávez, 1998; Santa Ana, 2002), we would like to make explicit the assumptions from which we are working. As De Genova (2002) and others have pointed out, undocumented migrants are not a social group to be conceptualized in isolation: they are not the “problem” to be studied. Rather, we note the importance of the historical creation of policies in the U.S. that have created categories (such as “illegal aliens”) and how

⁷ It is important to note that not all undocumented youth are Latina/o, and not all or even most Latina/os are undocumented. However, a great majority (87%) of the overall undocumented population is estimated to be of Latina/o origin (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009).

these categories have produced a low-wage, expendable labor source for U.S. companies. Migrant “illegality” is created and sustained as the product of laws and categories (“legal”/“illegal”), which have been historically drawn in the U.S. to regulate Chinese workers first, and then Mexican migrant workers in the twentieth century (De Genova, 2002). Importantly, these categories have been constructed along the lines of race and difference (De Genova, 2002; Ngai, 2004.) Elaborate systems have been created to classify, regulate and criminalize the movement of people. And, post-9/11 immigration policies have focused on deportation as the primary means to deal with undocumented migrants, resulting in seven times the number of yearly arrests than in prior years (Capps, Castaneda, Chaudry & Santos, 2007).

Fear of deportation is a powerful presence in the everyday lives of not only adults, but also youth and school personnel who serve them. Despite youth’s rights to education, the *Plyler* ruling comes “at the price of invisibility” (Mangual Figueroa, 2011, p. 263), protecting the undocumented student population but doing so at the cost of being silenced: a kind of “don’t ask don’t tell” policy where administrators, teachers, parents and students do not have open conversations about the issue. As with other socially consequential categories (race, class, gender, sexuality, [dis]ability, etc.), the cost of silence is the continued invisibility of phenomena that nevertheless exerts a clear impact on people who inhabit those categories. As long as groups’ experiences are rendered invisible, they are subjected to more exploitation and oppression. Moreover, invisibility and silencing preclude collective action. We argue that socially-just teaching that *conscientiously* acknowledges undocumented status (rather than rendering it invisible or aberrant) better serves youth than status-quo silence.

First, it allows teachers to recognize current political processes (such as deportations) that affect youth’s abilities to perform in school (i.e., when fear of deportation prevents students from arriving to school or participating actively in the classroom). Second, it allows teachers to potentially channel alternative resources for post-secondary opportunities that youth may not know are available to them (which may also affect school performance if students begin to disengage once they realize that college may be out of reach for them). And third, perhaps most importantly, teachers’ acknowledgement and normalization of undocumented migration can potentially partially combat aspects of “illegality” that render youth as less than human and less than equal members of society.

Research on documentation status has grown substantially in visibility (e.g., Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011), especially in examining the experiences of undocumented youth in high school and college. Findings point to limited availability of information, fear of deportation, different application requirements that vary by state, high out-of-state tuition, and little or no access to financial aid (Abrego, 2006, Allard, 2013; Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, 2010, 2011; Jefferies, 2014a & 2014b; Nienhuser, 2013)—all factors that severely limit their transition to college. Despite growing attention to undocumented youth in education, a sustained focus on teachers’ interactions with undocumented youth is largely missing. One exception is the work of Gallo (2014) and Gallo and Link (2014). Gallo’s (2014) analysis draws from a five-year study and traces the impact of documentation status on children’s learning. She also highlights how some teachers such as “Ms. Vega” sought to avoid issues of status: “[Ms. Vega] emphasized that in all of her teacher education, ‘you talk about cultures, you don’t talk about immigration’” (p. 492). In this way, silences within teacher education served to justify additional silences in practice. Still needed are understandings about how teachers successfully take up issues of documentation status in practice.

Ethnographic Vignettes

In this section we draw from two ethnographic studies to provide more grounded illustrations of ways in which teachers addressed status issues while interacting with their students. We disclose our own motivations and connections to this scholarship, highlight the aims of our studies, and provide illustrations that speak to how the teachers in our studies broke silences to reach their students.

A Teacher’s Attempt to Make Undocumented Youth Visible (Julián Jefferies)

The data for the first study were gathered between 2006 and 2011 at an urban school in an eastern city

of the U.S. that enrolled only recently arrived immigrant students.⁸ Alongside my role in the school as a teacher, after-school coordinator and soccer coach, I conducted a multi-sited/global ethnography (Burawoy, 2000) of the daily lives of Latina/o undocumented youth as they navigated school, work, and family. The data collection was shaped by who I am, a bi-lingual White Latino male from Argentina who migrated ten years prior to the study. My experiences in the U.S. contributed to the motivation for this study and shaped the kinds of questions and observations I made. These formative experiences include: navigating life in the U.S. without a valid migration status at times; being detained at the border once; and contending with undocumented status for many years. This position afforded me a sensibility to the issues of undocumented youth in the high school that facilitated contact, communication, and observation of how their teachers dealt with migration status in their classes. In my data collection, I took written notes at: teacher and administrator meetings, counseling sessions, and classes; these data were supplemented with semi-structured individual interviews with administrators, counselors, teachers, and students.

The overall findings of this ethnography revealed in detail how fear of deportation was a powerful presence in the lives of these youth; students were afraid to discuss their status, meanwhile administrators feared bringing up the issue, and teachers remained aloof. This “circle of silence” around immigration status in the daily routine of school put students in danger, threatened their educational investment as well as their ability to graduate high school and continue to higher education (Jefferies, 2014b). To expand on the role of teachers, this ethnographic vignette focuses on one teacher, Mr. Domenico (pseudonym), observed during the third year of data collection, in order to illustrate how he became aware of students’ migration status and integrated this issue into his classes.

Mr. Domenico was a ninth-grade math instructor and baseball coach, originally from the Dominican Republic, who lived in a neighborhood with a high population of Caribbean immigrants and African-American residents. He found out about students’ varied migration statuses, initially, by having conversations out of class and during baseball practice. Due to the relationship established and the level of trust garnered by his position as a coach and as an immigrant, students approached him with questions about an array of issues that students and their families were experiencing:

... the students already ask me about problems their parents are having with mortgages, with buying the bus ticket. So the subject comes up generally when they are trying to apply to their first job... filling out applications for kids in the summer, to get employment, and they say “Mister, I don’t have that important paper.” What do you mean? And then that’s how it comes up. So, it’s about how is one tactful in asking the question...

Because of the climate of deportations happening in the state where Mr. Domenico worked, and because he did not know how some of the other school personnel would respond, he made sure the information stayed between the student, other allies in the school, and himself. He did not want to put students at risk by writing down their names on a list, but also wanted to make sure he referred them to the appropriate services: in this school, this meant talking to the counselor about their higher education possibilities, and also conferring with a paralegal that visited the school twice a month to inform students about their rights and possibilities concerning applying for permanent residence. While this approach was productive, there were limitations: only teachers who were aware of the issues and had rapport with the students could act to connect them personally to resources. It was more difficult for the young women in the school to open up about immigration status, because there were no female teachers who had established this kind of trusting relationship with students.

For Mr. Domenico, creating a space in the classroom where students’ migration status was normalized was of utmost importance. As a math teacher, Mr. Domenico acknowledged bringing up migration status “every couple of weeks or so” as part of mathematics examples he gave in class. For example, while explaining percentages, he talked about the number of documented and undocumented immigrants in the United States and the percentage of growth over the last three censuses. When he approached the subject, he had students explain what documented and undocumented was, addressing the fact that the media sometimes named them as “illegal.” While only mentioning it in passing, he made sure the whole class knew that he would not accept names such as “wetback”, “*mojado*,” or “illegal” in class discussion. With this move, Mr. Domenico acknowledged

⁸ To protect human subjects, our descriptions of school settings and locations are purposefully vague.

migration status in the classroom, made visible the experience of some of the students in the class, and signaled his supportive stance in ways that could make students more comfortable approaching him about that subject in the future.

Investigating Teachers' Practice in Civics Classrooms: The Significance of a Teacher's Signaling Moves (Dafney Blanca Dabach)

The second study focused on how experienced teachers of immigrants discussed voting, citizenship, and political participation in civics classrooms situated in a Western U.S. region (Dabach, 2015). The purpose was to better understand how civics classrooms can ultimately be more inclusive spaces despite structural barriers to formal citizenship. One motivation for this study was personal: as a mixed-heritage child of immigrants who were skilled manual laborers (with ties to the Middle East, the Balkans, Spain, and Venezuela), some of my family members were undocumented. I also noticed how with the timing of my family's migration, my relatives were eventually able to regularize their status due to legislative reforms, contrasting sharply with the experiences of youth I later worked with as an adult (e.g., Dabach, 2013). For me, this contrast marked how the consequences of undocumented status have become more fixed and severe than they used to be.

In addition to the personal motivation of this study, I saw a great need to address undocumented issues in teacher practice based on what I was seeing while working on another study where a social studies teacher struggled to understand citizenship status issues when working with immigrant-origin English language learners (Dabach, 2014). The teacher assumed students' beginning levels of English proficiency meant they lacked status—despite not knowing what students' actual situations were. She appeared to have few resources for how to think about documentation status in practice. Witnessing this, I wanted to find teachers who had in-depth knowledge of how documentation status can play out in classrooms in more productive ways—as they were teaching.

I initiated a year-long (2012-2013) ethnographic case study (Yin, 2009). Our team conducted teacher and student interviews, and classroom observations.⁹ Due to space limitations, I focus on one of four teachers who was especially explicit about how she navigated undocumented status in relation to her teaching practice.

Ms. Scott (a pseudonym) was a White teacher who had over many years of experience and worked in a school that was undergoing demographic change with increasing numbers of immigrant youth. The community she worked in was predominantly middle- and working-class. Outside of her school setting, she was actively involved in local social justice teaching networks, which provided a means to stay informed about issues, including documentation status. At her site, she developed multi-stranded relationships with youth, especially those who were in her Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) class (a college-access program for first-generation college youth). Through her role in this program, Ms. Scott became more aware of the undocumented population at her site because of the college-access barriers her students faced.

One feature that became especially visible in Ms. Scott's social studies class was her approach to normalizing undocumented status—rather than it being something that did not exist or was highly unusual. Similar to teaching moves that counter heteronormativity, when addressing her class she would acknowledge the possibility of undocumented students in the classroom. She did not come from a place of assuming that students were documented or undocumented, but allowed for the possibility of both. For example, she would make a point to announce to the class that scholarships for undocumented students were available—regardless of who was present. An important aspect was using language in different forms to counter the silences of illegality, both by *speaking* about scholarships that undocumented youth were eligible for, as well as by leaving *written text* in the room as a visual signal to students. Ms. Scott prominently displayed scholarship information on the door at eye level so that students would see the scholarship information every day on their way out of the classroom. Ms. Scott explained:

The language thing is key...I think that posting things in your room with information for undocumented students, mentioning undocumented students a lot, resources available to them, and normalizing that experience—kind of challenging the notion that—even exposing your kids

⁹ Members of the research team included Aliza Fones, Mee Joo Kim, Natasha Hakimali Merchant, and Adebowale Adekile.

to language choices is actually great.

Highlighting scholarships for undocumented youth served a dual purpose: first, it communicated important college pathway knowledge of actual resources to students who are routinely excluded from consideration of scholarships, and second, it signaled not only her awareness that undocumented students may be in her classroom (and her stance as someone communicating resources available to them) but it also served as a signal to others that their status was not the only one that existed. Additionally, by signaling her awareness and support, students would then approach her and at times disclose their status. Once they disclosed their status, she connected them with additional resources, and to on-site personnel (especially the advisor to the Latina/o Club who had become a local expert on helping undocumented students apply to college.) Given the heterogeneity of Ms. Scott's class (including non-immigrant students, immigrant "legal" residents and citizens, and undocumented immigrant youth), her signaling moves allowed undocumented students to come to Ms. Scott on their own terms. At the same time, her acknowledgement of undocumented students made them less invisible when others assumed they did not exist. Ms. Scott recognized status explicitly not only for the benefit of undocumented youth's safety, but also to challenge discourses of silence and invisibility.

Understandings, Emerging Areas, and Continuing Tensions

Through our focus on teachers' navigation of documentation status, we have illustrated different ways Mr. Domenico and Ms. Scott broke normative silences at their school sites. In thinking about breaking silences more broadly, we depart from our ethnographic vignettes to draw upon our wider ethnographic research on the subject, as well as the emerging literature on this matter, in order to discuss the larger issues we see in the intersection of undocumented status and teacher practice. First we highlight understandings about undocumented status issues that for us are concrete. Second, we highlight key areas of focus that are emerging. Third, we turn to the ambiguities and tensions—places of continuing uncertainty that are far from resolved.

Understandings

Here we focus on key understandings that we think will help teachers better serve undocumented youth:

1) Undocumented youth have educational rights. Despite the spectrum of views that teachers may have regarding immigration debates, the *Plyler* Supreme Court decision clearly establishes educational rights for undocumented children in the US. *Plyler* is a starting place for acknowledging the need to educate all youth, regardless of their documentation status. Beyond the *Plyler* decision, others have contributed to understanding the issue in a broader domain: education is a human right (López & López, 2010; UNESCO, 1960).

2) (II)legality is a social construct. (II)legality, despite having real consequences for individuals, families, and communities, is a larger societal phenomenon that involves boundary maintenance: decisions of inclusion and exclusion (see Faltis, 2012; Ngai, 2004). This means that those who have traditionally wielded more power have at particular moments made decisions—not because legal definitions are necessarily intrinsically sound or moral, but because they have had access to being decision-makers. (The writings of Martin Luther King Jr. [e.g., 1964] have contributed to making the distinction between what is right and what is legal.) Boundaries can be arbitrary. During the 1920's immigration debates (which coincided with the eugenics movement), people with epilepsy were excluded because they were seen as undesirable (Dabach, 1996). At the same time, immigration debates have historically been linked with larger issues of race, colonization, and exploitation, and currently are bound with larger processes of inequality and globalization.

3) Undocumented people can be of any background and may be fluent English speakers. Although, as we noted earlier, Latina/o immigrants are disproportionately impacted by undocumented status, most Latina/os who live in the U.S. are U.S.-born and have citizenship rights. Recent revelations of the award-winning Filipino-American journalist José Antonio Vargas put a public face on the plight of undocumented youth such as himself (2011). His case and others also demonstrate how many undocumented youth are high achieving and college-going. Moreover, White immigrants are also represented among undocumented populations; for example, current Irish undocumented migration continues, yet typically Irish immigrants are not the targets for

raids or stereotyped as undocumented (Rodríguez, 2007).

4) Undocumented status shows up in different ways across life stages. Research in early childhood (Yoshikawa, 2011) demonstrates clear impacts of parental undocumented status on youth, and additional scholarship highlights how youth in middle childhood are impacted by status issues (Gallo, 2014; Mangual Figueroa, 2011). Yet with adolescence, new challenges emerge: undocumented status becomes especially salient during normative rites of passage (getting a driver's license, dating, transition to work or college, etc.) (Allard, 2013; Gonzales, 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Key Areas of Emerging Focus

Building from these understandings, we turn now to three areas of focus that have emerged in our scholarship as significant areas that intersect with teachers' practice:

Emotional safety.

As the teachers in our studies demonstrated to us, addressing issues of emotional safety are critical. Beyond the normalizing moves we illustrated earlier which validated undocumented youth and helped make undocumented status visible, we highlight additional issues. First, during heightened deportation threats, youth may be fearful of detainment of themselves or a family member. Second, because immigration is at times a subject of debate in classrooms, undocumented youth may face situations where classmates (or teachers) may invalidate their presence (while either knowing or not knowing of youth's actual circumstances). Having a classroom building and maintaining climates that protects youth's physical and emotional safety is critical. Sometimes hurtful language which is often normatively used in media (i.e., "illegal") shows up in classrooms as well, or in informal conversations when peers may mock undocumented youth (or youth who are assumed to be undocumented) (Jefferies, 2014b). We see a clear need for conscientiousness in regards to classroom and school climate that affects youth's emotional safety.

Additionally, if students "out" themselves while seeking support, there is a possibility that they may feel especially vulnerable, depending on how open they are about their circumstances. The need for discretion (and for example, paying attention to who else is in the room or within earshot) when speaking about individual students' circumstances is also important. However, students' sense of vulnerability in being "out" may vary greatly due to many factors. Increasingly, some youth are deliberately out and take a stance of "undocumented and unafraid" (Galindo, 2012), forming part of social movements. And, to add to the complexity, some youth may be out to different sets of people (i.e., out to their science teacher, but not their English teacher.) Having a sense of which youth are "out" (or to whom) can be helpful in avoiding accidental disclosures that may increase students' sense of emotional stress and risk.

Channeling resources and building local networks.

Teachers are not legal or financial aid experts. Yet once students disclose their status they may seek help from trusted adults at school to help them navigate through these areas. Because tuition and college pathway situations vary greatly from state to state, it is helpful to connect to local advocacy groups that are informed. Often within local communities, networks develop and local knowledge accumulates regarding how to navigate systems. In some settings, a teacher or other school adult (i.e., librarian, coach) may become especially knowledgeable hubs of information and have embedded community ties that help students once they disclose their status. Building local networks of those that are knowledgeable about documentation status is critical to being able to serve students well, especially because local policies and resources vary substantially (i.e., from state to state, county to county, etc.).

Creating spaces of empowerment.

Spaces of empowerment occur when, beyond having a safe space, youth can collectively share resources and organize. Sometimes these spaces may emerge in school clubs. Sometimes they may emerge in alternative settings. As noted earlier, youth are spearheading growing movements where they have staged collective actions (S.I.N. Collective, 2007). Still unclear, though, is under what circumstances youth are able to develop empowering stances towards documentation status, or how teachers can enact curriculum that actually results in youth building systematic critiques of the current system.

Tensions in teacher practice.

Our studies begin to shed light on the intersection of teacher practice and documentation status; however, because this terrain is marked by ambiguity and is under-researched, much remains unresolved. Here we articulate some tensions in terms of teachers' uptake of practices in different contexts. In particular, issues of how teachers enact practices (whether inside or outside classrooms) continues to be an area that needs additional consideration. The ways real-time situations unfold can be highly variable and contingent upon many factors that include teachers': interpersonal skills and sensitivity in picking up information in context; deep knowledge of students and communities; understanding state laws and practices; access to and knowledge of resources (scholarships for undocumented youth, legal counseling, and community organizing networks); and of critical importance, the degree of trust between teachers and students.

An important tension arises when teachers of immigrants try to approach migration status without putting students at risk or singling them out. The teachers in our studies were able to do this in ways that helped youth obtain vital resources and made social and material differences in students' lives. As our vignettes illustrate, teachers who served youth were able to combine a deep knowledge about their students' out-of-school lives with a classroom approach that made undocumented youth visible and comfortable to share their status with trusted adults. As noted earlier, it is not prudent to assume that students are undocumented because of how they look, their level of spoken English, or any other marker. Rather, our teachers created an atmosphere where students felt safe opening up through the skillful use of language, by signaling moves. Ways that teachers can break normative silences include: making undocumented youth scholarships visible, mentioning the contributions of undocumented people, and noting immigration policy changes (such as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals [DACA] motion).¹⁰

In the event that students do open up to teachers about their status, one initial aspect that helps teachers help students is being well-informed about resources their local contexts. Some questions that may orient teachers in other contexts include:

- Does the school have a student group that advocates for (or with) undocumented youth? Does the school have access to professionals who can counsel students (i.e., school counselors, paralegals, or others)? If not, is it possible for school staff to advocate for resources for creating positions to assist youth, or partner with other organizations that already provide services?
- What immigrant rights organizations (or other groups like churches or mosques) are working for undocumented students' rights and are well informed about pending policy issues at different levels (i.e., national, state, local)?
- Does the state have a policy for in-state tuition for public universities? If so, which students does it include or exclude?

If teachers investigate these questions within their local contexts, they will be better prepared to serve their students on occasions when students disclose status.

Implications and Future Work

¹⁰ DACA gives some undocumented youth from ages 16 to 30 a reprieve from deportation and a temporary work permit. For more information, see <http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process>

There is a great need to address the intersections of teachers' work and documentation status. Documentation status is not only about undocumented youth, but also citizen youth from mixed-status families, temporarily documented people, and youth whose citizenship rights (and that of their families and communities) are secure. In a similar vein to research on multicultural education that asserts that multicultural education is not only for students of color (e.g., Banks, 1993), we argue here for the development of a broader social awareness of the liminal status of undocumented families, as well as the historical and contemporary circumstances in which they are situated.

In addition to broader understandings of documentation status, we also see a great need to better develop a pedagogical-conceptual terrain for this area that tends to be hidden within schools—yet still has great consequences for youth and families. Our piece has offered a beginning. LGBTQ dynamics also parallel some of the same processes in teaching and working with undocumented youth, especially concerning (a) the variability surrounding which students are “out,” to whom, and under what circumstances, and (b) the ways in which normative silencing has occurred regarding queer issues, especially in schools, where the issues are nevertheless ever-present. Future work can examine the similarities and differences between these populations (including undocuqueer youth who are members of both communities) and draw from work that is already underway (e.g., Mayo, 2013; Seif, 2014). In addition to seeing how some of the pedagogical-conceptual terrain has been developed in relation to groups that face similar dynamics, additional scholarship beyond education may be useful. For example, how have other professions that are similar in some ways to teaching (e.g., social work), dealt with documentation status issues? Furman et al. (2012) have specifically examined social workers' value conflicts in relation to undocumented immigration policy, for example. Perhaps moving forward, teacher education can grapple with ways of addressing teachers' potential value conflicts in relation to documentation status. Teacher education is well-placed in teachers' learning trajectories to process value conflicts; it is preferable for teacher candidates to think about these issues before they are teachers of record in settings where they may have less space and resources to consider working through their dilemmas. Finally, drawing from McDonald et al.'s (2013) scholarship on innovative partnerships between teacher education and community-based organizations (CBOs), we see a vital place for partnerships with CBOs that may be able to help teacher candidates develop relationships with organizations that may be most knowledgeable about documentation status issues within local communities.

Conclusion

As teacher education programs increasingly include coursework on “diverse” learners, including “English learners,” this article articulates the need for teacher education to account for more than linguistic and cultural differences, but documentation status differences as well. Without careful thought about how issues of potential citizenship status disparities are best dealt with, they are likely to be unaddressed, handled unskillfully, or left to teachers' own idiosyncratic efforts. We call for additional work to investigate what kinds of approaches would best serve teacher candidates and their students. In closing, we reiterate the need to break silences. Although silencing is the norm in many contexts, teachers and teacher educators can potentially break the silences associated with undocumented status in a variety of ways that better serve youth. Teachers are in important positions with respect to providing information about youth's educational rights in K-12 schools, transitions to college, and in connecting youth to organizations or people in school settings who are knowledgeable about legal resources. What is at stake is providing a more humanizing schooling experience that works toward fulfilling a vision of a more inclusive society.

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