

Unauthorized Education: Challenging Borders between Good and Bad Immigrants

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Abstract

This article presents a case study that examines how undocumented youth reject notions that, as students, they are more deserving of state-granted rights (e.g., citizenship, but also temporary rights through DACA). It highlights the use of what I call undocumented pedagogy as a form of everyday activism for greater immigrant rights. This unauthorized pedagogy largely takes place outside of the classroom and disrupts traditional hierarchies within education. Through offering informational workshops and providing personal testimonies among other educational activities, undocumented students in this study aim to 1) broaden access to rights for the larger undocumented immigrant community and 2) challenge negative preconceived notions about undocumented immigrants among citizens. These are key elements to moving forward the struggle for immigrant rights.

Coming Out of the Shadows

The bell tower at the center of campus casts a long shadow on this sunny day in April 2014. Administrators in suits mingle with staff and the few faculty members who are spending their lunch hour here. While some undergraduates sit at attention, others mill around talking to friends. Still other students speed by on bicycles and scooters, craning their necks to see and hear what is happening. Members of PODER (Providing Opportunities, Dreams, and Education in Riverside), the undocumented student advocacy group on campus, are giving their testimonios as part of an event they are calling “Coming Out of the Shadows.” A young man with dark hair and expressive eyes takes the microphone and introduces himself. “My name is Beto, and I am an undocumented student.”¹ He is clean cut and athletic looking; on another day you might expect him to be recruiting members for a fraternity on campus. He tells the group at the bell tower about a conversation that he had with a cousin—his childhood best friend—who, like him, resides in this country without legal documentation. Because Beto committed himself to school and his cousin had not, the two drifted apart as teenagers. One day they ran into each other at the intersection of two streets in their neighborhood in Orange County. Upon seeing that Beto was carrying several books with him, the cousin asked, “Beto, why are you carrying all that?” Beto responded, “Well, man, I have to study for my AP exams. I have to really do my work.” Then his cousin said, “I don’t get it, man. Why do you continue studying? You know that you can’t do anything with it, and if you graduate, what are we going to do? Where are you going to work? How are we going to work? You’ve got to think about that Beto.” At this point in his story, Beto paused, allowing his words to reverberate and settle into the air while we who are listening are struck by the apparent hopelessness of Beto’s situation. Finally he continued, “You might be right, but for me, I’m just going to keep on trying. I don’t know why, but I’m just going to keep on doing my work.”

Beto’s story demonstrates the very fine line between the undocumented migrant that society deems deserving of citizenship because of his decision to pursue higher education and the members of his extended family who society deems undeserving. In his testimonio, Beto primarily focuses on a conversation with his cousin, who we understand has opted to forgo school for work. In his testimonio, Beto emphasizes that he and his cousin are similar in many ways. They come from the same community in Orange County; they are the same age; they are part of the same extended family; and they are both undocumented. As far as we can tell, the difference between them is that Beto has chosen to believe that something good will result from his choice to pursue school. He is choosing to be optimistic about an immigration system that exploits peoples’ labor without guarantees of rights, regularly separates families through practices of deportation, and does not reward the investment that undocumented migrants make in their communities. Beto knows that his choice to pursue school does not make sense to his cousin, and Beto does not distinguish himself as different, better, or more deserving than him. Instead, he crafts a testimonio that captures the ways that particular subjectivities lead

¹ All of the names of undocumented students in this article have been changed to pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

undocumented immigrants to make different choices that result in diverging life circumstances.

This article presents a case study that illustrates the complex subjectivities and the pedagogical imperatives of the undocumented student group at the University of California at Riverside, PODER (Providing Opportunities, Dreams, and Education in Riverside). As Beto's testimonio suggests, undocumented students grapple with the exceptionality that society grants them as students. While mainstream media regularly labels undocumented immigrants as "illegals," it labels young people like Beto as "DREAMers." Undocumented students at UCR never express the sentiment that they are more deserving than other undocumented immigrants, especially considering that the "other" unauthorized people are often their own family members and friends. I argue that, for this reason, undocumented students at UCR use their positions as university students to create spaces of learning outside of the classroom to accomplish two key imperatives. First, through events such as Coming Out of the Shadows, PODER students teach the general public about the life circumstances of undocumented people in their community. The goal of such events is to cultivate citizen allies who will support humane, comprehensive immigration reform. Second, PODER students actively teach other members of the undocumented community how to access the rights and resources that are available to them through state and federal policies. In this way, undocumented students at UCR use their own knowledge and political capital to increase access to rights that progressive immigration policies make available to the larger undocumented community.

This article also examines undocumented pedagogy as a central part of PODER's activism. PODER planned the Coming Out of the Shadows event as part of Immigrant Awareness week, a week of activities and discussions that highlighted the circumstances of undocumented immigrant communities. In its inaugural year (2014), Immigrant Awareness Week was one of the group's bigger events, but members regularly facilitate smaller events that teach about resources available to the undocumented community, often translating federal and state policies that affect the undocumented immigrant community. When these occur on campus, they are geared toward students, staff, and administrators. However, PODER's events frequently take place off campus, where members of the group can engage with the broader undocumented community who might benefit from the information they present. By using the resources available to them as university students and educating their communities, they facilitate an important kind of public pedagogy that decenters traditional teacher-student power relationships and effectively disseminates critical information about the undocumented community. By raising consciousness and inspiring people to take action, this undocumented pedagogy cultivates the liberatory potential of education, the potential to change society from the bottom-up.

Undocumented Students in Higher Education

Latino/a immigration scholars have long abandoned theories that immigrant assimilation occurs in a linear fashion. Latino/a immigrants' race, class, and gender positionalities as well as their receiving communities all affect assimilation.² The literature reveals that for undocumented youth, particularly the 1.5 generation, the school system is a powerful institution that shapes immigrant incorporation.³ Scholars argue that during their K-12 education, undocumented youth are treated as de facto citizens because of their equal access to public education per the Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe* (Gonzales, 2011). Furthermore, completing primary education in the U.S. inculcates young undocumented immigrants with the same cultural knowledge as their American-born peers (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Perez, 2012). This illusion of inclusion is shattered as undocumented youth near the end of high school when they face realities of limited access to higher education and the job market (Abrego 2006; Abrego and Gonzales 2010; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012). The expense of a college education and limited financial aid preclude many undocumented youth from enrolling in college after high school. Upon graduation, the same institution that shaped their identities as American then casts out undocumented students as foreigners who often have to pay out of state tuition rates to enroll in their local institutions. As they move from childhood to young adulthood, scholars have demonstrated that undocumented youth must contend with the stigma of "illegality" and must learn to live without the protections that K-12 education provided them (Abrego 2008; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012).

A key aspect of the literature on undocumented students in higher education is about civic engagement

2 For recent examples of Latino/a immigrant assimilation theory, see Jimenez (2010) and Zavella (2011).

3 I use this term to refer to immigrants who were born in another country but have been educated primarily in the United States.

and activism, in particular how undocumented students use civic engagement and activism as a way to push for immigration reform. Gonzales (2008) offers important analysis about how undocumented students increasingly become activists as young adults. He argues that after high school, undocumented students have fewer opportunities for political engagement (e.g., they cannot vote; they cannot serve on juries). At the same time, if they have matriculated to college, their political resources deepen, as do the social networks that might inspire and instruct political involvement. This combination of factors often mobilizes undocumented students to become activists. Scholars have carefully traced undocumented youth involvement in the immigrant rights movement in terms of its messages and the political strategies and tactics that undocumented youth have used (Negrón-Gonzales, 2015; Nicholls, 2013).

While this important literature focuses on students' work in mounting protests, civil disobedience, and political organizing, little has been written about undocumented students' everyday forms of activism. My research at UC Riverside reveals that a major characteristic of the undocumented student movement involves educating and informing the community about issues facing undocumented people as well as rights and resources available to them. While these actions can be understood as everyday activism, I argue that this kind of community organizing dovetails with public pedagogy to create what I call undocumented pedagogy. Undocumented pedagogy describes how undocumented students assume roles as *teachers*, educating immigrants and citizens outside of traditional spaces of learning (e.g., the school system) about immigrant issues using platforms such as public testimonios, workshops, panel presentations, and conferences. While the literature about undocumented students in higher education has generally focused on undocumented youth's experiences as *students*, this research expands such notions to include their experiences as *teachers*. When undocumented students teach, they challenge the borders that limit access to the university as well as the hierarchical borders that exist within the institution.

I argue that PODER students use undocumented pedagogy as a way to create spaces of possibility for the larger undocumented community. This pedagogical approach takes education out of the classroom and into alternate spaces; it challenges hierarchies between teachers and students; and it rests between teaching undocumented people how to navigate federal and state immigration policies and encouraging citizens to think beyond the ways that the state constructs legality. It is an undocumented pedagogy not only because undocumented students put it to use, but also because it is an unsanctioned attempt to challenge boundaries between teacher and student in the struggle for immigrant rights. The long-term goal of undocumented pedagogy is humane and comprehensive immigration reform, but the short term goals are to teach migrants how to navigate state bureaucracy with regard to ever-changing state immigration policies and to cultivate citizen support for federal immigration reform.

The concept of undocumented pedagogy draws from theories of public pedagogy as well as Freirian notions of liberatory education. Though theories about public pedagogy are broad-reaching, scholars generally agree that it promotes the idea that "schools are not the sole sites of teaching, learning, or curricula, and that perhaps they are not even the most influential" (Sandlin, Schultz, & Burdick, 2010). One of the most prolific theorists of public pedagogy, Henry Giroux (1994), posits that public pedagogy can signify sites of unconventional learning that challenge the ways that capitalist culture undermines democracy. Indeed in the introduction to their *Handbook of Public Pedagogy* (2010), Sandlin, Schultz and Burdick assert that public pedagogy "reframes inquiry into the relationships among pedagogy, democracy, and social action—regardless of where these relationships occur" (p. 3-4). The intersection between teaching/learning, social justice, and activism defines the heart of the work that UCR undocumented students perform in the UCR community and beyond. Undocumented pedagogy creates alternative and oppositional spaces of learning. By educating immigrants how to maneuver through immigration policy and educating citizens about the complexities of the immigration debate, undocumented students open possibilities of social agency and, by extension, greater democracy, one that represents the voices and concerns of more people who reside within the borders of the United States.

Undocumented pedagogy rests firmly within Freire's theories about how education can be both liberatory and transformational as a practice that recognizes the many ways that knowledge is embodied and disseminated. He asserts that in the process of education, we must recognize that teachers and students engage in an exchange of knowledge such that "both [groups] are simultaneously teachers *and* students" (Freire, 2000, p. 72). Drawing from the resources of their university education (both in and outside of the classroom), this case study reveals

that undocumented students regularly assume teaching roles both on and off campus in order to educate people about issues that are salient to the undocumented community. While these actions are significant, it is but one piece of a pedagogy whose goal is societal transformation, particularly in terms of humane and comprehensive immigration reform. Other aspects of this pedagogy include “problem posing,” which in this case is manifested by challenging people’s limited ideas about what it means to be undocumented in this country among both citizens and unauthorized immigrants. While some citizens hail from communities where they have personal relationships with undocumented people, many do not; members of PODER aim to educate the latter group, whose views may be narrowly informed by negative media representations. They also recognize that even unauthorized immigrants internalize negative images of their community and limited notions of their possibilities. For these reason, undocumented pedagogy is critical to generate what Freire (2000) calls “the emergence of consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality” (p. 81, emphasis original). Indeed undocumented pedagogy is meant to inform and to challenge, but it is ultimately meant to transform the way that undocumented immigrants exist in U.S. society.

Undocumented pedagogy is at the heart of undocumented action at UCR as a unique blend of everyday activism and public pedagogy. PODER members draw knowledge as well as social and political connections from the university in order to advocate for their communities (Gonzales, 2008). Though they are students, they assume the role of teachers as they create spaces of learning outside of the classroom. They share their navigational capital with other undocumented immigrant youth and families, and they challenge citizens to rethink their perceptions of the undocumented community and, by extension, to rethink their approach to comprehensive immigration reform.⁴ This form of teaching—undocumented pedagogy—is an essential part of propelling forward the movement for immigrant rights.

Methodology

This article is based on ongoing fieldwork with the undocumented student community at the University of California, Riverside (UCR). As a professor in the Department of Ethnic Studies and as someone who has been allied with the office of Chicano Student Programs over the past nine years, I have made many informal connections with undocumented students on campus. With the encouragement of two undocumented students, I approached the leadership of PODER to ask if I could conduct fieldwork with the group. After those conversations, I applied for and received IRB approval to conduct research. I then acquired collective consent from the group to begin research in the Fall of 2013; the following school year (2014-2015), I again requested and received collective consent to continue my study with the new and returning members of the group. My ongoing fieldwork includes attending PODER’s regular weekly meetings, events they sponsor on campus (e.g., their annual conference for undocumented high school students, California DREAM Act workshops), and some of the meetings that they have with university administrators. Off campus, I also accompanied group members to presentations and workshops in Riverside and in neighboring communities. To supplement my fieldwork, I have conducted twelve qualitative interviews with eight undocumented members of PODER. These open-ended interviews focused on understanding the purpose of PODER and each student’s involvement with the PODER. Interviews were recorded and lasted between 45 minutes to two hours.

I recognize that, especially as a professor at the university where these students attend, my relationship to students in the group can be as a friend, a mentor, a professor, and/or as an ally. As a researcher, I am keenly aware of the power differential that is embedded in each of these relationship configurations, and I take seriously the process of research return (Velasquez, 2015; Hale, 2001). My interpretation of research return is both academic and service-oriented. First, I share my writing with the group prior to publication and invite feedback. In this way, I ensure transparency and open the possibility for collaboration. Second, I make myself available for any service that the group requires, such as speaking at conferences or events, providing academic advice to students, and sitting on scholarship committees in order to help them fulfill some of their logistical needs.

⁴ See Yosso (2006) for an in-depth discussion of navigational capital.

Blurring the Boundaries between “Good” and “Bad” Immigrants

Undocumented student members of PODER at UC Riverside use undocumented pedagogy to actively blur the boundaries between so-called good and bad immigrants. While the concept of undocumented pedagogy encompasses a range of political and pedagogical actions, for the purposes of this article, I focus on two major methods that PODER students use to challenge the false binary between those immigrants who deserve citizenship and those who do not. The first of these practices is through actively and publicly giving their testimonios to challenge public understandings of undocumented immigration; the second is by teaching their fellow undocumented community members how to navigate the state and federal immigration policies that directly impact them. Before my discussion of PODER, I will provide context by detailing how student activists, particularly in California have shaped the immigrant rights movement.

The DREAM of Immigration Reform

Students have played a central role in the immigrant rights movement since the early 2000s. The creation of the DREAMer as a collective subject successfully challenged and broadened popular understandings of the immigrant community and, more importantly, who would benefit from immigration reform. Though in many ways effective, the DREAMer prototype had the unintended consequence of casting one cross section of the immigrant community as “good” and another as “bad,” particularly during the first decade of the twentieth century. While that began to change after 2010, undocumented students at UCR struggled with the message of an immigrant rights movement that was meant to benefit them, but was dissonant with their personal relationships. Keenly aware of the fine, even porous, line that separated so-called good from bad immigrants, these students often used their families as a way to anchor their political subject positionalities.

From 2000 to 2010, the DREAMer emerged as a politicized subject with a very carefully crafted profile. Mostly of the 1.5 generation, they had not made the decision to migrate; their parents had made that decision for them. In other words, they had not willingly broken any immigration laws. Even though they did not have legal documentation, they represented themselves as “all American” youth.⁵ It was a profile and a narrative that appealed to conservatives and liberals alike. DREAMers and their particular kind of activism were part of a carefully planned political strategy to pass the DREAM Act, one piece of what would hopefully lead to federal comprehensive immigration reform. Though focusing on DREAMers made political sense, it also positioned these young people against immigrants who had willingly chosen to migrate and those who did not graduate at the top of their high school class, or did not graduate at all. By emphasizing how these students deserved citizenship, the implicit message was that other undocumented immigrants were undeserving. Certainly, not all undocumented activist youth in the movement accepted such rigid categorizations of themselves or of their community. While these youth fought within the movement to broaden the struggle for immigrant rights, other undocumented youth chose to invest their political energy in different arenas.

Alba, a PODER alumna from Orange County, was active in her high school’s student organizations and approached her matriculation to UC Riverside with a desire to be politically involved. However, she initially eschewed participation in the undocumented student movement precisely because she was uncomfortable with its exclusivity. She recalls:

Generally speaking, I did not like being involved in undocumented groups just because they were a little ... it was a little too focused on the undocumented student rather than the broader prospect. It was very much push for the DREAM Act, push for relief. And it was a little, “let’s throw our parents under the bus” sometimes. And so I had conflicting views. Not with PODER necessarily, it was just the general movement. So I generally didn’t like being involved in the undocumented student movement because of that.

Alba critiques what she perceives as the narrow political goals of the initial DREAMer movement that excluded and even vilified undocumented parents. On the other hand, she felt conflicted because she knew that—as

⁵ Perez’s book *American by Heart* (2012) demonstrates how undocumented high school students used civic engagement to cultivate an outward presentation of Americanness.

an undocumented student—the movement was meant to benefit her. Ultimately, she decided to commit her limited time and political energy into labor union organizing on campus.⁶ Invoking her family and its connection to labor, she states, “My parents did come from a union, they worked for unions. My grandparents were bracero workers. So there was that kind of connection to labor that I had.” Rather than invest in a political movement that she perceived to be disparaging to her parents, she turned to the union, whose political goals seemed broad enough to benefit the immigrant community as a whole.

Fissures in the DREAMer political strategy became apparent after 2010, when many undocumented youth activists broke with their traditional supporters by crafting new images and promoting more radical politics (Nicholls, 2013). Undocumented youth championed the “undocumented and unafraid” movement; an overlapping group highlighted their intersectional identities by coining the term, “undocuqueer.”⁷ Both of these rhetorical shifts signaled that undocumented youth activists were not separating themselves within the phenomenon of family migration. On the contrary, they challenged what they perceived to be unjust immigration laws that allowed for the exploitation of immigrant labor but refused to grant civil rights. In 2013, slogans and images began to circulate emphasizing that undocumented parents were the “original dreamers.” With the new rhetoric came new goals. Rather than focus solely on the DREAM Act, legislation that would only benefit a limited number of undocumented youth, activists began to push for humane, comprehensive immigration reform. To achieve these goals, undocumented youth adopted more confrontational tactics, such as sitting in at their congressional representatives’ offices and purposefully trying to be detained by ICE—Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Nicholls, 2013). In this way, undocumented young people began to actively challenge the border between “good” and “bad” immigrants and to push for social justice.

Undocumented at UC Riverside

Within California’s conservative Inland Empire, UC Riverside undocumented students were generally removed from many of the more radical politics of the immigrant rights movement during the first decade of the twenty first century.⁸ Modeled after already existing programs in the UC system, PODER was established in the Spring of 2008 for the purpose of providing a safe space to support undocumented students at UCR, to provide community members both on and off campus information about relevant immigration legislation, and to provide scholarships for undocumented students.⁹ During the organization’s first several years, it was working with extremely limited institutional and financial support. However, because of broad-based UC undocumented student activism, UC Riverside undocumented students have recently begun to benefit from a commitment by Janet Napolitano to allocate \$5 million over three years to fund scholarships and programming for undocumented students.¹⁰ On the UCR campus this has translated into student scholarships, emergency loans, programming, and the employment of a student affairs officer specially trained in undocumented issues. Additionally, the recently passed California DREAM Act enables undocumented students to apply for state-based financial aid as well as private scholarships. These scholarships and services are available to the nearly 300 undocumented undergraduates who enrolled at UC Riverside in the Fall of 2014, a student population that has more than quadrupled over the past four years.¹¹ These scholarships and services in conjunction with the establishment of an Undocumented Student Programs office have created a campus environment that is more positive than it was in the early days of PODER.

6 Like many undocumented students, particularly before the California DREAM Act was passed, Alba worked several hours a week to pay her way through school. During her first year at UCR, she was working 35 hours a week while attending school full time.

7 See Terriguez (2015) for an excellent analysis of the undocuqueer movement within the immigrant rights movement.

8 Some of the more politicized students attended actions, particularly in Los Angeles.

9 PODER constitution

10 News of Napolitano’s appointment as the new president of the UC system triggered student protests on several campuses. Undocumented student leaders cited fears of deportation given her previous position as director of Homeland Security. In the wake of these student protests, Napolitano established an undocumented student task force and committed \$5 million dollars over three years to undocumented students enrolled in the UC system (http://abcnews.go.com/ABC_Univision/undocumented-students-describe-fears-napolitano-uc-president/story?id=19731262).

11 personal communication, Bryce Mason, 2/25/15

Testimonio as Pedagogy

Within the context of UC Riverside, a common aspect of undocumented pedagogy involves the use of testimonio to challenge the boundaries between so-called good and bad immigrants. Sharing one's personal story through testimonio is an important tool that subjugated communities use to show far-reaching impact of the state on people's lives. While generally testimonios are understood as individual life stories, Negrón-Gonzales (2014) reminds us that "creating and sharing *testimonio* is a practice of reflecting on one's own life and connecting one's own personal experience to broader social and political context" (p. 272). Indeed testimonios are not gratuitous tales of self; they are significant for the ways that they illuminate larger social, economic, and political processes. I argue that undocumented students use their testimonios to challenge the criminalization of undocumented immigrants who, for myriad reasons, are not enrolled in institutions of higher education, including members of their own families. These testimonios not only render undocumented student stories public, they also encourage listeners to understand that undocumented students are embedded in and buttressed by social relationships with other undocumented people, many of whom do not fit the good immigrant prototype. In other words, students' deservingness of citizenship does not emerge in a vacuum; it is forged in the cauldron of an undocumented immigrant community that is under siege.

The opening of this article highlights a young man giving his testimonio at the bell tower of the university. I emphasized how Beto compared himself to his cousin as a way to demonstrate the easy slippages between deserving and undeserving immigrants in relation to education. It is important to note the frequency with which PODER students refer to their families to illustrate injustices within the immigration system. Beto's testimonio focuses on his relationship with his cousin and the starkly different life paths that they chose despite their very similar circumstances growing up together. Other students often refer to the struggles and sacrifices of their parents within their testimonios. This frequent invocation of family demonstrates not only the intimate connections between so-called good and bad immigrants, it also challenges those borders altogether.

I have heard Miriam give her testimonio several times over the past few years at the events that PODER organizes both on and off campus. Though sometimes she emphasizes certain points over others, she always talks about her parents' decision to migrate. Miriam's story is unique because it was her medical condition that compelled her family to migrate. She was born with a floating spine, missing three vertebrae and her tailbone; this condition affected her leg muscles and nerves such that doctors in Mexico told her parents that Miriam would never walk or even be able to sit up. In fact, they predicted that she would spend her entire life lying down. She recounts, "My parents paid thousands of dollars on specialists and none of them could give them any answers." Then her parents heard about Shriners Hospital for Children in Los Angeles as a place that could potentially help. They flew to Los Angeles with Miriam for a consultation, and the doctors at Shriners told the family that they could do a series of operations that would enable their daughter to walk. By the age of three, after several surgeries, Miriam was walking. While this was a medical victory, it would not be the end of her treatment. She states, "Once [my parents] realized that the medical care would be ongoing, they were like, 'Okay, well, let's move here,' because the one thing that my parents cared about [was] my ... wellbeing." To date, Miriam has undergone eleven surgeries and, with the help of leg braces, traverses the campus by foot and scooter.

In her narrative, Miriam focuses on the urgency of her family's situation; Mexican doctors predicted that her parents' newborn daughter would spend her entire life bedridden. In a recent speech on campus, Miriam spoke about how her parents had a good life in Mexico. They were educated, professional, and they had an affinity for travel. They had strong family and community ties. However, they were willing to sacrifice all of those things in their home country so that their daughter would have a chance to walk and live a more normal life. By highlighting her parents' point of view in her testimonio, Miriam complicates the idea of good and bad immigrants. Though the choice to migrate and overstay a visa might be viewed as bad and, indeed, "illegal," she asserts the inherent goodness of parents who would make such a choice—a choice that involved a great deal of sacrifice—for the wellbeing of their child.

DACA and the DREAMers

Though over the past five years undocumented activist youth, including Beto and Miriam, have resisted facile representations of good and bad immigrants, the image of the law-abiding, all-American DREAMer remains a powerful political tool. Two years after the undocumented youth movement began to take more militant actions, and in the last few months of his re-election campaign, President Obama announced Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Issued as an executive order, DACA provided relief from deportation for immigrant youth who fit the original DREAMer profile. Eligible DACA youth could receive a social security number, which would enable them the ability to apply for jobs and obtain drivers licenses. Eligibility was restricted to those immigrants (under the age of 31) who had arrived in the United States before the age of 16, had graduated high school or completed a GED, and had no serious criminal record.¹² In other words, even while activist youth were challenging the DREAMer prototype for its unfair exclusion of the other cross sections of the immigrant community, the introduction of DACA created a legal division among undocumented immigrants, solely granting rights to those youth who did not choose to migrate, finished school, and maintained a clean record.

Despite the mixed implications of DACA, many undocumented youth, particularly college students, have benefitted from its implementation.¹³ Recent quantitative and qualitative studies have outlined some of the benefits of DACA, including enabling undocumented youth better jobs, drivers licenses, and a sense of security that they will not be deported (Martinez, 2014; Teranishi, C. Suárez-Orozco, & M. Suárez Orozco, 2015). Though many—but not all—undocumented PODER students are now “DACAmended,” they have not been rendered politically complacent. Valeria reflects on how PODER has helped her to remain vigilant despite legislative gains that benefit her. She states:

We’re in this together, and there’s more people [than those with DACA]. I think if PODER wasn’t there, it would have been easy for me to be just like, ‘Well the California DREAM Act worked out, and I have DACA, and I can work, so I don’t need to care about this issue anymore because I’m good.’ [The group has] prohibited me from going to that type of mentality... It’s more like, ‘Yes, I have these two things, but I need to be extremely grateful that I have them and be aware of the fact that they’re temporary, and they can be changed.’ And that there’s others that for one reason or another might not have fit into the categories, and there’s others like our parents that are still struggling. And there’s still a lack in what we can have as ‘almost citizens.’

Valeria emphasizes the importance of PODER in keeping her accountable to the larger undocumented community and attentive to quickly shifting legislative politics. In her narrative, she recognizes that while the policies that currently benefit her particular cross section of the undocumented community are good, they are temporary, and they are still only a fraction of the rights that citizens enjoy. For this reason, Valeria along with other member of PODER remain politically aware and active in pressing for greater immigrant rights. Furthermore, it is important to note that Valeria does not distinguish herself as more deserving than those members of her community who “for one reason or another” do not fit into the categories for DACAmended status, including her parents. The categories of good and bad immigrant do not exist for Valeria; rather, for her, being undocumented is a shifting borderlands identity that requires political and tactical vigilance. For this reason, a key part of the PODER agenda and its undocumented pedagogy is to educate citizens through their testimonios about the situations and struggles of undocumented people within the borders of the United States.

Family Defenders

While the use of testimonio can be a powerful pedagogical tool to blur the boundaries between “good” and “bad” immigrants, it is but one way that PODER students use pedagogy to empower the undocumented community as a whole. This section explores how students teach members of their community to navigate

¹² Immigrant youth who had been honorably discharged from the armed services were also eligible.

¹³ See Gonzales et al., 2014.

state and federal policies that affect undocumented people. Drawing from the formal education and the political resources that the university provides, undocumented students learn to navigate the bureaucracy of the state, especially in regard to immigration policies. Students use this knowledge to teach other members of their community how to claim the rights that are currently available to them even while continuously advocating for humane, comprehensive immigration reform.

A key part of PODER's activities since 2012 has been to educate undocumented people on and off campus about state and federal policies that affect undocumented immigrants. For potential and current college students, PODER actively disseminates information about AB 540 and the California DREAM Act, two California state policies that deflect some of the costs of attending a college or university. More broadly, since the summer it was announced, current and former PODER students have been offering free DACA clinics to the general public. The latter is significant because many families are unable to pay the DACA filing fee in addition to a lawyer's fee to help them fill out the paperwork. Students often train themselves to offer these services. For the former, undocumented activist students access webinars and trainings from the California Student Aid Commission website. For DACA, some students are formally trained by local immigrant rights organizations; others are self-taught or seek advice on online forums (such as Facebook). For DACA cases that are complex (e.g., applicant has a criminal history or has left the country for a period of time), students refer applicants to lawyers. Nevertheless, these trainings are a major part of the everyday activism and the undocumented pedagogy of undocumented students.

While stop gap immigration policies have primarily benefitted those undocumented immigrants who fit the DREAMer profile, PODER students and alumni quickly responded to President Obama's announcement of Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) and an expanded DACA program in November of 2014. Under DAPA, immigrants who have been in the United States since 2010 who have children who are citizens or permanent residents would be eligible for three-year work permits.¹⁴ The announcement elicited mixed reactions from members of PODER because not all of their parents had U.S.-born children. In fact, many DACAmented students' parents would be ineligible for DAPA. Nevertheless, current members of PODER and locally based alumni began to organize to help those members of the community who were eligible to apply for the DAPA and expanded DACA programs. Less than three months after the President's announcement, PODER alumni and current students began to work with the Family Defenders Program.

Alba, who is currently working as a staff member at UCR, announced the program at a regular group meeting in February 2015. UCR's office of Undocumented Student Programs would be working in conjunction with the office of Congressman Mark Takano to make DAPA and DACA more easily accessible to the local undocumented community. Modeled after a program in Chicago, the Family Defender Program would make lawyers available to provide DACA and DAPA training to community members. The program was specially aimed at college students so that they, in turn, could offer support in filling out the applications to members of the undocumented community. At the time, UCR was the only university and Riverside was the only congressional district to enact such a program.

Members of PODER embraced the opportunity to work on a project that would help them to serve their families and the larger undocumented community. For Beto, involvement in PODER has served as a springboard to broad-based activism across communities of color at the university. Nevertheless, he gravitated to the Family Defender program because it enabled him to help his family and other members of his home community to access the same kinds of rights that he has as a student at UC Riverside. Beto explains:

I'm in the process right now, with Family Defenders, with getting educated on my own status...helping out my brothers and sisters back home. My friends, they don't know what I'm doing, what I'm going to study or what I'm going to do, but when they get their DAPA and I sign and I fill it out, ... and I give them the research, [I'll show them that] this is what I want to do for a living. Not only for myself, but for my family... Because if I can't help my family, then what does

¹⁴ Please see: <http://www.workpermit.com/news/2015-07-13/us-immigration-dapa-executive-order-heard-by-appeals-court>
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that say about everyone else? I can't really be helping out everyone else and just forgetting about the people that brought me to where I am today.

In many ways, Beto has maximized his experience as a college student, not only taking the requisite coursework to graduate, but also becoming involved in the campus community through activist work. However, he recognizes that the people who “brought him” to college do not have the same rights and resources that he does as a student in higher education. Rather than distinguishing himself from his family or his community as someone deserving of increased rights, his involvement in the Family Defender program provides a way for him to give back and to extend rights to his family and friends back home.

Just a week after the Alba made the announcement about the Family Defender program at the PODER meeting, a federal judge in the Southern District Court of Texas issued a temporary injunction against DAPA and expanded DACA from going into the effect after 26 states filed a lawsuit to block the programs.¹⁵ Current PODER students and alumni immediately organized and participated in a demonstration to protest the injunction. Isabel, a PODER alumna and local community organizer, helped to connect PODER students with a protest sponsored by Inland Congregations United for Change, a faith-based community organization, at the San Bernardino City Hall. The current PODER president and her mother were both speakers at the protest. Isabel posted about the event on PODER's Facebook page, writing, “WHEN OUR COMMUNITY IS UNDER ATTACK, what do we do? STAND UP, FIGHT BACK!”¹⁶ Her statement coupled with Beto's narrative clearly indicate the ways that UCR undocumented youth view themselves as closely connected to the larger undocumented community, not distinguishing themselves as more deserving, but rather as in the struggle together.

Engagement in programs like the Family Defenders is a key part of PODER students' undocumented pedagogy. Students are able to use the political resources available to them at the university to disseminate knowledge to members of their community who do not have access to such resources. Undocumented students become educators for their families and their friends as they teach them how to navigate the bureaucracy of the state. In this way, they challenge traditional boundaries between teacher and student, creating democratic spaces of learning. We can also read a second aspect of undocumented pedagogy in the protest and defense of undocumented communities. PODER students and alumni in conjunction with community organizations render undocumented lives visible to the public through testimonios and through protests in their push for humane, comprehensive immigration reform. These aspects of undocumented pedagogy are important to view the multifaceted struggle to challenge false divisions in the undocumented community and to extend rights to students' families and friends.

Conclusion

This article presents a case study that illuminates the ways that university students use their social and political capital to challenge the rhetorical and increasingly legal borders between so-called good and bad immigrants. PODER students at UCR work to render visible the complex situations of the undocumented community in the United States. They do not cast themselves as exceptional, but rather as young people who stand on the shoulders of family members who have sacrificed for them to have a place at the university. In addition to challenging stereotypical public perceptions of the undocumented community, PODER students also focus on helping their families and communities to access the limited rights that are available to them through state and federal policies. Departing from the DREAMer political tactics that emerged in the early 2000s, UCR undocumented students engage in activism that includes shining light on their complex family migrant subjectivities and working toward immigration reform that is recognizes the humanity of all migrants.

In the case of PODER, I argue that this activism is inherently educational and can be understood as undocumented pedagogy. Undocumented pedagogy provides a useful framework to understand the ways that UCR undocumented youth actively and urgently create spaces of learning outside of the classroom. In these spaces, students directly challenge the politics of immigrant deservingness through their use of testimonios and work to cultivate citizen allies. By educating their fellow undocumented immigrants about policy, students

¹⁵ <http://www.natlawreview.com/article/dapa-and-daca-what-happened-to-president-obama-s-executive-action>

¹⁶ FB post, 2/17/15

challenge educational hierarchies in terms of who has the right to teach and who has the right to learn. At its heart, the goal of undocumented pedagogy is about promoting social justice in the form of increased rights for undocumented immigrants. In this way, it is not only a critical, political tool, it is also a strategy of unlocking the liberatory potential of education.

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