Placing Photovoice: Participatory Action Research with Undocumented Migrant Youth in the Hudson Valley

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Abstract:

This article describes a research study that aims to better understand the life-worlds of undocumented migrant youth in the Hudson Valley region of New York State. The program design combines critical place inquiry with Youth Participatory Action Research (yPAR) and photovoice to understand how experiences of setting and place shape how youth who are facing the dilemma of precarious legal status while living in rural areas envision and plan for their futures. With guidance from Indigenous theorizations of refusal, the project explores the potential of embedding refusal into image-based methodologies to involve participants more deliberately in the collection, generation and sharing of data.

Keywords: *Undocumented migrant workers; undocumented youth; DACA; youth Participatory Action Research; image-based research; participatory photography; photovoice; critical place inquiry; refusal in research; New York state farm workers*

Introduction

We are seated on folding chairs at a long table in the South Fallsburg Community Center. A squat beige structure flanked by leafy trees, it serves as the only gathering place for residents of this 3,000-person town. The group of 12- to 14-year olds around the table are delighted to be here, spending the last two weeks of summer participating in a photovoice research project. Prior to this program, they have rarely had the chance to spend time in the community center.

This afternoon, we are looking at pictures from a series called "Where Children Sleep" (Mollison, 2010). Each of us around the table holds a print from the series, which consists of children posing in their bedrooms in various countries. We discuss ideas of audience, consent, research ethics, and the types of knowledge that are produced from such images. We ask the youth if they would allow someone to take a picture of them in their bedroom. Their answer is a resounding "NO!" "What if," we ask next, "we wanted you to take the picture yourself?" "No!" was the answer again. "What if you were offered compensation?"

This answer is less certain. The youth cast sideways glances at each other until someone giggles, "…depends how much!" We are nearing the end of the photovoice workshop, and we have not, and will not, ask them to take such a picture. In this way our group engages a kind of double refusal: the participants refuse to take the picture, and the researchers refuse to ask them to take it.

In 2012, President Barack Obama implemented an executive order on immigration called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) that aimed to provide undocumented youth with temporary relief from the threat of deportation. DACA provided young people with documentation to get a social security card, work permit, and driver's license, and apply to universities that do not otherwise accept undocumented students. For many, DACA was the sole route to employment and higher education, although it is not a path to citizenship.

This article attends to the experiences of DACA eligible migrant youth[1] who are planning their futures during an especially precarious time. We investigate the role of place in the lives of these youth through photovoice; a visual methodology that involves a critical approach to taking photographs, discussing and analyzing images, and publicly sharing visual data to inform policy (Wang & Burris, 1994). Questioning the limits and possibilities of the photovoice method, we encouraged the youth to help frame the research process as it unfolded.

While place is often considered as merely a backdrop to human activity, it informs and shapes experiences and decision-making (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Our research sheds light on how location and environment affect the way undocumented migrant youth experience their roles in society, and impacts their ability to make plans for the future, including making use of policy designed to benefit them. In these pages, we present initial findings from year one of a five-year project led by Dr. Eve Tuck titled "Deferred Action and Postsecondary Outcomes: The Role of Migrant Youth Settings in Effective and Equitable Policy." We also share reflections to contribute to a generative discussion about the usefulness of visual research methods in the context of young and vulnerable populations living with precarious status.

Project Description

Hudson Valley Photovoice aims to document the role of multiple settings in how migrant youth (aged 13 to18) gained access to provisions under the DACA program, and how policy and settings work together to improve postsecondary options for migrant youth using multiple forms of data. The photovoice workshop is one of the five-year project's three branches, the others being longitudinal life world interviews and a survey. Exploring the significance of place in the lived experiences of these youth provides a window to understanding their approach to the policy opportunities available to them. The photovoice project was designed with Mid-Hudson Migrant Education Tutorial and Support Services (Mid-Hudson METS), an organization that has provided academic assistance and advocacy support to migrant families in the region for over thirty years. Mid-Hudson METS recruited participants and co-facilitated the photovoice workshop, titled "Photography Storytelling Camp," alongside the research team. The program fit with Mid-Hudson METS' mandate, as it functioned as a rare extracurricular activity for migrant youth in the area, and generated useful data for the demographic they serve.

The Photography Storytelling Camp took place in the last two weeks of summer when the new school year was impending. Each day, sessions started at 10 am and closed at 2 pm. Though we arrived at 9 am every day to set up supplies, wipe crumbs from tables, and stack piles of extra chairs, one or two participants would already be there, leaning against the outside wall of the community center, waiting to be let in. All but two participants lived within walking distance of the center, and arrived on their own. One participant rode to the center on a much-coveted bicycle.

1. When this article refers to migrant youth, we are referring to young people who are either undocumented themselves, or in some cases are born in the USA but whose parents, siblings or other family members are undocumented, and compelled to travel to find work in different parts of the USA.

While the project was designed for youth of between ages 13 and 18, the group of participants who signed up for this workshop were almost all between 13 and 15 years old, for practical reasons: older youth were able to get summer employment working in the poultry processing plant on the outskirts of South Fallsburg, and so were not available to attend the two-week program. Most parents were working full time in the poultry processing plant; other jobs included domestic labor.

The majority of the young people who signed up for the program spoke some English; all but one spoke fluent Spanish. This necessitated a dual-language program where everything spoken was simultaneously translated to enable both the Spanish and English speakers to follow along. In addition to translation support from the two Mid-Hudson METS co-facilitators, some of the participants were adept at translating, so the translator role shifted among several people throughout the program.

Observing their limited English language skills, we wondered how challenging school might be for some of the participants. Although graduation rates are difficult to track for migrant students, the U.S. Department of Education estimates that only half of migrant youth living in the United States complete high school (Gibson & Hidalgo, 2009). In New York state, the percentage of youth pushed out of school may be higher. Challenges to migrant youths' school completion include frequent relocations, inconsistent family income, unreliable access to comprehensive health care, and lack of access to quality instruction in their home language (Gibson & Bejinez, 2002; Shea, 2003, Cruz, 2008). For the youth in the Storytelling Photography Camp, limited language abilities had practical implications for their daily lives, such as their ability to succeed in school and their ability to navigate local streets. Through Mid-Hudson METS, they were able to access academic and other supports.

The workshop location posed challenges. Our facility, the community center, had no wireless internet. Cellular reception was limited and patchy in the area, which hindered our ability to communicate with one another when some team members had to leave the site. From the community center, it was a half hour drive to the big-box stores that were our option for purchasing workshop supplies and print photos. More than once, we made the drive only to find out that Wal-Mart was out of photo paper. We would drive on to another location with the chance they would not have photo paper either, sending us on a daily tour of the region.

The daily schedule included a mix of activities that moved between research topics, camera and photography instruction, looking at and discussing photographs, and planning for project outcomes. The actual photography work was completed by participants outside of program hours in the form of daily homework assignments, which were reviewed each morning in a group discussion with the photos projected on the wall of the darkened room. Participants would take turns sharing their images and discussing their creative and thematic choices. Facilitation was split between the researchers and Mid-Hudson METS staff. The leader of each session rotated based on our various areas of expertise.

Mornings began with committee meetings, during which participants met in small groups. During week one, there was a committee planning the exhibition, another learning how to use a video camera and recording video blogs, and a third designing the program t-shirt. For week two, these committees transitioned to the planning of the closing ceremony, a group thinking about where and how the research could be used after the program, and a new video team. After half an hour in committees, participants rotated through workshops led by facilitators covering different subjects.

Methodology: Bringing Refusal into Photovoice

Photovoice is one of three interwoven research methods we used to work with the young participants. When productively entangled with youth participatory research and critical place inquiry, and informed by an insistence on the possibilities of refusal in research, photovoice can be an avenue to explore the lives of young people and grapple with important questions about research ethics, limitations and possibilities.

The concept of refusal in research is most fully described in Kahnawá:ke scholar Audra Simpson's work (2007, 2014). We learn from her work to consider how refusal might be built in to research designs to avoid replicating certain kinds of themes and narratives about migrant youth and communities. Hudson Valley Photovoice was designed in part to learn about the possibilities and limits of photovoice approaches with migrant youth. While the method is intended to be participatory, with participants determining what will be photographed and how it will be presented, photovoice studies are often organized into a structure where researchers ask participants to take pictures of certain things. These directives and the resulting images give researchers access to worlds inhabited by the participants, but they are worlds that have been sculpted at the outset by the research questions. The ethical dilemma of what becomes of those images, where they are showcased, and the work they are asked to do is at the heart of the productive entanglement between the methods of photovoice and refusal. It is an ethical dilemma often hastily resolved under the guise of good intentions, and one that our project aims to dismantle.

On the last day of the Photography Storytelling Camp, participants reviewed the images they had created. They determined which could be used for research purposes and which would be excluded. On a printed page of thumbnail images, the youth considered each image before marking it with either their signature to indicate approval, or an "X" for disapproval. We took time to frame and set up this activity with care and explanation, to emphasize the importance of the task and its implications.

Photovoice is commonly defined as a participatory methodology (Wang & Burris, 1997) that encourages participants to reflect on their concerns and desires to and discuss emergent issues with a critical lens. However, "this potential is not always actualized as the assumptions that undergird photovoice are often the same ones that (re)produce inequalities" (Higgins, 2014, p. 208). The focus on giving voice in research involving youth and photography has expanded, while there is a lack of attention to how researchers use voice as a concept in photography-based projects (Luttrell, 2010). Photovoice projects are often researcher-driven (Hergenrather et al., 2009) and based on the "commodification of victimization" (Truchon, 2007, p. 255). At the same time, the method has also been shown to shift power in the research process (Truchon, 2007) and act as an "effective method for sharing power, fostering trust, developing a sense of ownership, creating community change and building capacity" (Castleden et al., 2008, p. 1401).

Photovoice projects, within academia and outside of it, require an inwardly critical lens in order to be more fully participatory. Photovoice's participatory elements can lean toward being illusory, masking the fact that youth participants are being asked to photograph specific places or situations, thus revealing them for researchers and ultimately research audiences. Beyond the confines of a photovoice program, activities meant to be participatory shift when the images are presented in a new context, by people who did not create them. When images are packaged into glossy slideshows and presented at conferences by researchers, what happens to the meanings intended by the photographer? What strategies can be developed and honed to embed the photographer's intention into the image, to burn in the desired meaning so it cannot be re-shaped by others down

the line, as in a game of telephone? We mulled over these questions as we planned the activities for the Photography Storytelling Camp, attempting to avoid the pitfalls of misrepresentation in the hands of researchers, as we simultaneously critiqued and worked with the photovoice method.

Our intention from the outset was to engage photovoice in a way that was critical of the romanticization of voice, and by extension, critical of research centered on narratives of damage (Tuck, 2009). We worked from a position of supporting desire-based narratives and the presentation of this work to audiences outside of the academic conference circuit. Our wish is always to prioritize audiences implicated and involved in the issues raised by the research.

To address tensions inherent in photovoice, we consider Youth Participatory Action Research (yPAR) as a method that can point to reshaping photovoice by embedding intention and ownership throughout the process. Cammarota and Fine (2008) assert that yPAR is not just pedagogy, but a means through which young people engage in resistance. They position researchers as stakeholders within an institution, beholden to a preset, if underlying, agenda. yPAR compels researchers to deconstruct what constitutes research who can conduct research projects (Fine et al., 2007; Torre, 2009). "Researchers committed to building youth as critical collaborators into reform projects need to think through the following questions: Who is in the room when research questions are being framed? Who is missing?" (Fine et al., 2007).

Using these questions and commitments as starting points, an overall goal of the study has been to stretch the photovoice method to root it in youth ownership of ideas and intentions, broadening yPAR to theorize image-based methods. Other research methods and tools that inform this method include critical place inquiry (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015), refusal, and complexity. We look to other researchers who are creating modifications to photovoice in the spirit of a "critical and complicit engagement" (Higgins, 2016, p. 672) with the method, such as egalitarian relationships and ownership (Truchon, 2007), transparent analytic frameworks (Luttrell, 2010) and iteration and feedback loops (Castleden et al., 2008). Refusal and complexity refer to ways of avoiding the co-opting or changing of intended meaning when work is shared beyond the confines of the project. Responding to the prevalence of pain narratives in educational and social science research, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2014) use the notion of refusal to honour distinctions between what is accessible and what is off-limits to researchers. Refusal speaks to "what you need to know and what I refuse to write in" (Simpson, 2007, p. 72).

There is a need for discussion, beyond critical pedagogy, about the role of refusal in image-based modes of inquiry, including photovoice. Refusal provides an avenue for, as Tuck and Yang (2014) put it, moving away from damage-centered narratives towards a desire-based framework (p. 231), rejecting the idea that issues around representation in educational research are resolved simply with the incorporation of participatory elements.

Refusal involves the choice to not give away *everything* in order to get *something*, and is taken up by Indigenous theorists in various disciplines. Audra Simpson (2014) refers to ethnographic refusal as "a mode of sovereign authority over the presentation of…data, and so does not present 'everything'" (p. 105). Quechua scholar Sandy Grande (2015) talks about refusal as a joint effort, such as that undertaken by a writing collective using a *nom de guerre*. Angela Morrill (2016), a Klamath scholar, discusses *reading* as a practice of refusal, reading *for* recognition and *against* disappearance. To this list of modes of refusal, we add photography. The photograph has been described as both a mask and a revelation (Bell, 2011), and the framework of visual sovereignty provides a way to determine *when* to mask and *what* to reveal. Barthes (1981) acknowledged that "photography cannot signify except by assuming a mask" (p. 34).

Theoretical Framework: Refusal and Place

Photovoice is a method that invites participants to use photography to make meaning, often by responding to questions or prompts. A question is posed based on the research focus, and participants create an answer by creating a photograph or series of photographs along with written captions. One dimension of this study as a whole is to understand the possibilities and limits of photovoice as a research method, especially in studying the intertwined roles of place, land, and mobility in migrant youth's lives. Our use of photovoice revealed intimacies of place in the lives of migrant youth, and how these intimacies connect to both experiences in the present and future planning.

Indigenous scholars attending to the visual are developing new methods and descriptors for embodying refusal in their image-based work and writing. In visual educational research, the concept of the fugitive aesthetic "chooses refusal and flight as modes of freedom" (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, p. IV). Blackfoot and Sami filmmaker Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers (2016) talks about focusing on the counter-narrative in her documentary films, emphasizing that "love is what got us here, and it is through a love for each other, and for our stories, that we keep moving forward" (p. 298). Andrea Marata Tamaira (2015), a Kanaka Maoli scholar, uses the term counter-framing to describe "the production of images that subvert the distorted simulations circulated through colonialist imagery" (p. 101).

We approached the traditional photovoice structure in new ways, rearranging some key features to support our goals. Most photovoice projects entail taking photos, discussing photos, and having an exhibit or show at the end of the program to share the work with an audience. We shifted the model to place the exhibit in the middle of the program, so that it marked the halfway point. Rather than promoting an idea that the project has a conclusive end, this midway showcase communicated, to both the audience and research participants, that the work is ongoing. Further, it emphasized the ways in which audiences are capable of performing accurate and inaccurate reads of youth work, especially based on their presumptions about migrant youth life. Notions of audience and what audiences bring to their encounters of photographs made by migrant youth were a foundation for activities that built refusal and complexity into images the following week. Anticipating the audience became a meaningful analytic for the youth photographers. Sharing emerging initial work with their families gave the participants a chance to gather active and robust feedback that fed into the week ahead. The culminating activity was a future self-portrait in which the youth posed for a portrait in a pose of their choosing, with the intention to modify the print afterwards.

To be thoughtful and deliberate in our treatment of place in this project, we apply critical place inquiry to photovoice as a framework to take a critical view of places and the relationships people form with them. This means positioning place not merely as topic but as an integral part of our knowledge creation process, as something that shapes social practice and calls for specificity and rootedness (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Significantly for a project with migrant youth who may have precarious relationships to place, critical place inquiry considers mobility to be a central aspect of place. Because this form of inquiry "understands places as themselves mobile, shifting over time and space and through interactions with flows of people, other species, [and] social practices" (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015, p. 19), it is particularly relevant as a tool for analysis in this project. Places that the participants deemed significant were forests, riverbanks and backyards where they could find solitude and quiet; and sites where they had the freedom to interact with their friends.

A discussion of how people relate to places must concern itself with the ways in which place is experienced differently based on lived experiences, and how those differences are part of

the creation and enforcement of structural forms of oppression. Lipsitz's (2011) work exposes "networks of practices that skew opportunities and life chances along racial lines" and argues that "race is produced by space, [and] it takes places for racism to take place" (p. 5). The partitioning of spaces along racial lines leads to spatial isolation and unequal access to infrastructure and resources, factors that are significant in the lives of migrant youth in the Hudson Valley.

Context: Undocumented Youth in the United States

When this five-year study was designed, it was with the understanding that it would stretch across two presidential administrations as it explored the false starts and broken pathways of policies designed to meet the needs of youth who are called "Dreamers," for the DREAM Act (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors), which has been failed by Congress since 2001. Though designed to track a tumultuous policy landscape and understand the lived consequences of the tumult, the Trump administration's dismantling of a modest policy like DACA has been breathtaking.

DACA had the potential and promise to change the lives of millions of families. In a January 2017 interview conducted and aired on ABC, correspondent David Muir asked President Trump directly whether Dreamers should be worried. Trump seemed not to know exactly about whom Muir was referring, and replied that

> they shouldn't be very worried. They are here illegally. They shouldn't be very worried. I do have a big heart. We're going to take care of everybody. We're going to have a very strong border. We're gonna have a very solid border. Where you have great people that are here that have done a good job, they should be far less worried. (ABCnews.com)

Inlaid in Trump's response is a framing of Dreamers as "illegal" and as safer if they are "great people." Seven months later, Trump had Attorney General Jeff Sessions announce the administration's decision to end DACA.

DACA, which approximately 1.7 million young people were eligible for, received 750,000 applications (Passel & Lopez, 2012; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2016). Of these, 93% of its users applied for renewal, which points to the program's benefits (Hipsman, Gomez-Aguinaga & Caps, 2016). In a national survey, 2,700 DACA beneficiaries reported a marked increase in their income and employment opportunities, and many had applied for driver's licenses and credit cards, and opened bank accounts. These benefits served to ease the living conditions of thousands of youth, though significant barriers to upward mobility are still in place (Gonzales et al., 2016).

In 1996, the passing of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) changed the way immigrants were viewed in the USA; from welcome and beneficial to society, to excluded and potentially criminal; and caused significant distress among families and communities with undocumented members (Rodriguez & Hagan, 2004). The legacy of IIRIRA continues in anti-immigrant sentiments espoused by the Trump administration. In his extensive research with undocumented youth in Los Angeles, Gonzales (2016) argues that individuals residing "illegally" in the United States have come to represent the ultimate "persona non-grata," and that in routinely choosing to criminally prosecute those without documentation, rather than pursuing them in civil court, the federal government "categorically casts undocumented immigrants as

law-breakers, deserving of expulsion and exclusion and undeserving of citizenship" (p. 219). Gonzales' (2016) study of undocumented young people reveals that this deeply negative characterization of illegality is especially difficult on those who have grown up in the US, without much knowledge or experience of the countries in which they were born. Gonzales' (2016) research additionally reveals that as undocumented young people come of age, they experience a total shift in life experience: what was once a safe environment becomes anxiety-inducing and hostile (p. 23). Gonzales (2016) finds that schooling can play an enormous role in setting youth on the path to college or to deportation, and he argues that DACA contributed to a fourfold division: between College-going undocumented youth and those who left school early (what he terms: "early exiters"), and between characterizations of "'innocent' youth and their 'lawbreaking' parents" (p. 27).

Along a similar vein, Abrego's (2011) work with residents of Los Angeles has argued that undocumented persons must not be considered a monolithic group: they express very different experiences with the law and with varied levels of vulnerability and feelings of fear or stigma depending on age, length of time spent in the U.S., and schooling. Negron-Gozales' (2009) study, which also took place in California, found that fear and exclusion became a catalyst for young people's political action when they were presented with ways to theorize and talk about their situation (p. 42). Her powerful account of undocumented young people campaigning to pass the DREAM Act reveals courage and resilience in this community, and importantly, a potential to effect sweeping political change and challenge conceptions of the nation-state.

While there have been numerous research projects undertaken with undocumented youth in the U.S., few studies have been conducted in New York state. Migrant youth living in the Hudson Valley are among those made most vulnerable by the dismantling of DACA. Research about New York State migrant youth's experiences with and recommendations for DACA is needed. Scholars who have worked on these issues in depth have recommended more interdisciplinary work that links immigration and education policy (Gildersleeve & Hernandez, 2012, p. 19). Our study responds to this recommendation by using innovative approaches to research methodologies that center refusal and seek to provide in-depth understandings of the lived experiences of young people from their own perspectives, and on their own terms. We seek to understand how migrant youth, facing a potentially perilous situation, plan for their futures and understand or negotiate their own sense of belonging and agency within a system that places them at the edges of society.

Discussion

This section discusses the four thematic elements that emerged in the Hudson Valley Photovoice project data: future selves, parental sheltering, places that need a change, and interventions on the future.

Future Selves

One of the first activities in the Storytelling Photography Camp involved participants taking a self-portrait in the image of what they think they will be doing in the future, which we called future self-photos. Most participants expressed that they wished to be soccer stars. This aspiration was earnest: the participants spoke passionately of their plans to make it onto a college soccer team, eventually join a professional league, and live their days as stars of the international football world. Many of them created posed photos of themselves posing with soccer balls, indoors and outdoors, in various positions: chests puffed up, holding a ball in the air; throwing the ball in midair

with an ear to ear smile, and holding a trophy; all while projecting into the future that one day, this would be the real thing. One participant created a photo series in the living room of his family's basement apartment. He was decked out in his shiny team uniform complete with shin pads and cleats, his curly hair perfectly styled. Standing in a nook between two couches, he posed for 12 action shots in a variety of poses with and without a soccer ball: jump-kicking the ball, heading the ball, standing with one knee up on the couch and the ball on his knee, standing with hands on hips, and others.

A recurring theme in the participants' future self-photos was the smartphone. Smartphones showed up in images in response to most photo prompts. Whether as valued objects or as props used to model other concepts, the participants produced dozens of photos of their phones. They also snapped pictures of cars taken throughout the town in response to the future self-prompt, to indicate a wish to own a car. Cars also appeared regularly as objects in photos meant to portray technical use of the camera. Another popular theme was close-up shots of a soccer ball. There were so many pictures of soccer balls, cars and cellphones that we considered creating a bar graph of these pictures and posting it on the community center wall to show the participants just how many pictures of these objects they had taken.

The materialistic aspect of the participants' photos seems to express a sense of belonging in society through possession of a phone and car. When we inquired as to how their cell phones (or a family member's phone, if the young person didn't have one) could be the response to all the photo prompts, they responded with, this is how I talk to my father back home, this is how I look at photos of where we used to live, this is how I talk to the doctor for my mother, this is how I stay connected to everything I had to leave behind.

Parental Sheltering

Of the four participants who did not express a dream of being a soccer star, one wanted to be a veterinarian, one planned to be a general contractor, and three said they would be lawyers to help people avoid deportation. Overall, there was a deep conviction expressed by all the participants that they could become whatever they wanted. In talking about their future plans, participants indicated encouragement from their parents about doing well in school and attending college. We noted a pervasive innocence, on the part of the young people, about their precarious status within U.S. society. While most of the participants would surely find out toward the end of high school how limited choices are for undocumented people, at the time we knew this group of young people, while they were aware of their status and their parents' status, they were largely unaware of the effect being undocumented could have on their future.

This tentatively demonstrated that parents desired for their children to know only a minimal amount about the potential consequences of not having status, and points to the success parents were having in sheltering their children from the realities of being undocumented in America. Gonzales' (2016) findings corroborate this observation. The transition to adulthood is, for undocumented youth, the *transition to illegality*. The youth involved in his study were often not aware of their undocumented status until they encountered barriers to teenage rights of passage such as obtaining a driver's license or getting a first job.

Places that Need a Change

Land, and a sense of place, was a recurring theme throughout our activities. While we directly addressed the idea of land and mobility in two activities, places and spaces as concepts emerged across all the photos taken by the participants. For example, when asked about prized possessions, about half the participants took pictures of pictures of themselves and/or their families in a favorite place: this varied from a city formerly lived in, a city they wished to visit, or a place where relatives currently live. In activities aimed to teach photography techniques, such as experimenting with perspective, framing, light and shadow, participants opted to take photos of natural spaces, such as forests, ravines, rivers and skies. Many pictures displayed the same soccer field. Discussions about these photos led to three themes: first, an appreciation of nature, and a feeling that natural places were a respite from daily life; second, a discussion of how natural places reminded them of their country of origin; and finally, the opinion that there's nothing else to take a picture of. A prompt that asked participants to show photos of their favorite places led to pictures of the soccer field, the local park, and personally significant place including a lone tree in a field and a front porch. A prompt about "a place that needs a change" resulted in photos of the outside of participants' homes, the soccer field, a road next to a participant's house divided by a sizeable crack and a photo of an unpaved parking lot at an apartment complex where a young girl had once been injured by flying gravel.

We followed the "place that needs a change" activity with an exercise where youth used permanent markers to draw on prints of their photos, to depict the changes they felt were needed. During this exercise, five notable interventions were made. Two of the youth visually fixed things they noticed in their neighborhood: the rough gravel parking lot was paved smooth; the large crack in the road was filled in. Another participant drew soccer nets onto the field. He explained that he and his friends played soccer on that field daily until one day the city took the nets away. Now they play without nets. One of the participants took his picture of a road bordered by forest and covered the trees with shiny silver buildings. He explained that he dreams of living in a city, and wishes someone would come and build over all the forests. Finally, one participant revamped a picture of the long-abandoned movie theater located directly next to the South Fallsburg Community Center with flower pots in the windows, a working front door, and a sign that read "OPEN."

Another activity asked participants to draw a map of South Fallsburg and mark all the places they go, and where they do not go. While the group was split in two for this activity, both maps revealed similar themes: the youth follow essentially the same paths each day between school, home, friend's homes, the soccer field and park. Their access to nearby areas seemed to be limited. While they did make regular visits to Stewart's gas station, they did not go to the few shops and restaurants located along South Fallsburg's main strip. Their mobility within the town, and participation as consumers within local shops, was limited. They were also adamant that they never went to the poultry processing plants located just outside the town, even though many of their parents and relatives were employed there.

To better understand the participants' experience within their town, a description of the region is useful. This part of the world, only two hours' drive from New York City, is freely growing with hills, swamps, sprawling forest, and homes built on centuries-old foundations. With the Catskill mountain range silhouetted in the distance, dozens of small towns are attached by narrow country roads and winding highways. Lush green hillsides are dotted with vineyards, summer holiday resorts, group retreats, picturesque lakeside neighborhoods, and enormous crop fields stretching to the horizon. Driving from town to town, the bucolic scenes are pierced by huge roadside

corporate complexes: Wal-Mart, Best Buy, CVS, McDonald's, Burger King, Taco Bell. Grocery stores were few and far between. The main street of each town consists of a row of mostly boarded-up former restaurants and stores.

Local economies in these parts seem to be about sending food and monies elsewhere. As non-residents of the Hudson Valley, we observed the contours and corners of the place during our time there. In sharp contrast to the prevalent green lushness, entire sections of the population here live in relative poverty. A short drive away from New York City, this area feels forgotten: it is a land inhabited by other-than-human beings (bears, coyotes, snakes, turkeys) with the space to grow and live, but it is also exploited for its richness. Between the fields or factories for food processing and forgotten stretches of forest, there are insulated holiday communities, some in the form of apartment complexes housing extended families for the summer and longer, others in clusters of lakeside homes marked everywhere with glaring "PRIVATE PROPERTY" signs.

There is a sharp cultural separation of peoples living in this region. It is comprised of aging middle-class white New Yorkers, and of Orthodox Jews from Brooklyn whose populations inflate in the summer months, but who also live here full-time (Urban Action Agenda, 2015). Walking through these neighborhoods, there is a sense of disjointedness in these populations, who live in proximity, yet isolated from each other. Through the photography storytelling camp we intended to learn more about those barriers, using photovoice to explore intimacies of place in the participants' lived experiences. During the program, what emerged was that the combination of language and cultural differences, economic power, a sense of temporariness in families habituated to moving for work, and a dearth of activities and locations available for the participants' age group functioned as barriers to participating in their community setting.

Demographics in this region have been shifting for centuries. In her study of ghost stories in the Hudson Valley, Butler (2013) traces a restive history between populations that have experienced constant metamorphoses and flux. While Mohican, Munsee and Lenape peoples had been living as farmers in the area for thousands of years, following colonization by the Dutch and later the English, the region consistently witnessed war, power shifts in land ownership, and waves of migration to New York City. During the 18th and 19th centuries, when an economic culture of producing crops and goods for an ever-flourishing New York City began to intensify, regional writings were marked by a sense of unease and fragmentariness. This translated to a culture of ghost stories and ghostliness that "served to articulate and contain anxieties about strange places and people…historical amnesia and a sense of pastlessness were common maladies. In the Hudson Valley, the disintegration of connection to the past could seem a common condition…" (Butler, 2013, p. 493).

While the topic of ghosts may seem tangential in a research project about migrant youth, we observed that an uneasy feeling persists in this beautiful, culturally and economically disjointed region that produces large quantities of food for millions of people and difficult labor conditions for those harvesting it. Questions, like ghosts, feel stuck at the surface of the rolling horizon. Where are all the people who come through this land coming from, and where are they going to next? What did they have to leave behind? How can the broader culture justify entire populations who are not allowed to belong…and yet, be so deeply connected to these people through the food they are eating? How would the young people in our program, though compelled to be invisible within this society, fulfill the bright and vivid expectations they had for themselves?

Interventions on the Future

The last activity of the program looped back to the original future self idea, with a twist: this time, participants used markers to invoke their vision of their future self on a printed portrait taken for this purpose. They posed for their portrait in a stance that was related to their future self. Many of them chose to pose in a neutral stance. We provided 8 by 10-inch prints of their portraits and a bin full of colored Sharpies, and the youth got to work. The resulting images were varied, revealing uncertainty, resistance, personal style, and career plans. A few participants fashioned themselves as soccer stars, which was no surprise given the prominence of soccer throughout our discussions. One boy drew a scale of justice into his outstretched hand, a nod to his desire to be a judge, while another drew a briefcase and papers marked "evidencia" to represent his future career as a lawyer. One participant styled himself as a member of the activist hacker group Anonymous: "Anonymous, The Take Over: Justice is Coming" he wrote in the corner of his photo. Others created versions of themselves with references to adulthood; they drew suits and ties over their shorts and t-shirts, and facial hair onto their cheeks and chins. One girl created herself as a lawyer, drawing a desk and briefcase beside her and explaining that she hopes to work with the U.S. government one day to help stop deportation. Another colored her standing figure in black and covered the silhouette in silver question marks. The participants' interventions on these portraits represented future selves that either left the future as an open question, or saw the future with great certainty and optimism. The young people represented themselves as agentic, desiring beings with diverse plans and expectations.

Implications

Adopting photovoice as a methodological intervention enabled us to focus on aspects of minoritized, migrant youth perspectives that are often ignored within the understudied context of New York state; namely youth experiences of place, identity and belonging. Our findings contribute to a discussion of the limits and possibilities of DACA and related policies that may ultimately be limited by ideological constructs of what it means to be "American."

Migrant Labor in New York State

The New York State Department of Agriculture's website boasts "36,000 family farms producing some of the world's best food" and notes that "agriculture is a major driver of the New York State economy" (http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/). The rich black soil of this rural area nurtures an annual production of thousands of tons of crops for export. The farming industry, worth upwards of 5.5 billion dollars, depends upon cheap human labor. Farmworkers in New York are not protected by labor laws that guarantee them overtime pay, a day off each week, and worker's compensation, among other rights (Grossman, 2015; Geneseo Migrant Center, n.d.). In many cases, farmworkers overstay work visas and continue to live and work in the U.S. without documentation. Belying bucolic landscapes of rolling hillsides and farmer's markets promising organic and local produce is a population without employment rights, vulnerable to deportation, driving the agricultural economy, and living wherever there is work.

In the lower Hudson Valley, the number of undocumented people is an estimated 47% of the population (Fitz-Gibbon, 2017). In the Mid-Hudson Valley, where our study is located, the fastest growing section of the population is made up of 18 to 34-year olds from racial and ethnic

minorities described as mostly black and Latino, in lower income brackets, with less than a high school education (Urban Action Agenda, 2015, p. 9). While the participants in the Storytelling Photography Camp were too young to be eligible for DACA, should the opportunity to apply for it be lost, it is highly possible they too will be assimilated into a life of low-income agricultural labor. If this happens, it would not indicate a deficit in their own skills, smarts, or self-determination. Rather, it would represent a structural failure in a system that thwarts opportunities for people from certain demographic groups before they have a chance to realize what they may have been capable of contributing.

Olsen's now classic 1997 study of a California high school with a large population of undocumented migrant and immigrant students explored how educational policies helped or hindered opportunities for undocumented students. She describes how policy makers were affected by "a pervasive and determined color-blindness" (p. 246). Rather than consider the ways that diverse populations might inform and shape pedagogies, administrators and teachers instead assumed, or insisted, that all students should fit into a schooling system informed by a narrow model of what it means to be American (Olsen, 1997, p. 240). Students did not "naturally" elect to be divided or placed on specific pathways: policies *produced* their future opportunities, and the process of integration became one of loss (Olsen, 1997, p. 242). Olsen points out that this loss is not only experienced by the young people who are compelled to define themselves within a conformist identity frame, but is also a loss for a society and culture that refuses difference. Ensconced in this xenophobic sensibility, US Congress has failed to implement policy changes that would provide people with pathways to safer and better jobs, or labor rights in difficult and dangerous jobs through legal documentation.

An unwillingness to allow immigrants to share worldviews and language and potentially change American culture operates in tandem with the power and domination required of a violent economic system characterized by predatory formations (Sassen, 2014) which require the expulsion of large groups of people from the dominant market. It is convenient to have "an immigrant class that is not fully literate and only partially assimilated…[who] fill a particular niche in the lowest paid and least protected rungs of our labor market" (Olsen, 1997, p. 250). The structure is a continuation of the white settler colonial project which requires "the import of cheap labor, first slaves and now immigrants, defined in legal code as lacking full personhood" (Patel, 2015, p. 141).

Meritocratic Measures of Who Belongs

Patel (2015, 2016) has critiqued DACA because of its inherent reliance on ideas of merit and deservingness. Rooted in neoliberal ideas of who is deserving and who is undeserving of just policies, DACA only provides temporary relief from worry about possible deportation (Nair, 2013). It is not a comprehensive policy. For those who are building resistance movements designed to rethink not only the immigration system, but also the way that capitalism and citizenship (or who gets to be a citizen) operate coterminously to exclude and oppress (Nair, 2013; Borcila, 2011), DACA created bureaucratic busywork that distracted from this important endeavor (Patel, 2015, p. 147). DACA worked to help "the racist state…gesture towards equity in order to avoid fundamentally changing the oppressive socioeconomic structure" (Patel, 2015, p. 148).

Despite the economic and social contributions of migrant workers across the United States, racist ideologies centered on a narrow view of who belongs have dominated public and political rhetoric and policy-making in education. If provided opportunities to do different types of work, to move, stay, work and study without having to worry about detention, family separation and

deportation, undocumented families could bring expertise, care and attention to those they love, and different forms of knowledge and perspectives to U.S. society. Without these opportunities, families with undocumented members are denied the chance to find meaningful work, or contribute to society (to use the term favored by the participants) in diverse ways.

In the small upstate New York towns where we are conducting our research, undocumented families are villainized as either criminals or people taking advantage of the system; or viewed as lazy or deserving of their poverty, just as in studies of mostly white communities with newer migrant neighbors conducted more than 20 years ago (Olson, 1997). Within this long-standing conscription of migrant youth held by white, often middle- or low-income families,

> undocumented youths' bodies are conjoined with illegality, as their crime is defined as bodily presence in the U.S. without federal sanction...the combined identity markers of being undocumented, racially minoritized, and in low-income work overdetermine immigrant youth as exempted from laws, safety, from projects of self-determination. (Patel, 2014, p. 140)

These identity markers do not have a chance to be changed without the facilitation of policies designed to help undocumented youth embark on different life paths. Yet, compliance with policies such as DACA paradoxically required that individuals fit into a meritocratic system that was always already flawed, since it "employs a paternalistic rhetoric to 'protect' some undocumented youth, while maintaining absolute right to police and thus divide the immigrant community…[and] position[s] the United States as the benevolent overseer of opportunity" rather than face down the centuries old social constructs and colonial logics that have formed and informed American institutions (Patel, 2015, p. 146). This begs the question of whether young people should even bother to be included into a system that requires a narrow view of what they are or should be. It exalts the ideal or "innocent" citizen while continuing, in and through this exaltation, to posit and shape who still doesn't, and can't ever, belong.

At this moment in time, with the loss of DACA as a policy, it is worth noting that DACA offered young people a very narrow certainty of inclusion into society. Now that even this window may be lost, there is an administrative record of nearly 750,000 young people who applied for the policy. What the current administration will do with this record remains to be seen.

Conclusion

We're buckled into red, yellow, green and blue Go-Karts on a race track. Engines are revving and hands are tightly gripping steering wheels. It is a hot, sunny Saturday, and we are at the midpoint of the photovoice workshop: two graduate students in their thirties versus a group of laser-focused 13-year old boys. After an intense week of photovoice activities and the work of an exhibition, we're all equally energized, pleased to be breaking for an excursion. The ride attendants shuffle amongst us, checking seat belts. The participants chatter over the buzz of the engines, anticipating the thrill of a race with the wind in their hair. The gates open, and with that, we're swerving around sharp bends and each other's cars, laughing and teasing one another all the way. We're at the Holiday Mountain Fun Park, a half-hour drive from the community center. With a $40 entrance fee, this is the first time any of the young people have visited this place. It is impossible to rein in their energy.

The park is noticeably aged, with a smattering of outdated carnival games: mini-golf, bumper boats, a rock-climbing wall. Looming high at the far end of the property against a backdrop of tree-covered hills was a structure topped with a colorful sign that reads "FUN SLIDE": a set of three pastel-colored slides stretched down and along the ground, bordered by a rusting metal staircase. Most of the rides aside from the Go-Karts barely registered for the participants so most of the day was spent zooming around the track for as long as the attendant would let them, then lining up amongst the few other park attendees for their next turn. After coming to understand the extent to which not having a vehicle impacted life in the Hudson Valley, the vision of the participants, joyfully driving in endless loops on a circular track produced a clear irony: these boys may never be permitted to have driver's licenses; may never, despite their motivations, be able to drive around without fear, travel without fear, or pursue their dreams without fear.

The Hudson Valley Photovoice project provided an opportunity to use images in participatory research with migrant youth. Taking and discussing photographs of their surroundings was a starting point to explore the significance of place in their lives, complicating and disrupting the prevalent damage-based narratives that tend to dominate depictions of migrant lives. A focus on place allowed us to disrupt the mainstream narrative of these youth as either victims or criminals (Gonzales, 2016, p. 219), and emphasize the future possibilities in the participants' lives, for example in the ideas for neighborhood improvements that emerged in their "place that needs a change" image-modification activity.

Migrant labor is ineluctable to the U.S. economy: states that successfully deported or barred undocumented migrants from working have lost billions of dollars (Serrano, 2012). Yet, being undocumented is criminalized and stigmatized. Despite migrant families' necessary presence and undeniable capital contribution within a society that venerates capital gains, the forces that profit from these laboring bodies simultaneously mark them as undesirable and inadmissible. Political rhetoric around who does and does not belong denies undocumented workers the right to have a place within the United States; even while the economy necessitates their work on the land; even while everyone eats food that is harvested by migrant workers.

In this article, we described our observations of the early stages of a research project that weaves the theoretical frameworks of yPAR, photovoice, critical place inquiry and refusal together to nurture a more complete understanding of how undocumented young people negotiate presence and plan for their futures in the Hudson Valley. As we continue this study, we expect to delve deeper into the ways that identity and belonging in the United States are contrived and compelled by definitions of citizenship within a shifting policy landscape that is increasingly precarious for undocumented people. As we enter a phase of Machiavellian immigration policy under the Trump administration, it is more evident than ever that there is a need for policy changes that do not rely on ideas of meritocracy, but instead venture to re-imagine citizenship and belonging altogether.

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