

UndocuQueer Disidentifications: “Being Undocumented and Queer, Just Like Death, Means  
Having to Navigate Two Worlds”

Edgar Sandoval

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Committee:

Megan Ybarra

Michael Brown

Vicky Lawson

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University of Washington

**Abstract**

“Being Undocumented and Queer, Just Like Death, Means Having to Navigate Two Worlds”:  
UndocuQueer as Experience, Navigation, and World-Making

Edgar Sandoval

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:  
Professor Megan Ybarra  
Department of Geography

This thesis seeks to center undocumented queer migrant leaders’ use of care to reframe the state as heterogeneous and to conceptualize how this engagement with care creates worlds for these actors. Geographers have conducted research that examines sexuality and racialization; however, work explicitly examining UndocuQueers within the discipline remains nearly nonexistent. This article presents a study of how people have engaged in caring for themselves, others, and communities primarily in Seattle, highlighting interactions with, away from, and to the periphery of state processes and flows. UndocuQueers deploy care to navigate spatial configurations of geopolitical and cultural exclusion. This thesis grounds literature around queer people of color critique, black geographies, and feminist geopolitics to nuance how we think about identity, the state, and producing space. In the first section, I draw on UndocuQueers’ narratives of what identifying as UndocuQueer means to establish how they perceive their relation to the world

around them. The following section proposes that a centering of UndocuQueer experiences allows a reframing of state apparatuses as heterogeneous, moving, and partial. I conclude that the vulnerability UndocuQueers experience does not preempt them from being agents in the production of social, political, and spatial practices; rather, they are constantly engaged in a process of world-making that is caring, expansive, and relational.

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## **Introduction: “Just like Death”**

Jacque Larrainzar walks across the stage adorned in a black dress from Mexico with a guitar and tambourine on hand. A musician, Jacque performs Mexican songs with a queer twist, shifting the lyrics to insert the experiences of queer and transgender (hereafter, trans) people. Jacque performs a song from Guerrero named La Lloroncita, where one of the verses now reads: “Isabel la mataron / por vestir como mujer / en el cielo llora / todo el día ya es mujer.” (Isabel they killed / for dressing as a woman / in the sky she cries / she is now a woman every day). Jacque is at a Día de los Muertos event in Seattle set up by Entre Hermanos, a local service organization, and she stands firmly in front of a waiting crowd. The lights begin to dim when Jacque speaks into the mic and offers Entre Hermanos a thank you for inviting her to perform during this year’s celebration. Jacque then says, “Entre Hermanos is very dear to me because I grew up with them. Through them, I found love. I found myself.” Jacque’s feelings speak to her experiences learning about how to navigate multiple worlds with Entre Hermanos. She begins her set with a song about healing that she learned from a musical collective that had visited Seattle from Mexico. Her tone is soft, calm, and relaxing.

When the song ends, Jacque places her instruments down and takes her hat, dress, and scarf off to reveal a second outfit underneath. She laughs, telling the audience that her physical transformation, stripping off the dress for sleek black leather pants and jacket, represents a shift in the ways in which she has identified and presented her gender throughout her life. The rhythm of the music after her physical transformation is faster and irresistible: my toes are tapping. A few more songs go by, at which point Jacque grabs ahold of the mic from the stand to conclude her performance.

I look around me during this transition and notice the altar at the other end of the room. Entre Hermanos hosts a Día de los Muertos benefit to celebrate the LGBTQ<sup>1</sup> Latinx<sup>2</sup> community and the work they do to offer resources to them. Día de los Muertos is a Mexican holiday when communities gather to remember people who have passed away and support them in their spiritual journey to the afterworld. Those who participate build an altar that honors the deceased and seeks to wake them up with gifts, many of which are food offerings, or through storytelling and music. This year the Día de los Muertos altar had 49 photos up for the people killed in the shooting that occurred inside Pulse, a gay nightclub hosting Latin Night, in Orlando, Florida on June 12, 2016. Feelings of sadness, fear, and loss reverberated throughout the queer Latinx communities in the U.S. since Latin nights at gay nightclubs have been considered a haven for people to be themselves in a world where they must constantly navigate their identities and practices. Five months after this tragedy, the 49 different photos above the altar remind me of the precariousness between death, queerness, Latinidad, and documentation status. This day serves as a moment when the boundary between life and death, between those living and those deceased, wavers and reveals itself as transparent. This moment reminds me that death and violence are constant threats for undocumented queer racialized migrants (Herrera 2016) who must navigate these processes in order to survive and thrive.

Melancholically, I turn back to the stage to listen to the performance. “Being undocumented and gay,” proclaims Jacque, “just like death, means having to navigate two

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<sup>1</sup> Entre Hermanos uses LGBTQ to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer communities with whom they work. I describe my usage of queer instead of LGBTQ later in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The term Latinx has recently appeared as an alternative to using Latino, Latino/a, and Latin@ that does not reify gender binaries. Latinx is a gender-inclusive term that recognizes that trans, genderqueer, gender fluid, and gender nonconforming people often identify outside of the heteronormative construction of gender. Many UndocuQueers who participated in this project identify as trans, gender nonconforming or as femme men and use Latinx to move away from the violences associated with applying a presumed gender-neutral yet masculine term for a wider community.

worlds.” I am momentarily frozen. While her words sound stark, she understands what is at stake for her as an undocumented queer migrant. As undocumented and queer, Jacque must grapple with hierarchies of value that arise through the criminalization of undocumented migrants and the social marginalization of women of color in queer spaces. UndocuQueers navigate these worlds by engaging in practices that explore alternative geographical political imaginations of existing in the reality of our world while engaging in a production of queer futurities. Within the context of Día de los Muertos, Jacque’s declaration reveals a celebration of one’s ability to navigate multiple worlds not only as a survival strategy but as a process of making worlds that accounts for joy as well. I continue to carry this affect and Jacque’s words with me through this research journey. This thesis examines how UndocuQueers’ practices of navigating multiple worlds enables them to make their own life chances around spatial configurations of subjection that produce their social death (Spade 2015; Cacho 2012). Undocumented queer migrants have an intimate understanding of how their lives are shaped through various mechanisms, technologies, and processes. I think through how undocumented queer migrants’ experiences reveal the linkages between embodiment, politics, queerness, race, and social practices. For Jacque, “death” is an embodied experience necessitating a critical lens on how state and non-state actors produce her vulnerability

As a term, UndocuQueer has various connotations. People have deployed the term UndocuQueer to refer to how their experiences as queer, trans, and undocumented intersect and should be understood as such. UndocuQueer, for some, refers to a sociopolitical movement. Many UndocuQueers think about their identity as a political orientation toward liberation. Scholarship exists that resonates with the experiences of UndocuQueers in this project (De Genova 2010; Chávez 2013; Seif 2014; White 2014). The term UndocuQueer articulates an

intersectional identity around queerness and documentation status, though many also express how they are positioned around race, gender, class, age, and (dis)ability. In this paper, I use UndocuQueer to signal undocumented queer and trans migrants who identify themselves as active within social movements and their communities.

This thesis argues that undocumented queer Latinx migrants engage in a project of world-making through disidentification to resist social death, exploitation, and limited life chances (Cacho 2012; Gilmore 2007). As undocumented, UndocuQueers fall outside of the law's protection but not its punishment and are valued for their economic exploitation (Cacho 2012). Lisa Cacho determines that "human value is made intelligible through racialized, sexualized, spatialized, and state-sanctioned violences" (2012, 4) and, consequently, how many populations are then made "ineligible for personhood" (6). The intersectional experiences of those in this project as queer, trans, and racialized migrants further compounds the harm that processes of subjection produce for this population (Crenshaw 1991; Gilmore 2002). Instead of oppression, I use subjection to try "to capture the complexity and the significance of how thoroughly our ways of living, thinking and knowing ourselves and the world are imbued with the meanings and distributions wrought through these various categories of identity" (Spade 2015, 7). Many UndocuQueers have an intimate understanding of these processes. Consequently, rather than reemphasize the violences they experience, this article centers UndocuQueers' disidentifications to examine how they produce spaces that "move[] us beyond critique and toward the construction of new forms of relationships, institutions, and actions that enhance mutuality and well-being" (Lawson 2007, 1).

This research originated from my experiences growing up and participating in organizing with UndocuQueers. I carried out six months of participant-observation with Entre Hermanos, a

Seattle-based nonprofit, and conducted twelve interviews with self-identified UndocuQueers from 2016-7. UndocuQueers have not only made sense of their identity but have also figured out how to navigate their vulnerability within geopolitical and cultural exclusions. What, then, does examining UndocuQueers' experiences offer scholars and activists? This project is guided by the following questions: 1) how do UndocuQueers express identifying as UndocuQueer, and what does this reveal about their relationship to space? 2) How does this relationship to space enable scholars to conceptualize a world-making through the geographies of disidentification? I utilize ethnography to speak back to theories of queer people of color critique, feminist geopolitics, and black geographies. This thesis brings queers of color critique into conversation with geographical theory to reframe UndocuQueer as a collection of disidentification practices, a term José Esteban Muñoz uses to describe practices that queer people of color engage in (J. E. Muñoz 1999), that shape reality and produce new, or different, worlds. This paper demonstrates that disidentification is a foundational aspect of UndocuQueers' project of world-making that validates and opens up alternative formulations of social, political, and spatial practices for some of the most vulnerable in society.

I conceptualize how undocumented queer migrants transform spaces in the U.S. through their practices of disidentification. I argue that UndocuQueers have expanded the notion of disidentification to navigate their social and political lives. To better understand why UndocuQueers' experiences reveal how political projects are mutually constituted by care, it is important to consider the critiques that UndocuQueers have levied at both the queer and immigration rights movements. I primarily use stories to demonstrate how care can reveal alternative geographies. This project puts disidentification forward as a form of politics that can enable people to change their material conditions. In so doing, this research reveals how current

strategies for seeking justice remain constrained within assimilationist strategies (Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz 2005), and makes available more just geographies (McKittrick 2006) within our current moment. The next section describes the methods, methodologies, and terms that I draw from in the rest of the thesis.

### *Making Space for UndocuQueer Methods, Methodologies, and Terms*

The dearth of literature on methodological approaches to engage with when conducting research with UndocuQueers pushed me to construct a framework fusing literature on black feminist geographies and queers of color critique. I bring a range of methodological perspectives together to combine ways of knowing that acknowledge unequal power relations without being defined by their limitations. I draw on Katherine McKittrick's approach in *Demonic Grounds* to claim that "the interrogations and remappings provided by black diaspora populations can incite new, or different, and perhaps more just, geographic stories" (McKittrick 2006, xix). Seeking to move away from traditional geographies that "cannot do the emancipatory work some subjects demand" (ibid), I subsequently argue that the narratives and experiences of UndocuQueers offer "alternative geographic formulations that subaltern communities advance" (ibid). In other words, in looking at the narratives of UndocuQueers, their experiences reveal the nuanced relationship around queerness, race, geopolitics, migration, and space that would be difficult to understand if we did not center UndocuQueers. As such, I examine how UndocuQueers' "interrogations and remappings" of their reality produce new, or different, worlds in place.

Similarly, José Esteban Muñoz, the late prolific scholar within queers of color critique, argues that disidentification is a way people who are subjected to violences can "disidentify with that world [of wage exploitation and class stratification] and perform a new one" (J. E. Muñoz

1999, xi). Muñoz proposes disidentification as the third node of performance that offers a more nuanced reading of practices than the former two: identification, a process where people throw out other identities to identify *with* the mainstream; and counter-identification, where people identify *against* the mainstream. Muñoz argues that these two nodes reaffirm power dynamics and, therefore, reproduce hierarchies of valorization and normalization. Disidentification is a practice whereby people identify with a norm and repurpose it for a different end and interest, performing a new world. This disidentification is, on one hand, a way to navigate social death, exploitation, and limited life chances *in situ* as they occur. On the other, disidentifications can also take place as performances in social spaces that produce alternative formulations of the world. I consider this practice of world-making as a critique of UndocuQueers' exclusion, exploitation, and marginalization of their daily life as well as of traditional geographies that often fail to reveal their geographic stories. UndocuQueers express their attachments to space in a myriad of ways that offer nuance into thinking through undocumented queer migrants' relationship to space.

The methods of this project include participant observation, interviews, and discourse analysis of UndocuQueer art. I conducted participant observation with Entre Hermanos (EH), an LGBTQ Latinx organization in Seattle, for six months starting in August 2016 as a volunteer. Scholars have argued that one way to reconcile tensions that arise when applying theories and methodologies to a new context is to anchor them within a specific organization (Prada 2014). I argue that Entre Hermanos constantly attempts to understand the experiences and needs of undocumented queer Latinx migrants in King County. Many queer Latinxs in Seattle know of Entre Hermanos through a Latin Night they host at a nightclub in Capitol Hill, the gay-friendly neighborhood in Seattle. They primarily offer case management for Latinxs living with

HIV/AIDS but have expanded services based on the feedback from their communities to include immigration counseling, labor theft advocacy, and support for sex workers.

Entre Hermanos as a site enables scholars to operationalize a centering of undocumented queer Latinx migrants. EH was founded after a group of queer Latinx, many of them migrants, sought to create a space for them to be themselves and offer resources to other queer Latinxs. Entre Hermanos is Spanish for Between Brothers but the more apt description for this LGBTQ organization would be Between Siblings. The name of the organization speaks to the ways in which queer Latinxs came together to care for one another in ways that define families as kinship relations that are made instead of born into. Queer Latinxs at EH, especially the staff members, perform a type of kinship labor to construct these social relations. Their practices resonate with the broader practices of navigations with which UndocuQueers engage in their everyday lives.

I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with self-identified undocumented queers, or UndocuQueers, all of them identifying as Latinx, through original contacts that put me in conversation with other UndocuQueers. Undocumented as a status does not remain fixed but is constantly in flux. Therefore, the ways in which people identify as undocumented changes. Given the ways in which some of these ethnographic spaces are also complex, intimate spaces (L. Muñoz 2016; Nagar 2014, 100), I learned, as indigenous scholars claim, that oral traditions “remain a most important way of developing trust, sharing information, strategies, advice, contacts, and ideas” (Smith 2012, 15). I built relationships around trust (Jaggard 2008) with UndocuQueers located in Seattle, Chicago, San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles, whose various stories converge thematically and literally in place as many of them met at various gatherings for UndocuQueers. Many of the stories that UndocuQueers shared intersect at various

points; despite their geographic distance, there are moments where their stories converge. Their experiences and understandings of them are thus not limited to where they live.

I found having relationships with UndocuQueers to be important for establishing myself as trustworthy. As a queer Latino, I found many of these spaces to be welcoming to me. My engagement with issues around being undocumented, queer, and Latinx in Seattle helped me to be in contact with many people active in these movements and their communities who I continued to have relationships with outside of this project. Moreover, considering that we operate under the time of Trump and a moment when DACA is in danger, the ability to conduct interviews with 12 UndocuQueer demonstrates a significant empirical contribution to the field of geography. I originally offered an interpretation, and the interviews challenged those ideas. I have the skills for people to become comfortable and feel safe to speak with me. It would have been difficult to carry out this project without the previous connections I possessed, and not many UndocuQueers would trust someone who was not committed to supporting their communities. Just as geographers drew on feminist scholars to inform their work as involved and political (Anderson et al. 1990; Sieber 1993), I engage with the undocumented, queer, and Latinx communities in Seattle to situate the narratives that comprise this paper as practically and theoretically productive for activists and researchers.

I conducted 12 interviews with people who identify as community leaders and who have identified at one point as UndocuQueer. Most leaders live in Washington State, with many those residing in Seattle. All 12 UndocuQueers also identify as part of the Latinx community, so their stories represent only part of the people who are undocumented queer migrants. Many of them are Mexican. While Mexicans represent more than half of the estimated 11 million undocumented migrants in the U.S. (Yee, Davis, and Patel 2017), they do not represent the

experiences of all of those who identify as undocumented and queer. Nevertheless, this study offers insight into how widely varied the practices of a specific subset of this group are. Within undocumented queer migrant Latinxs, the ways in which they navigate the world overlap but do not conform to one another.

I primarily draw on narratives to contextualize this research. Why narratives? In *Yearning*, bell hooks calls for a new vision that includes Black women's contributions since those inputs are those of "practical experience that is the breeding ground for all useful theory" (hooks 1990, 48). I believe this comes into the space of ethnographic fieldwork, particularly within interviews, to develop theory that is applicable for UndocuQueers. I embrace how the ruptures from ethnography reveal the "practical experience" that comes along with attempting to understand one's lived reality. I came to this realization through the work of Lorena Muñoz and Saidiya Hartman who demonstrated how a "rupture, marked by my personal disclosure," as Muñoz shares, "produced a nuance way to understand" her project and her relationship to the people involved (Muñoz 2016, 302). Hartman also produces new trajectories for her research as she conducted fieldwork in Ghana (Hartman 2007). Hartman, Muñoz, and hooks converge to ruminate about the how interactions and storytelling help produce theory. My own project similarly attempts to critically engage with narratives and my relationships to UndocuQueers to stake out their potential in transforming scholarship and politics.

I examine my own position conducting this fieldwork to situate the narratives within a larger site of ethnography. Firstly, I am reminded about how Alison Jaggar states that good feminist research must have "trustworthiness" (Jaggar 2008, x). Secondly, I draw on Richa Nagar's conceptualization of positionality in *Muddying the Waters* to rethink this reflection beyond a strictly bounded identity category in fieldwork. Nagar proposes that we think through

postcolonial studies about “situated solidarities” (Nagar 2014, 86) and how “the sociopolitical and institutional locations in which researchers [are] operating” (100) produce the research space. Positionality as a process reframes scholars’ accountability to not limited to the planning state nor on the field but continues to her present reflections on how to produce transformative scholarship. I seek to engage in the sociopolitical, economic, geopolitical, and cultural processes that have created the opportunities for me to engage in this research with UndocuQueers.

Considering how undocumented queer migrant leaders may be spread out, I situate some of my work within the lens of a participant observer in Entre Hermanos. The organization offers sexual health services, primarily around HIV/AIDS, to queer Latinxs in the Seattle area. Events like those described at the beginning of this chapter create opportunities for Entre Hermanos to share information about new projects that provide queer Latinxs with access to mental health services, legal consultations, wage theft concerns, and social events, to name a few. Entre Hermanos primarily serves lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans Latinxs in the King County area. I initially wanted to work with the organization because I am invested in supporting queer Latinxs generally. However, the more time I spent with Entre Hermanos I came to realize that the people who seek services are undocumented. I decided that I would conduct an ethnography of Entre Hermanos to better understand how they operate within these various processes to become a space that can accessible sexual health support services, legal advice, labor theft advocacy, mental health connections, and socializing for queer Latinxs. I decided to make Entre Hermanos a location through which I would thread the narratives while also thinking through how people have interacted with the organization as a site of support and power. I bring together narratives from the interviews and ethnography of Entre Hermanos with a critical discourse analysis of artwork to make the subsequent arguments in this text.

## *Roadmap of Thesis*

The accounts in this thesis help scholars think through how undocumented queer migrant leaders expand how we think about care in relation to identifying as UndocuQueer, navigating the reality around them, and producing worlds in which to live. I think about how disidentification can be a way to navigate institutions, geopolitics, and culture and imagine a world in the future that centers their experiences. I draw on José Esteban Muñoz's notion of disidentification and world-making to make sense of how UndocuQueers' narratives produce different geographic stories. Considering that scholars have already produced literature around the daily performances that queer people of color engage to navigate the world, then I synthesize that research with the existing literature within geography.

Chapter 1 offers a succinct timeline of UndocuQueers' participation in social movements, often leading them and offering critiques to some of the rhetoric organizations used. I begin to thread some of the theories and ideas that I deploy throughout this thesis. I also examine how UndocuQueers have expressed their identification as UndocuQueer. This section sets the foundation for how I examine UndocuQueers' navigations of their reality and how they produce worlds around them. It describes how UndocuQueers express identifying as UndocuQueer, indicating how they make sense of the world around them. I argue that UndocuQueers perceive themselves as actively producing space through their navigations of geopolitical, economic, and cultural exploitation and exclusion.

In Chapter 2, I argue that the state is not a monolithic entity. Rather we can understand the state as heterogeneous and constituted by its many ebbs and flows. In the second section, I look at Entre Hermanos as a site that is part of the state and the community that navigates this

tension for their undocumented queer migrant Latinxs clients. I also look at how UndocuQueers' practices of self-care are also acts of caring for other and communities. In chapter 3, I examine how some of the practices that UndocuQueers develop help scholars consider a production of space by UndocuQueers around care and a validation of alternative ways of being for the present and future through world-making. In this chapter, I synthesize black feminist thought, care ethics, feminist geopolitics, and queer people of color critique to make sense of how UndocuQueers participate in projects of world-making. I conclude this thesis with a consideration of what the findings mean, offering thoughts on future developments under Donald Trump's current administration.

## Chapter 1: UndocuQueer as History and Subjectivity

This chapter seeks to situate this study historically and within the narratives of the UndocuQueers. In the first section, I analyze some of the historical aspects of the queer, immigration, and UndocuQueer sociopolitical movements. I consider the critiques they have lobbied at the queer and immigration rights movements, and I examine some of the alternative politics that their participation enables. The second section draws on the narratives of UndocuQueers to produce different, or new, geographic stories and worlds. I establish the ways in which undocumented queer migrant leaders have expressed their identifications with UndocuQueer as a social and political project of producing spaces and futures.

### *UndocuQueer Interventions: Critiques and Alternative Politics*

I trace how undocumented queer migrants have been involved in immigration rights movements and have offered criticisms aimed at expanding strategies within these spaces. This section is meant to recount UndocuQueers as historically and geographically placed within social movements as well as geopolitical processes. What follows is not meant to be an exhaustive account of the immigration rights movement (other scholars have done this work) but rather I pluck out specific examples to attempt to thread through some of the ways in which UndocuQueers have participated, led, and critiqued these movements. I use these accounts to provide a level of historical context for the discussions that occur in the latter chapters. First, I offer a few moments that demonstrate how relational they are and the ways in which they have leveraged strategies deployed in earlier movements for justice in their own. Secondly, I touch on the participation of undocumented queer people in these movements to highlight their political

agency and their willingness to critique organizing spaces as exclusionary, pointing to the ways that framing justice without intersectionality fails to serve some of the most vulnerable people.

Many groups of undocumented activists became connected through their activism across the U.S. around their similarly precarious condition. Many of them identified as “DREAMers” after their support for a proposed federal law—the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, or the Dream Act—that would under strict conditions grant documented status to youth in the United States. Many DREAMers became organized and active in 2010, publically “coming out” as “undocumented and unafraid,” a tactic that Karma Chávez argues resonates with the queer rights movement (Chávez 2013). People have traced the origin of undocumented students’ activism to Tucson, Arizona, where five undocumented students occupied Senator John McCain’s office in May 2010 to support the DREAM Act. In a 2011 article in *Waging Nonviolence*, Jake Olzen described the increasing number of student-led actions throughout the United States as small, committed, “and connected” (Olzen 2011). Whether due to inspiration or organization networks, in referring to these actions as connected, Olzen speaks to how undocumented student actions are not isolated incidents but part of a network that influences and informs each other. In other words, the organizing work of one community gave ideas to and inspired others putting their bodies on the line for change. This collection of people grew as they began to relate their experiences with one another as part of the systemic challenges they face as undocumented.

Some of the focus that undocumented student organizing received from media emphasized their lack of citizenship status without considering how their status intersected with various other identity markers. For example, blogs and newspapers highlighted a video contributed by the Washington DREAM Act Coalition that centered sixty-seven undocumented

youth with signs about how they sought reform as students. At various points within the network of undocumented groups working for immigration rights, activists who had “come out” as undocumented also “came out” as queer. Many activists began to openly share their identities as gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, and gender nonconforming. In an article in the Huffington Post, Ryan Campbell wrote about the number of LGBT organizers in leadership positions in organizations within the immigration rights movements. Years after these actions were covered in various media outlets, Campbell later describes the situation for many undocumented queer activists: “UndocuQueer organizers find themselves divided between cultural worlds: one foot in a movement overwhelmingly speaking on behalf of and for Latinos [sic], the other in the LGBT community, all while suffering the indignities of undocumented status” (Campbell 2015). Many undocumented queer youth participated as leaders in the movement at its inception and have remained at the forefront of radical actions for justice for immigrant, queer, and racial communities.

Prerna Lal, an undocumented queer migrant woman who founded the Immigrant Youth Justice League, traced the history of undocumented queer organizing back to 2001 in a Huffington Post article published in 2013. She notes that Tania Unzueta, a queer undocumented woman from Chicago, had been scheduled to testify for the DREAM Act at Washington D.C. about her experiences in the U.S. before the 9/11/2001 attacks delayed this indefinitely. She writes about how her work at DreamActivist helped use the stories of queer undocumented youth to build relationships across mainstream immigrant and queer rights organizing spaces. In her article, Lal weaves the presence of queer undocumented youth through various actions: The National Coming Out of the Shadows Day in Chicago, the “Trail of Dreams” from Florida to Washington D.C., and the sit-in at John McCain’s office in Arizona. While Lal describes

UndocuQueers' participation in these movements, she acknowledges their "intersectional oppression" (Lal 2013) and the creation of "UndocuQueer" as a political identity.

I think about the intersectional identity of UndocuQueer as undocumented and queer, as well as race, gender, sexuality, trans, ability, religion, etc. I draw on Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) to think about "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (Gilmore 2007, 28). This vulnerability is relational, demonstrated in Lisa Cacho's concept of social death: "the production and ascription of value are both violent and relational, both differential and contextual" (Cacho 2012, 18). Lal argues that the tactics the immigration rights movement deployed were not, in fact, simply drawn from the queer rights movement but instead inspired by the experiences of subjection of the UndocuQueers participating in the movement who sought to use their stories to support family and friends.

UndocuQueers have used their experiences to critically critique the immigration and queer rights movements. UndocuQueers' stories of struggle, adversity, change, and joy can be found through the interstices and convergences of their commitments to undocumented, racialized, and queer communities. Their experiences, thus, encompass the ways in which both the queer and immigrant rights have failed to think through the needs of all immigrants or queers through narrowly defined objectives. Lal points to how mainstream LGBT organizations have a history of opting for assimilationist strategies for justice while mainstream immigration reform organizations have lobbied critiques against radical tactics in favor of respectability politics, which narrowly defines those who are worthy of justice, of value, and of equality, or the ways in which we frame ourselves, our actions, and politics around the normative logics of capitalism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy. While her article describes organizing work that attempts

to move beyond the narrow perspectives of mainstream groups, her concerns stem from her experiences as an undocumented queer woman. These organizations may not always be aware of the contributions of UndocuQueers and, thus, may not be as expansive in vision in seeking justice for those who identify as both undocumented and queer. I argue in further detail below that UndocuQueers have attempted to imagine a world that seeks justice for all.

In their political articulations of justice for all, UndocuQueers offer critiques at moralistic frameworks used in social justice movements and media. This framework has depended on the “normalizing figure” of the ‘good’ undocumented student, which “relies on the constant reproduction and enforcement of racialized gender norms that govern sexual behavior, speaking styles, diet, emotional range, punctuality, manners, dress, and much more” (Spade and Willse 2016, 3). Jake Olzen, for example, writes about how those who have been arrested at civil disobedience actions were arrested, released on bail, but not deported. He posits that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) likely does not want bad publicity for deporting “some of America’s best-education youth of moral character—even if they do not have papers” (Olzen 2011). The author argues that it is despite their undocumented status that their morality, or their commitment to patriotic ideals, should be measured. Under Trump and the recent deportation of DREAMers, the current administration’s disregard for their appearance to the whole of the U.S. shifts this analysis to think about how respectability politics may not be as relevant today. Even with this, UndocuQueers have come forward to criticize these types of judgements as founded within settler colonial, white supremacist, heteropatriarchal hierarchies. These critiques stem from UndocuQueers’ daily lived experiences and have manifested materially and experientially.

UndocuQueer activists have challenged some of the hierarchical bases on which certain aspects of social movements have operated. Some immigration rights leaders and the media

framed their arguments for justice around respectability politics, using the contributions of immigrants to further highlight a distinction between criminals and upstanding citizens (Cacho 2012, 116–117). Additionally, mainstream queer rights leaders’ language seeks to recognize the commonality between the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and trans communities and the straight community. This occurred in the campaign for marriage equality, where the equation between gay and straight “promotes equality within the oppressive frame of heteropatriarchy,” shifting the line on “what is considered good, healthy, and normal and what remains bad, unhealthy, stigmatized, and criminalized” (Spade and Willse 2016, 7). UndocuQueers have sought other forms of engagement besides respectability politics.

In claiming identities deemed unworthy people with the most privilege, some UndocuQueers have challenged what constitutes a rationale someone that should stay in the US. UndocuQueers have looked inward to their own experiences and outward to other movements for ways to imagine a justice that emancipates all aspects of their identity. In so doing, they open possibilities up to think about how justice can work for those most disadvantaged and exploited. The lived experiences of UndocuQueers drive the theoretical pathways for this research, connecting a range of theorists and scholars to offer practical critiques for moving forward in liberation movements. I ultimately argue that UndocuQueers have used care, and sites of care, to navigate these exclusions in their approaches for justice.

### *UndocuQueer Affiliations as Experience*

In this section, I establish the ways in which undocumented queer migrant leaders have expressed their identifications with UndocuQueer as a social and political project of producing spaces and futures. When I initially examined the rhetoric UndocuQueers deployed to talk about

themselves in the media, and how the media portrayed them, I read an UndocuQueer identification as a political one. Many UndocuQueers described this identification as a political articulation of a simultaneous commitment to both the immigrant and queer rights movements. These depictions facilitated an understanding of UndocuQueer that made sense through a specific type of political legibility that marked undocumented queer migrant leaders as bridges between two seemingly disparate yet related movements for rights. Many UndocuQueers did engage movement leaders to critique how a failure to include one aspect of their identity over another did not capture the specific challenges they faced. They worked to create agendas that were expansive enough to consider how documentation status, sexual orientation, and gender converge around their respective issues in these spaces. Their political actions have sought to push policy-makers to consider the needs of lesbian, gay, and transgender migrants.

UndocuQueers articulate their experience *as* UndocuQueer as both social and political. Many spoke about how they came to identify as such and what this identification means to them through social relations that could or were political. On one hand, UndocuQueer is an identification that expresses and makes legible a particular political orientation. For some, UndocuQueer is a commitment that “all walls will fall,” or an expression that the multi-layered conditions of their lives do not allow them to choose a side between borders and boundaries. On the other hand, UndocuQueer is also a declaration of the social relations that they see as part of a project of world-making. Social interactions help construct this identification as UndocuQueer, and the spaces where these occur allow for UndocuQueers to imagine a future that considers their identities and those of the people they care about who are left unprotected from these processes of subjection (J. E. Muñoz 1999, 2009). I provide some descriptions of how people

have developed their understandings of UndocuQueer and what this does for conceptualizing the political and social.

Jorge C. grew up in Mexico City, Mexico, and came to the United States in 2008, which was too late to participate in the federal program Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Jorge identifies as UndocuQueer, though they often challenge this identification and refer to themselves as an ‘illegal faggot’ in protests. This demonstrates a form of disidentification with some spatial dimensions associated with it. Jorge disidentifies with respectability politics, particularly around the term undocumented queers, in some spaces in order to gain access to resources that would otherwise be difficult to reach. Jorge does not do this because they explicitly identifies along normative lines. That is why Jorge identifies as an “illegal faggot” in protest spaces because the denotations around the term claim back the term as empowering. Jorge describes how they attended workshops for undocumented queer migrants at a conference for United We Dream and how “nice” seeing “other people going through the same thing” as them was. At the conference, they noted that it was the “representation” of undocumented queer folks that spoke to them. The conference focused on issues of migration and documentation status, and Jorge was surprised and excited to see workshops around being undocumented *and* queer.

For Jorge, it was difficult to untangle the differences between the social and political aspects of being UndocuQueer. When I asked if they believed UndocuQueer to be a political identity, they stated: “I think that depends because sometimes you do seek the social comfort of it, the social comfort of being with people who are going through the same thing as you, and then that’s where you kind of want to keep it. Other times, you’re like, okay. We’re going through this. We can do something. Let’s do something.” Geographers have thought about places, with

all their critiques, as places of care for people, drawing on Joan Tronto's dimensions of caring relations (Brown et al. 2014; Tronto 1994). For Jorge, being in community with other UndocuQueers brought on a social comfort through identifying common experiences of being undocumented and queer, as well as the resources they received at the conference. Jorge felt comfortable because others go "through the same thing" as they do. This recognition of shared experiences, however, does not stop at their social gathering but extends to one seeing their 'commonality' as a collective experience of vulnerability. "We're going through this" indicates an acknowledgement that a group of UndocuQueers share experiences of vulnerability, fear, and exclusion. The shift to a collective "Let's do something" indicates that these experiences are produced through structures that can be changed, whether an unthinkable possibility (Cacho 2012, 31), an imagining of a different future where care is central to this formulation.

Jorge recognizes that issues of employment, housing, healthcare, education and several markers as racialized, gendered, sexual, and criminal produce their insecurity and vulnerability. UndocuQueer, for some, expresses that their subjection is relational to others' oppression as well as part of systems and networks of power that work together to police and erase undocumented queer migrants from the landscape. For some, like Jorge, UndocuQueer arrived through a moment that contained both social and political materializations. Jorge perceives a deployment of UndocuQueer to be politically charged, though the ways in which their politics manifest are myriad, interlocking, and intersectional. This story demonstrates how we can think about the social and political as mutually constitutive in the construction of UndocuQueer.

Jorge R. came together with other undocumented youth in Chicago to find ways to prevent one of their friends who was being detained from being deported. While they initially met to plan actions and events to support their friend, they continued to do this work for other people

who were undocumented in the area. Many of them were also undocumented. Jorge R. describes how during one meeting someone told them that they identified as queer. One by one, they went around and more undocumented youth shared their sexual orientation with each other. Surprised, many of them decided to get together outside of meetings to talk about being undocumented, queer, and Latinx. They began to incorporate their queerness in their immigration activism, and the Immigrant Youth Justice League planned a “Coming Out of the Shadows” event for people who identified as undocumented queer migrants.

The organizing meetings and the socializing that occurred outside of them provided Jorge R. and others a space to develop their understanding of what it means to be UndocuQueer. Jorge R. describes how the socializing in which they engaged helped him realize that they interacted with each other differently than they did with others who identified as only undocumented or queer. In other words, the social practices that developed when Jorge R. and his group came together offered alternative practices for them to socialize and be in community. Their interactions helped them understand how the type of precariousness they experience came from the multiple systems that produce conditions of vulnerability. This relational way of producing knowledge allowed them to think through the interlocking ways geopolitics and queerness converged to shape their lives. Their politics further developed through their relationships with each other that helped them see how their lives were differentially impacted. Their social and political engagements and influences do not function linearly; rather, they operate cyclically and simultaneously.

Jacque’s journey to identifying as UndocuQueer occurred when she came across an art piece with a large, pink man with “I EXIST / YO EXISTO” on his chest and stomach. The man has four colorful butterfly wings with words on them. The two top wings have “MIGRANT /

QUEERNESS” and “JOTERIA / MIGRANTE” on them. Jacque was in San Francisco and heading to a panel where other undocumented queer migrants would be present. Jacque states that the people on the panel with her introduced to term. Years later, Jacque describes what UndocuQueer means to her as a form of navigation and creation:

So I love that word. UndocuQueer. Because it really encompasses these two worlds that you're always...not always part of what is considered the norm, but you have a place in the world and a reality in the universe. And it's a universe that we created... We're always—part of our experience as people is that we are always having to create spaces for ourselves because those spaces usually don't exist for us. This is another thing that I find really inspiring about being queer and undocumented. It's that we are creators of spaces where we can live our life. We're creators of art, creators of literature, of just expressing who we are in the world. I think that's pretty cool. It's pretty awesome. Wherever we go, we try to create that space where we can be who we are.

Although Jacque describes the term as being part of two worlds, in her account, Jacque constantly refers to the ways in which being Latina in Latinx spaces helped her understand her UndocuQueer-ness. As queer, Mexican, femme, and undocumented, she came to theorize her experience as constantly creating spaces for her communities. This is how I think through many of these processes and experiences. UndocuQueers have come to see themselves as constantly creating spaces for themselves, creating worlds. Considering the ways in which Jacque has formulated her identification as UndocuQueer, I deploy Muñoz's notion of world-making to think about how their perspectives, navigations, and care practices create a reality. This provides scholars with insights to think about how UndocuQueers engagement in a politics of care is simultaneously political and social in their construction of worlds, in their making visible of geographic stories often overlooked. It allows scholars to interrogate problematic rhetoric in a theorist while engaging in their meaningful contributions (Muñoz 1999, 9). I attempt to reconcile a range of theories to think about how UndocuQueers' usage of care is part of their social and political world-making.

Jacque describes UndocuQueer as an identification of the ways in which undocumented queer migrants create the world around them. What does this mean exactly? Firstly, Jacque points to how undocumented queer migrants produce and shape spaces around them. Rather than obscure ways in which uneven power relations operate, Doreen Massey offers three counter-propositions to contest traditional geographic conceptualizations of space: 1) as the product of interrelations against anti-essentialism, 2) as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity, particularly around difference, and 3) as always in process, which maintains an openness to the future that political discourses deploy (Massey 2008, 10-11). In this way, scholars can see how a centering of those often not considered highlights the relational, expansive, and openness of their geographic stories. Consequently, UndocuQueers are not simply passive recipients in the distribution of vulnerability and security; rather, UndocuQueers actively participate in navigating, negotiating, and resisting these processes in their position within local and national networks. In so doing, UndocuQueers seek change through political activism that aims to change the approach the US takes toward undocumented migrants. They also create social relationships and ways of living that make their agency legible in ways that are not always legible to the state.

Through this reading, UndocuQueers are not simply passive recipients in state-sanctioned and extralegal violences; rather, UndocuQueers produce spaces in which they can navigate, negotiate, and resist processes of subjection in their various positions within local and national networks. Secondly, the production of these spaces, as such, enables the rehabilitation, legitimation, and creation of practices that often fall outside of how the state and communities currently conceptualize ways of being for people. UndocuQueers seek material change through political activism that aims to transform how the U.S. approaches migration, particularly around

those who are undocumented. UndocuQueers also engage in producing social spaces that foster social relationships and other ways of being in the world that are often not legible to the state. UndocuQueers interact and live in ways that manifest alternative politics for transformation for which scholars, activists, and communities might not have the language.

The social and political continue to constitute one another through UndocuQueers' practices to create spaces by and for themselves. Social practices produce alternative notions of politics while an enactment of politics shape the constantly shifting nature of these social collectivities in place. In other words, social and political practices inform one another in place to make possible the "simultaneity of stories-so-far" (Massey 2008, 12) for UndocuQueers that allows for "the positive multiplicity, which is important for the appreciation of the spatial" (Massey 2008, 13). This liveliness, as Massey describes, of stories reflect the way these practices create space and transform the world around them. In the subsequent section, I examine how the liveliness of UndocuQueers' narratives unveils how a project of world-making seeks to simultaneously produce change in the present and imagine a future through their disidentificatory practices. Massey's theorization opens UndocuQueers as active participants in their relationships with space, systems of subjection, people, and politics.

Thirdly, Jacque's declaration draws from a feminist ethics of care to identify why UndocuQueers produce space by and for them. I draw on Fiona Robinson (2011) to contextualize the significance of understanding geopolitical processes around the border through an approach informed by feminist ethics of care. UndocuQueers' production of space inspires Jacque's own approach that "involves a focus on attention, responsiveness, and responsibility to the needs of particular others" (Robinson 2011, 29). Being undocumented, compounded with the intersection of queerness and racialization, produces a need to be "who we are" understood

within the historical and spatial contexts of UndocuQueers' lives (Tronto 1995; Sevenhuijsen 1998, 59; Robinson 2011). UndocuQueers view their existence and how they lead their lives relationally; in fact, similar to black feminist criticism (Combahee River Collective 1977; Griffin 2007, 490), many UndocuQueers stand in solidarity with larger struggles for undocumented, queer, trans, and racialized communities. Consequently, I "place into context [UndocuQueers'] daily lived lives" (Tronto 1995, 142) to conceptualize the nature of and relationship between the public and private spheres through their practices of disidentification.

Lastly, Jacque's declaration that undocumented queer migrants create spaces where none existed before signals the ways in which UndocuQueers have engaged in practices of disidentification. In other words, UndocuQueers have worked with politicians and within electoral politics to seek changes for their communities; however, UndocuQueers may deploy, or sometimes critique and decenter, this engagement for purposes for which they were originally not intended. DACA, for example, provides those recipients with less of a threat for deportation and detention (though these continue to be a reality under Donald Trump's administration) at the expense of being surveilled via documentation and biometric technology. DACA does not extend the type of encompassing change that UndocuQueers seek, as many have recognized the ways in which the program reproduces the good/bad, worthy/unworthy immigrant narrative between a select few and those who are older, arrived after the program's deadline to participate, have committed a crime, or did not arrive as children. For those who qualify, however, DACA enables those recipients to move away from being exploited within the informal economy, such as the agricultural sector, to find employment that enables them to financially support their families. While they may still be excluded from receiving state funding, and a work permit does not grant them permission to live in the U.S., some undocumented queer migrants have taken this work

permit to support their activist work throughout the country. UndocuQueers, then, can produce alternative geographies that improve their life chances. Jacque's declaration suggests that we consider the geographies of disidentifications to examine how a project of world-making seeks to achieve this making of life chances for UndocuQueers.

## **Chapter 2: Institutions and Self-Care**

### **Making Our Own Life Chances**

Lukas Rogelio was born in Mexico and brought over to the U.S. when he was three months old. Lukas identifies as gay and grew up in Washington State working as a farmworker to help support his family. Lukas began his first year of community college with the idea that his parents would “always support me financially.” During Lukas’s first year in college, however, he received a phone call that his father had been deported. His mother decided that she would leave the U.S. to be with her husband. Lukas was shocked, surprised, and unsure of what to do. Lukas wishes “could have done more” like contact, as he states, “several people that now I know. You know, do calls, or do emails, or contact several organizations to prevent” his father from being deported. Lukas stopped going to school full-time and began working to support himself without his parents around. Even with a job, Lukas lacked the financial support to continue paying for his education. Lukas attempted to seek out a loan, but without a valid social, the woman who had been helping him through the application process could no longer move forward. Without a social security number, however, he could not receive a loan. Lukas dropped out of school and began working in Othello, Washington.

Lukas is currently a recipient of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. He supports other undocumented migrant farmworkers in the area even if they do not identify as queer and trans. Cathy J. Cohen has argued that movement-building can be done alongside those who experience subjection under similar processes, and Lukas seeks to support others who work on the fields as farmworkers. Lukas has worked with people who are unaware about the eligibility requirements for DACA. He lives in a rural area in Washington and states that many people do not own computers or speak English. Lukas has seen how many lawyers

charge a significant amount of money to assist DACA-eligible undocumented youth complete the application. Lukas acquires, helps people fill out, and submits the application free-of-charge. He had to navigate the fields as a queer undocumented farmworker but still understands the conditions under which other farmworkers negotiated as undocumented. He builds community by caring for people through the services that he offers to others since, as Lukas claims, “I knew it was really hard for me at some point.”

DACA offers material benefits to recipients but also reaffirms harmful processes that exploit and marginalize people who are undocumented, whether they receive DACA or not. DACA reestablishes the valuation of the good immigrant and the devaluation of immigrant who do not engage in practices considered good, healthy, or lawful (Cacho 2012; Spade and Willse 2016). Feminist geopolitical scholar Dana Cuomo notes that a logic of masculinist protection meant to care for victims “can paradoxically result in decreased security and increased fear for those whom” these type of geopolitical projects, like DACA, “is purported to protect” (Cuomo 2013, 858). However, for some of the most vulnerable in society, their negotiation and navigation with DACA offers limited provisions that benefit them financially and emotionally despite the insecurities that may arise due to the current administration’s threats to discontinue the program and deport its recipients. This navigation, particularly with the state, is what I want to focus on in this chapter.

In *Normal Life*, Dean Spade describes administrative violence as a set of institutional norms that may produce more harm for transgender people (hereafter, trans) than discrimination and hate crimes. In Spade’s formulation of administrative violence, he signals that the vulnerable conditions in which trans people find themselves are partially a result of the administrative norms that produce their precarious positions and reduced life chances (Spade 2015; Gilmore

2007; Pulido 2006). In other words, healthcare and housing may be conceptualized as solely beneficial for people without applying a critical lens on how institutional norms may produce and exploit some of the most vulnerable people in society. I use Spade's ideas to think about how his formulation helps us holistically understand the types of violences UndocuQueers experience, such as lack of housing due to the requirements around ID. I offer Lukas's narrative on DACA to help us understand that state apparatuses and, thus, processes of subjection are not monolithic entities. The state, and the ebbs and flows that constitute the state as such, rather, can a heterogeneous, seemingly contradictory site of both care and harm for even the most vulnerable people in society. Our analyses of various state-connected sites require a nuanced conceptualization of how they differentially affect people across several markers of difference as well as how their impact can be understood as multidimensional.

In this chapter, I think through why and how undocumented queer migrants can navigate several state apparatuses and produce their own understandings of them. I first want to identify the ways in which state apparatuses do not apply evenly across people nor are they opaque in their application of policies. I argue that the state cannot fully account for the wide range of practices in which people engage. The state's interacting, overlapping apparatuses create gaps within processes of subjection where people can interact with the state and each other differently or produce other ways of being. I use this to then think about *Entre Hermanos*, a nonprofit, be thought about as a site in which undocumented queer migrants experience care and harm. I conclude this chapter thinking through how UndocuQueer can also be understood as a way of navigating complex systems through a critical lens pointed toward nuancing these processes.

*The State as Uneven and Full of Gaps*

I want to move away from conceptualizing the state as a singular entity that shapes people's life chances uniformly to one where the interactions between the state and people are thought about through a critical lens. Michel Foucault argues that discourses as power expand, flourish, and transform through various sites, of which I focus on institutions and organizations that are a part of or receive support from the state (Foucault 1978). Social movements and grassroots organizations, such as #blacklivesmatter, have brought necessary attention to the ongoing disproportionate rates of incarceration for Black and Latinx people, expansions in immigration agencies that have facilitated the highest rates of deportations under the Obama administration, and the constant threat of police brutality for people of color. The focus on incarceration, deportation, and police brutality—while significant—paint the state as solely producing harm for some of the most vulnerable people.

At a moment when we conflate police brutality to be the main workings of state interaction with marginalized peoples, the following section attempts to piece through how scholars have thought about the state as a collection of moving parts that inevitably create holes in the application of legislation. We may theorize various parts of the state as both producing harm and care for UndocuQueers. In this section, I attempt to highlight the ways in which the state fails to police and regulate practices and peoples as completely as we may conceptualize them to be. I particularly focus on the regulation of sexuality as it relates to class, race, and gender to think through some of the gaps that exist both in the literature and the state's own regulation.

First, I address how power functions to perpetuate violence against racialized communities and establishes racializing surveillance as an integral mode of theorizing geopolitical processes. Surveillance scholars have unpacked the relationship between the history

of surveillance practices in the United States and white supremacy, colonialism, empire, and capital. I consider forms of viewing, whether in-person or through government documents, as moving, heterogeneous parts in the construction of surveillance. I use Ruth Wilson Gilmore's idea of "fatal coupling" (2002, 15) to think through the literature. Racism is, as Gilmore explains, "state-sanctioned or extralegal" (2007, 28) "death-dealing displacement of difference into hierarchies that organize relations within and between the planet's sovereign political territories" (2002, 16). The fatal coupling of power and difference opens a theoretical and empirical space up to examine how these surveillance practices have been used to render legible racialized people to the state. The power that comes with targeting difference make racialized communities susceptible to state-sanctioned violence that reduce their life chances.

The state has regulated sexuality through various agencies and institutions. In *The Straight State*, Margot Canaday analyzes this regulation of sexuality through three federal agencies: immigration, welfare, and the military. Canaday traces how federal policies developed to become explicit forms of regulating sexuality, the earliest one being the regulation of female sexuality in the early twentieth century. Female homosexuality began to receive attention when women earned the right to vote and began to enter the military. While these policies initially sought to regulate same-sex practices, they moved to look at people who they could legally identify as homosexual and as such more likely to engage in these practices (Canaday 2009). Canaday's analysis revolves around the construction of a heterosexual/homosexual binary; however, if female sexuality had been regulated previously, then how would practices that are considered outside of the norm but not same-sex be thought about? The state produces vulnerable conditions for people who fall outside of normativity's power relationship, even if unintentionally, just like the application of these policies remain uneven. In other words, some

people may go unnoticed by these systems if they are traversing through immigration, for example, or they may use the system to fight for their rights.

Even if we refer to the state as straight, scholars should consider spaces where people are interacting with and affected by these systems. In *Stranger Intimacy*, Nayan Shah uses stranger or transient intimacy as a site of analysis to shed light through legal cases to the stories of South Asian transient workers from the western US states and British Columbia. Shah demonstrates how transient migrant workers from India sought to deal with their conditions through court appeals on labor contracts and property rights (Shah 2012). Immigration may have prevented some people from entering the US, but transient workers offer insight into how the people targeted by these policies also engaged with the straight state. The gap may be one described where a queer transient worker entered the US and become vulnerable to exploitation but could defend themselves against accusations of sodomizing younger white men. The multilayered, overlapping apparatuses interact imperfectly such that spaces appear where people can accomplish this.

I connect this discussion to one around embodied experience, which provides scholars an opportunity to see something they may have missed. Lorena Muñoz realized that heteronormative practices in the construction of the street vending landscape, but she reached this conclusion through her interactions with a queer street vendor (Muñoz 2016). Feminist scholars in security studies have shifted to think about how embodied experiences illustrate the dialectical relationship between geopolitics and everyday life. They have defined surveillance, for example, as part of the multifaceted apparatuses of securitization, “the diverse processes through which issues, spaces, and subjectivities become targets of regulation and surveillance in the name of ensuring ‘security’ (e.g., economic, physical, cultural) for particular populations,

most often the economically and politically privileged” (Williams and Massaro 2013, 752). These scholars have defined state processes as a collection of parts rather than a homogenous being. I argue that lived realities allow us to understand how practices shed light on these “diverse practices.”

Feminist scholars have contributed understandings of the ways in which geopolitical processes of security have differential impacts on people. To understand this unevenness, feminist scholars have suggested that embodied experiences reveal the relationship between surveillance, the quotidian, and difference that is often rendered invisible through spatial fetishism (Katz 2007). Feminist geopolitics, consequently, proposes a discussion of the material and affective connections to geopolitical structures and their effects on those most disadvantaged. Yet experiences with insecurity, surveillance, racism, and the emotions and affects that come with those are anything but seamless. Drawing on feminist geopolitics and black geographies, I specifically consider how racialized bodies’ embodied experiences uncover the complexities in the web between race, security, nation, capital, and affect to “attend to grounded lives, politics, and specific interrelations” (Lawson 2007, 9) and offer nuanced observations into the conditions of UndocuQueers and their lives.

Feminist work challenges the dominant scale of traditional geopolitical inquiry to reveal the opacity in security. Rather than implicitly emphasize geopolitical processes as issues of only the state, Jill Williams and Vanessa Massaro (2013) bring “attention to the everyday and embodied sites and discourses through which transnational economic and political relations are forged and contested” (751). What happens when we shift our vantage point from the “conquering gaze from nowhere” (Haraway 1991, 188) to “situated knowledges” (Haraway 1988, 581)? Williams and Massaro, along with other scholars, suggest that geopolitical processes

“shape and are shaped by banal, everyday practices and are experienced in uneven ways depending on one’s social positioning” (Williams and Massaro 2013, 752). In other words, geopolitics produce constraints and limitations around the way we live our life while the quotidian navigations and resistances reflect onto these structures. Perpetually fluid, feminist geopolitics suggests that embodied experiences provide insights into how surveillance practices become normalized at specific spatial-temporal moments.

Black geographies recognize the importance of relational embodied experience, particularly of those exploited through geopolitical and cultural processes. In *Demonic Grounds* Katherine McKittrick (2006) posits that “the interrogations and remappings provided by black diaspora populations can incite new, or different, and perhaps more just, geographic stories” since traditional geographies “cannot do the emancipatory work some subjects demand” (xix). For example, McKittrick examines Linda Brent, a black woman held captive under slavery, to understand how through her body-scale’s visibility of race, sex, and gender she produces her own and Dr. Flint’s (the slave plantation owner) sense of place. The garret in which Brent hides makes available a place “to articulate her lived experiences and emancipatory desires, without losing sight of the dehumanizing forces of slavery” (41). In this way, Brent observes her family, friends, who remained in captivity, and Dr. Flint and reveals her centrality—and relationality—to the racializing surveillance processes on the slave plantation.

Linda Brent viewing life on the slave plantation from the garret, thus, is a type of surveillance Browne refers to as “dark sousveillance.” This term is a way “to situate the tactics employed to render one’s self out of sight” (Browne 2015, 21). These tactics refer to not being visible *from* people, places, and objects, or the relationally of visibility, experiences, and space. In this way, dark sousveillance imagines practices as oppositional and providing other ways of

being that critique racializing surveillance. Furthermore, as a way of knowing, dark sousveillance speaks not only to observation (or ways of seeing) but “also to the use of a keen and experiential insight” (or ways of being and knowing) of surveillance (22). While these scholars have thought of surveillance and sousveillance under slavery, this racializing surveillance framework converges with feminist geopolitics to think about how the everyday as a site and temporality helps interrogate how people navigate and, perhaps, resist power. Consequently, I examine racialized bodies’ embodied experiences in everyday sites to make visible the uneven effects, navigations, and resistances to surveillance practices.

Feminist geopolitical scholars and black feminist geographers have demonstrated how embodied experiences of insecurity and care, relational racialization, and tactics of resistance can expand understandings of the effects, negotiations, resistances to surveillance practices. When scholars analyze surveillance through embodied experiences of insecurity, these situated knowledges untangle the complicated ties between racism, nation, and affect. We conceptualize the relational aspect of these processes through care ethics rather than perpetuate, as Clark (2013) mentions, individualistic frameworks of assessing geopolitical programs. Racializing surveillance reaffirms racial lines of subjugation through national and transnational structures as well as lived materiality. Yet black geographies consider the ways in which visibility and invisibility produce alternative knowledge productions that nuance daily lived realities of surveillance. I argue, ultimately, that this convergence allows scholars to operationalize what Simone Browne refers to as “intersecting surveillances” in various projects across the U.S.

I argue that a consideration of the state as homogeneous deflects attention away from the attacks that have occurred on critical social services. On one hand, the attention that social movements and grassroots organizations have brought to transforming the dehumanizing

conditions have facilitated critical conversations questioning the role police, prisons, and borders should play in society. On the other, social services have received less care and attention, which allows politicians to reduce funding with little participation from people at their initial proposals. When we theorize the state as a collection of moving parts, we can see how people may find care within the state. The next section seeks to draw out those complexities.

Ultimately, feminist geopolitics aims to move beyond critique to think through change for those most affected by state-sanctioned violence. In order to understand how to resist and challenge power systems of surveillance, “an intersectional feminist analysis examines how intersecting forms of difference...shape geopolitical relations and the daily lives of differently situated individuals and communities” (Williams and Massaro 2013, 754). Consequently, an interrogation of embodied experiences of insecurity—their intellectual rigor and practical relevance—provides “the vitality to animate social change” (Wright 2008, 379). In so doing, feminist scholars posit that geopolitics requires an intersectional, critical analysis of experience, not simply an examination, to reveal how looking at the scale of the quotidian contributes insights for enacting social change.

### *Navigations for UndocuQueers and Entre Hermanos*

Jasbir K. Puar uses assemblages to think through how race, sexuality, nation, and gender flow through various political moments that constitute homonationalism. She connects seemingly disparate aspects of homonationalism that are “symptomatic of an analysis that reveals connectivity in places where it is generally assumed none exists” (Puar 2008, 165). As Spade and Willse (2016) mention that marriage equality move the line, Puar highlights how particular homosexual bodies become part of the official practices that also keep out queers of

color, queer migrants, and undocumented queers. Many UndocuQueers are excluded through this process. Additionally, state apparatuses around immigration are deployed unevenly across the U.S. Some sheriffs cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to detain undocumented migrants, while some cities become sanctuary cities to afford some level of protection to people from ICE. DACA, as mentioned in the introduction, allows people to work in the US but not to live in the country. This offers people with opportunities to work but reproduces their vulnerability by exploiting their labor and making their living condition uncertain. In this section, I consider how Entre Hermanos and UndocuQueers navigate requirements of the state and spatial configurations of exclusion, respectively.

Jacque Larrainzar describes how she became the first lesbian in 1997 to win political asylum to the United States because of her sexual orientation. Jacque engaged in political work in Mexico around sexuality and gender, particularly around HIV and sexual health education, with other activists who, as she explains, “didn’t have what a lot of people had to lose so I think that made us a little more dangerous because our commitment to make chances was even more fierce.” LGBTQ people in Mexico began to recognize the possibility and realization of community as they created spaces for themselves, began to organize alongside political, labor, and indigenous movements, and sought political change through protests. During an action, Jacque was arrested and later applied to asylum as Mexican officials continued to arrest other activists. Jacque describes how after she told an immigration officer that she was part of the activists who were being arrested, they told her that her friends had been murdered.

While Jacque’s application for political asylum was approved, she explains how she “never liked the United States.” She disliked their form of capitalism and mass consumerism and came to like the US less once she arrived and began to understand racism and xenophobia.

Jacque felt safer in the US from the violence that was occurring in Mexico but “didn’t have control over [her] life.” Jacque “had to go back in the closet” and, without papers, she was told she could not work without a social security number when she looked for a job in the formal economy. Jacque describes how she scared she felt when she was told she could not work or rent a place without a social security number and an ID that would prove her residency in the U.S. The hard part, as Jacque recounted, was that she could not make friends because she could not reveal who she was and from where she had come. Part of her transition to Seattle relied on the services and work that Entre Hermanos created in the 1990s.

Contradictions appear apparent when scholars engage in detailed accounts of ethnography carried out on specific sites. In *Reproducing Race*, Khiara Bridges presents an excellent ethnographic study of prenatal and birth health care at Alpha Hospital in New York City. Bridges places the public hospital within a historical and political-economic context that thinks through power and care through various state institutions. Bridges offers an account of the what the public health care system can offer to Medicaid-eligible women; many of these women go to Alpha Hospital because of the quality of the care they receive. However, Bridges argues that a contradiction exists wherein state power operates in malignant ways on people who are accessing this public institution. Bridges reconfigures state power to think about both the potential to provide quality care while simultaneously reproducing understandings of race that reverberate to other institutions (Bridges 2011). Configurations of power and care operate together to offer seemingly contradictory positions on healthcare. Undocumented queer migrants similarly navigate the state’s sites of harm and care, particularly for those whose families traveled to the US in search of a better life and come face-to-face with some stark realities. These contradictions are, in fact, similar to those of DACA; the contradictions are part of the

exploitative project that affords some opportunities to people while marginalizing them through the institutions in which people participate.

Education is another site where contradictions appear. Many immigrant parents perceive education as the path to realize the American Dream. In *Lives in Limbo*, Roberto Gonzales explores school as a site of belonging and conflict for undocumented youth. The construction of this division occurs when schools “structure feelings of belonging by slotting students into categories of ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’” (2016, 91). In the same vein that Bridges describes how poor, undocumented, or women of color had few options available aside from Alpha Hospital, undocumented youth are required to attend school. Some undocumented students were deemed deserving through their measured success in education, or their report cards. These students “felt increasingly ‘at home’ in the school community while the larger pool of students labeled undeserving felt ever more excluded” (ibid). The processes that construct feelings of belonging and exclusion similarly mirror those of the Alpha Hospital. Schools offer some students access to care, to success, and to feelings of belonging while simultaneously reproducing harmful rhetoric for others. Several examples of schools as sites of care exist that resist some of the settler colonial, capitalist logics that inform many of the educational approaches currently in place. If we can conceptualize certain state institutions as capable of being sites of care, then we can imagine how state funds that travel through nonprofits can be part of the “diverse processes” that constitute a heterogeneous state.

Part of my research was conducting an ethnography of *Entre Hermanos* as a site that serves queer Latinxs in the Seattle area, many of whom are undocumented, and receives most of their funding, particularly around HIV/AIDS, from the King County Health Department. I worked at *Entre Hermanos* as a volunteer from August to December 2016, carrying out several

small projects to support the organization's work as I learned about how they related to the population they serve and the state from which they receive funding. As an organization that constantly requires funds to support their work around HIV/AIDS case management, Entre Hermanos seeks out funding from companies, foundations, and local governmental entities. When entering Entre Hermanos's building in the Central District of Seattle, the place has posters and images of their past events, images of people in glitz and glamour. The organization carries out most of their operations out of a house with a fluctuating staff of about seven. I became involved with Entre Hermanos and initially viewed the organization as simply a community-oriented one devoid of state involvement. As I worked closer with staff members and offered up my skills and services, I realized that Entre Hermanos's community work around the sexual health of LGBTQ Latinxs is one aspect that constitutes the state.

I conceptualize the state as being constituted by its various ebbs and flows, through outsourcing its responsibilities to other entities in the form of funding streams and labor contracts. The interlocking, overlapping parts of the state produce gaps in the way a policy, such as sodomy laws, for example, were differentially understood and implemented. The workings of distinct state institutions possess gaps in themselves; however, there are gaps in the ways in which we understand how community organizations and nonprofits are integral, if seemingly peripheral, to the state. I seek to draw this thread out through my ethnography of Entre Hermanos in order to think through how we may theorizations of the state to simultaneously understand how they support communities and how they reaffirm axes of difference, such as that of race that Bridges describes for the Alpha Population. Rather than thinking of the state as primarily and only composed of state institutions, such as the health department or the police, I argue that 'the state' should be understood as the multiple, fluid parts that are connected to the workings of state

apparatuses. Some nonprofits and community organizations offer a site upon which to think through the seeming contradictions of providing care and reproducing harm. Entre Hermanos's relationship to the King County Health Department and the LGBTQ Latinx community in Seattle does this political work.

Entre Hermanos further complicates these analyses through its connection and support of communities and funding from the state. I do not want to reproduce a dichotomy that assumes that state-funded organizations only reaffirm processes of harm and that community-based organizations can only be sites of care. EH must meet the requirements that the King County Health Department has around collecting data about the health and wellbeing of people living with HIV/AIDS. Similar to how Bridges examined how particular policies reproduce race at the scale of pregnant women of color, the requirements of data collection in their own way reproduce and place blame on men of color who have sex with other men. EH, however, listens to community members to think about how they need to use the funding they receive to provide services adequate to the population with whom they work. I draw on Jose Esteban Muñoz's notion of disidentification to think about how Entre Hermanos engages with this concept at the scale of an organization rather than an individual. As an organization for queer people of color, the organization engages in practices that produce a space that simultaneously allows for people to feel comfortable with others and reaffirms processes of subjection in which they also actively resist. EH is an organization that is community-based and state-funded; in order to expand how we think about communities and the state, I nuance the conversation to examine how EH can reinforce harm and produce care.

EH was founded as an organization that would support people who identify as Latinx and are living with HIV/AIDS in a moment where resources were particularly in need. Originally

part of the People of Color Against AIDS Network, EH sought to provide services and tool in Spanish to Latinxs who are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. EH split off from POCAAN to provide these services to the community but did not restrict themselves to that; instead people needed, wanted, and desired a place for them to come together socially. As I argued in the introduction about how UndocuQueers identify as such both socially and politically, EH similarly sought to fill a niche around sexual health for queer Latinxs and provide a space for queer Latinxs to be in community with one another. EH recognizes that many of the queer Latinxs who use their services are also undocumented migrants, which they argue means that many of the community members feel isolated and want a place to meet others. The organization, as such, seeks out a wider approach.

EH is currently in the process of expanding its services understanding that many undocumented, queer, Latinx migrants require more than sexual health services but also that other forms of care exist in addition to those around healthcare. Luis Fernando Ramirez states that many of the people they work with are also undocumented migrants to the U.S., approximately 80-90% of the people who come to EH, although the organization does not collect this information. They are actively trying to provide services to holistically serve their populations, such as those around housing, employment, and mental health. EH used to have a group that focused on the needs of lesbian Latinas in Seattle; however, due to a decrease in participation, the group was discontinued. The funding situation EH finds itself means that they do not always have the money to continue services that the King County Health Department deems are not efficiently being used. In this way, funding to a certain extent limits the work that EH can or would like to engage in with queer Latinxs. EH reached their objective to provide more services through many conversations with queer Latinxs in Seattle, and they use their funds

to provide services to people that need them to survive. While the King County Health Department has requirements, the staff at EH works diligently to adapt those to the community they serve.

Entre Hermanos seeks to support a range of other people than LGBTQ Latinxs. Similar to how UndocuQueers' vision for justice encompasses justice for all, EH serve people who are undocumented, queer, and Latinx but whose position does not necessarily intersect with all three. The organization seeks to support people whose lives lie on similar precarious lines. For example, EH hosts an immigration lawyer once a month who offers pro bono services to a couple of people a visit. EH keeps the meeting times open to people seeking legal counsel for their issues around immigration without regard for their sexual orientation. As such, most of them are undocumented migrants wanting to change their citizenship status. Many of EH's events are open to people living with HIV/AIDS or who identify as LGBTQ, though their priorities remain around providing culturally appropriate and financially accessible programming and services to Latinxs.

The funding from the state and the attempts to listen to community produce some contradictions since both of their needs may be in conflict. EH funnels advice from the community to adapt their services and then extends back out to support them through various forms of programming. The funding from the state only dictates some of their outlines and the community helps shift them to match their needs. The funding, however, does make this community organization also part of the apparatuses of the state. Being part of the state and community are not mutually exclusive; EH is both a branch of the welfare state and part of the community that is also a site of care and harm. This messiness is what makes their work so productive to the people who seek out EH for their program. Many people who do not speak

English and who identify as Latinx do not feel comfortable going to some of the other queer organizations in Seattle or to the municipal government. EH offers a space for people to come and seek out the same types of resources they are looking for elsewhere. Similar to UndocuQueers, EH has created networks throughout the King County area that supplement the work they cannot do on their own. In this network, they know people in these organizations they can direct people to when they need it. I argue that it is the messiness of being both community and state that allows for this to occur.

Entre Hermanos reminds me that the state will continue to have holes and gaps that we need to become acquainted with as well as make visible the other ways of living in which communities engage. The state is not homogeneous, and organizations that receive funding from the state remain at the periphery, invisible, to people who critique the state as always only producing harm and reaffirming processes of subjection. The state, or the organizations that take on their funding and the people who care for others, has the potential to be a site of care that does not erase the fact that the state reproducing harm through biopolitical, administrative, and sovereign power. We need to remain critical of the state while also ensuring that the services that people need to stay alive remain intact or improved.

I also think about how forms of navigating state apparatuses are a form of self-care. Rather than limit the ways in which we conceptualize self-care as the practices we engage in the privacy of our own home, I outline some of the ways that acts of navigation can expand the notion of self-care. I believe that a politics of care is also a politics of survival. Marco Antonio Flores is a PhD student at Brown University in Ethnic Studies. I spoke to Marco over the phone to discuss how he has thought about and theorized being an undocumented queer migrant. Marco states that before he became a DACA-recipient, he felt scared to fly. For Marco, flying was

“always incredibly daunting, horrifying, frightful for me to get on a plane to school-related thing” because he did not have a form of identify to show. Marco decided that he would play off his “institutional privilege” as a student at Berkeley by wearing “certain sweaters that had the Berkeley name on it or an Ivy name on it.” These actions helped Marco navigate airports:

And for me, that was a way for when I would go up to the, you know, to the TSA, and they were like, do you have an ID? I would... first, I would be like, “Oh, I’m really sorry. I left in such a hurry today. I didn’t bring my ID, but I have my student ID. I’m a student at Berkeley. I have these two forms of student IDs, if this is okay.” ... Like that was me performing a particular subjecthood that would be allowed to pass. It was always the case that they would let me through, right. It would be like, don’t forget your ID next time. But in my mind, I’m like, okay, yeah. Whatever. I’m just glad I was able to go through because I know I’m gonna have to go through again at some point.

As undocumented, Marco feels that he needs to perform citizenship in these spaces that expect a certain type of performance from people. His navigation of space, and the production of space in the airport, require an understanding of citizenship as performative, as constantly being produced.

This navigation is a form of self-care. Marco cares for his well-being at the airport. If found out to be undocumented, the threats that loom for Marco are much larger than not being able to get on the flight. His performance of citizenship at the airport is a form of survival in the moment, is a form of not being caught. Similar to how Simone Browne talks about making oneself not visible to institutions, a form of sousveillance, Marco’s actions demonstrate the ways in which one uses norms and ideas about citizenship and its performance to make oneself not visible as undocumented. For many undocumented folk, this form of performance might be seen as inauthentic. But this inauthenticity preserves their livelihoods. But how, and when, do people recenter themselves? How do people continue to care for themselves when this form of care can be both survival and a form of oppression?

Julio Salgado identifies as an undocumented queer migrant artist of color. Many people who work around issues of migration, race, sexuality, class, language, and citizenship have come across his artwork. Although his work has become familiar to many people, Julio used to struggle with the relationship between art and race. For Julio, “Art was for White people” even though what he created “was not art. What I was doing was something that was necessary.” Eventually Julio realized that who he is “inform[s] my art” and “encompass like a lot of my experiences and what I want to do for the rest of my life.” He saw the work he produced as art, as him “creating culture” that would “share the way people need to think about people of color in general.” Julio also perceives art to be something that people gravitate towards because, “whether it’s music or literature or movies or shows or water, for people of color, you want to see yourself.” In this way, I think about how producing art can be a form of taking care of one’s self through creation.

Producing art is a form of self-care and more. Producing art in a world that constantly produces configurations of geopolitical and cultural exclusions for undocumented queer migrants is a form of political survival for that person. This form of survival and care extends out, as Entre Hermanos work does, to other people who see Julio Salgado’s artwork. His work has profound impacts on other people who view the representations of resistance and dissent in art as significant in understanding how they actively produce other social formations and spatial configurations. As such, the very same art can help others cope with processes of subjection.

As previously mentioned, the social constitutes much of the ways in which undocumented queer migrants describe how they identify as UndocuQueer and the work in which Entre Hermanos engaged. For many people, dancing is a way to go out and take care of themselves. Scholars, as I discuss in Chapter 3, have described how queer people of color

experience dance as more than simply a moment of movement. Dancing becomes a spacetime where communities come together and allow themselves the freedom to let go. In fact, navigation can be self-care and caring for communities and coming together to dance does just that. Dancing is a form of survival in a world that constantly shuts you down. The coming together as community allows for people to care for others on a much broader way as they also engage in self-care. This coming together as community, and the caring for community, is part of what I think about when I think about the ways in which we can think about UndocuQueer. In the next chapter, I unravel this through the notion of world-making.

### **Chapter 3: Unthinkable UndocuQueer Politics** World-Making as Care and Making Futures

*Introduction: "Structures have robbed us of our smartness"*

Carlos Padilla and their family 'crossed' the border between Mexico and the United States when they were two years old. Carlos identifies as gender nonconforming, embodying both feminine and masculine qualities in their gender expression. Carlos's mother, father, and brother are no longer in the US for various reasons: deportation, seeking to not experience fear anymore, and reunification with loved ones. Carlos presently resides in Washington State, where their sister also lives, and carries out two primary political projects for people who identify as queer, trans, racialized, and/or migrants: as a co-founder of Somos Seattle, a nascent organization that seeks to support queer Latinxs across Washington State; and as a campaign manager for the Washington Won't Discriminate: No on I-1552. Growing up under conditions of poverty in East Los Angeles, Carlos knew that they were "being treated differently," they describe, "if he wore certain outfits" on the bus to school. Carlos narrates how their family, especially their brother, would wear clothes from South Park, a specific brand of clothing that he stated marked them as "gangster" and as youth who would be "getting in trouble." School authority figures, such as counselors and teachers, foresaw a future for Carlos and their brother devoid of value, marking the couple of siblings as not worth the school's time and labor. Teachers believed that Carlos's choice of clothing explicitly demonstrated that school was not their priority. If the teachers believed that Carlos did not care about school, then why invest in them as a student?

Carlos argues, then, that institutions were not built with marginalized people's success or liberation in mind. Carlos believes that migrants, queers, trans people, people living in poverty, brown and black communities, undocumented people, English-as-a-second-language speakers,

and other people exploited by our systems are indeed “smart” but “structures have robbed us from our smartness, from our intellect.” Carlos felt that they had a lot of life experiences to offer their classmates. They felt that, based on the struggles they faced growing up, they could support their communities from within the classroom. However, some counselors and teachers in their school deemphasized and invalidated their contributions due to their own preconceived notions of what Carlos could give. Carlos experienced education as a site that “robbed” them of their intellect, producing harm that further pushed Carlos from engaging in their school in ways that resonated with their lived experiences. Carlos believes that people can look beyond the current configuration of education to imagine a system that draws on, rather than takes from, communities to produce knowledge.

Carlos currently imagines a world that contrasts with their experiences of alienation, exclusion, and devaluation in the classroom as a racialized migrant and in public, such as within bathrooms, as a gender nonconforming Latinx. Carlos believes that a reframing of our approach to education can transform schools into sites of care, empowerment, and community-building. Carlos has taken up the violences that their family and them have experienced and transformed that affect into one of hope. Carlos continues to deal with the violence that comes from the separation of their family at the hands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This pain has not prevented Carlos from envisioning a community-driven school that would provide “information out so that somebody doesn’t have to go through the same pain that I went through.” The approach that Carlos envisions for education is particularly salient because of the violence that communities experience:

And the one thing I want to stop right away is the killing of people through these structures. And it’s gonna take a while, right, like, you know, first and foremost, that the

state has power to kill people. Like that's the stupidest thing I've ever heard as if we were property. And people are being sent to prisons and losing their entire lives and present.

When Carlos mentions "killing" in the passage above, he refers to the urgency around both physical state violence and social death (Gilmore 2007; Cacho 2012). Despite the pain that Carlos has experienced, they describe education as containing the potential to foster empowerment through an approach founded on caring for the people involved in these projects. Despite the lack of belief from counselors to support them, Carlos graduated from high school.

A sense of urgency drives Carlos's theorization of education as a possible site of care and communal empowerment. Carlos understands that processes of subjection limit the life chances of marginalized peoples (Spade 2015) yet continues to view education as one site where communities can come together to support one another in ways that do not reproduce the harmful ways that racism deploys difference as a death-dealing displacement (Gilmore 2007). Education can be a transformative site for the marginalized people that the current system fails to serve if the communities themselves are centered as producing the knowledge they need. Carlos believes that the people who experience subjection best understand what needs to be done to allow for their communities to survive and thrive. Community-driven approaches to creating "useful theory" through "practical experience" (hooks 1989, 48) are foundational for validating, as Carlos puts it, "each one of our powers and truths." Carlos's learned from their time within the education system that people will invalidate those they perceive as devalued (Cacho 2012). While Carlos's urgency to stop people from being killed enables their imagining of a world that supports all, they also understand that some people need to their truth to be validated by their communities for them to envision a world they want to see. Carlos believes that communities can come together to support the construction of their own knowledge when an educational system

has invalidated racialized communities, queer migrants, undocumented youth, women of color, and the differently abled.

I outlined in the last chapter the various ways that UndocuQueers have used to care to navigate various spaces, particularly emphasizing Entre Hermanos's work as both a state-funded and community-driven organization in Seattle. In this chapter I think through how UndocuQueers engage in a project of world-making, a term queer scholars of color use, to produce space and envision a world that centers marginalized communities. I trace how the navigations in which UndocuQueers engage presently allow for an imagining of a world, of subversive futures, that serves the most vulnerable people. Firstly, I describe how producing a community of care is also a production of homeplace. I think through how UndocuQueers coming together to care for one another helps scholars understand the production of space, or of homeplace. Secondly, I think about how these spaces, communities, relations, care networks, and perspectives helps us imagine a future where we can think about world-making, in the present and the future. UndocuQueers deploy world-making to visualize, to feel, a future where care centers as its foundation. I conclude describing how world-making is a political project to both currently navigate the world and a declaration of a future that UndocuQueers want to see.

### *Noche Latina as Communities of Care and Homeplace*

People come together to create community, care for one another, and support each other in ways that simultaneously create virtual and physical spaces. Feminist scholar bell hooks describes the notion of homeplace through the experiences of Black women. Homeplace for UndocuQueers is about creating a home, as bell hooks analyzes, where one did not exist before. Jacque Larrainzar, for example, proclaims that undocumented queer migrants must constantly

create spaces for themselves because those spaces do not exist. For those who have come to identify as UndocuQueer, many spaces lacked an environment that fostered an understanding of what it means to be undocumented and queer. These ‘homes’ hold the potential to become a place of caring for UndocuQueers. bell hooks conceptualizes homeplace as a site of resistance, as a place that Black women cultivated for the politicization of Black communities to resist white supremacy. Considering the ways in which state and extra-legal processes of subjection produce vulnerability for and violence toward racialized communities, particularly Black folk, hooks theorizes this politicization alongside “caring for one another” (hooks 1990, 44). hooks primarily thinks through home as the place that bounds the formation of political strategies of resistance for later use on the unwelcoming streets of white supremacy. UndocuQueers came together to care for each other, which politicized them to develop innovate politics and create social spaces for people to be in community with one another.

UndocuQueers’ production of spaces that allows them to express themselves as undocumented queer migrants extends the conceptual bounds of hooks’s notion of homeplace. While public spaces and streets are not welcoming for undocumented people due to the possibility of immigration raids and racialization that frames particular peoples as criminal, home may also not be the safest place for queers. The construction of the heteronormative family and respectable sexuality as nation produce some of the precarious conditions for UndocuQueers. Feminist geopolitical scholars have argued that geopolitical processes themselves are racial, classed, and gendered, and are experienced in uneven ways depending on one’s position in society (Cuomo 2013; Williams and Boyce 2013). In other words, for example, DACA, marriage equality, and the border wall uphold particular norms that further marginalize and exploit undocumented queer migrants. UndocuQueers’ experiences of social exclusion,

political marginalization, and economic exploitation have brought them to attempt to create spaces of their own. This complicates the idea of homeplace, opening practical and theoretical venues up to think about other spaces as offering similar forms of care and politicization for UndocuQueers. Homeplace for UndocuQueers becomes an expanding network of places that become homes. In these homes, UndocuQueers can create caring networks, kinships, and worlds that work for them. UndocuQueers' experience with homes unravel the geographic bounds of homeplace to think about how an expanded understanding of home simultaneously facilitate a development of social, political, and spatial practices.

Many of these spaces develop alongside practices of care, individually and communal. The creation of spaces for marginalized peoples includes the "caring for one another" that hooks describes, particularly when people feel unsafe and unwanted navigating the world. The caring for one another highlights the relationality of constructing these spaces for communities. The emergence of these spaces with care, as feminist geopolitics and care ethics emphasizes, are relational to peoples, objects, and places. The relationality of the construction of homeplace stresses the communal aspect of these practices and spaces. Community comes together to care for one another, which occurs in physical and virtual spaces that these communities create for themselves and other people who similarly experience processes of subjection. Queer people of color artists have demonstrated this through some of their artwork.

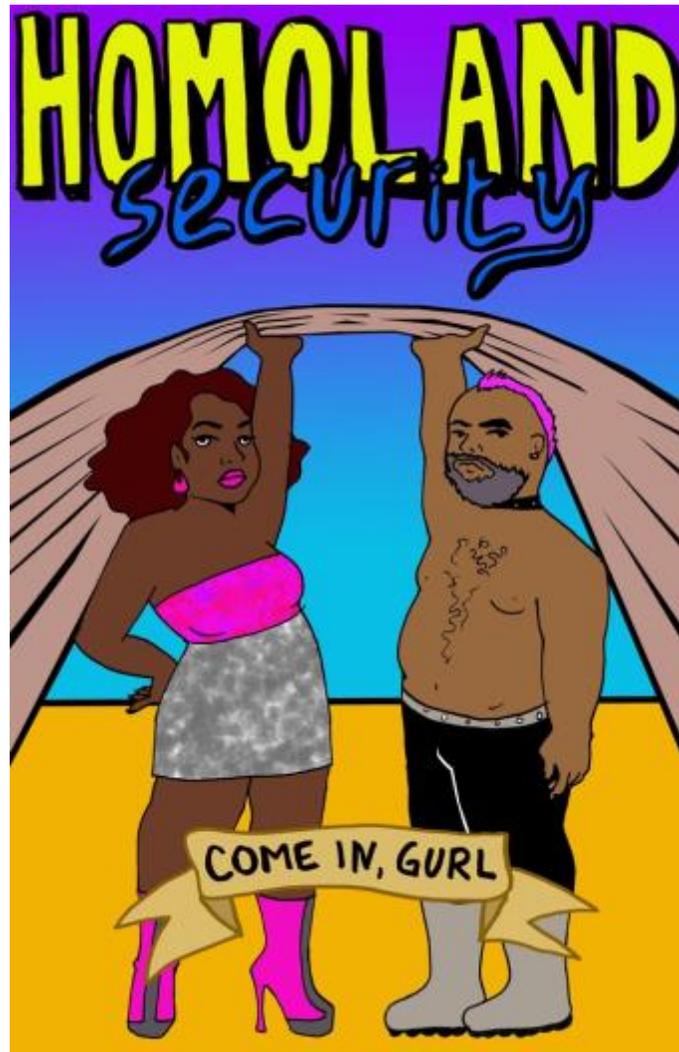
Julio Salgado is an undocumented queer Latinx artist based in California. Much of Julio's art emerged as a response to the DREAMer narrative that dominated undocumented students' narratives. Julio stated that he wants to challenge some of those ideas that "blamed our parents," portraying undocumented students as good immigrants, and, rather, "[make] fun of the fucked-up system." In 2016, Julio drew "Homoland Security" (figure 1). Similar to the way that Carlos

Padilla imagines a world despite their experiences within the educational system, Julio takes Homeland Security on and reimagines this space as an inviting one with the tagline “Come in, Gurl” at the bottom. Two people of color, most likely queer, both adorned in complementary hot pink and gray sparkles, hold up a fence as the tagline invites the onlooker into the space just behind the border. The two queer people of color act as security guards, just like in a club, to invite others who fall on similar lines of precariousness as them. Rather than secure against those whose non-normative sexuality further marks them as racially out-of-place (Puar and Rai 2002), these figures invite those same people to a space, like Noche Latina, that is by and for queer people of color. The ways in which Noche Latina creates a club space that invites difference informs the work that Julio does to imagine other spaces as welcoming of queer people of color.

Julio flips the script on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which is tasked to maintain people who are deemed dangerous out (Coleman 2008), and instead portrays the spaces that queer people of color are creating as inviting to those who would normally be discounted as dangerous to the status quo. Fiona Robinson's “ethics of care” and “relations of responsibility and care” (2011, 55) created a foundation to reframe security. Julio’s work portrays a community that cares for others and welcomes difference into their space. Security through this lens becomes a way to ensure that communities thrive in the spaces that challenge the hostile and exclusionary approach the U.S. takes to surveillance and security. The fact that UndocuQueers, and undocumented queer communities generally, thrive in places that would otherwise kill them might be read as an act of political defiance, an act of creating their own life chances.

“Homoland Security” does the work of emphasizing how UndocuQueers create spaces for a wider community that relates to their processes of subjection (Cohen 1997). Julio also uses humor to poke fun at these institutions for seeking to exploit, marginalize, and exclude

UndocuQueers and failing to grasp how this community is resilient and creates spaces where ones did not exist beforehand.



*(figure 1: Homoland Security, 2016, permission from Julio Salgado)*

Ray, an UndocuQueer in Seattle, describes some of the spaces that he has been in that center undocumented queers Latinxs as “floating spaces.” Jose Esteban Muñoz builds on theories of identification and offers a node referred to as “disidentification.” Disidentification is a form of resistance and survival, both identifying with mainstream identity concepts and rebelling by

claiming those identities that are not part of the dominant ideology. In other words, disidentification “neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it” (J. E. Muñoz 1999, 11). UndocuQueers who participated in this research describe the club scene as one that did not offer them that space until one was created for queer Latinxs. As a form of disidentification, UndocuQueers can disengage in the larger gay club scene, for example, but reconstruct the club as a space for themselves. UndocuQueers explained, in fact, how people of color nights held infrequently at gay club scenes were, as Ray states, “spaces where we can talk about those issues.” Scholars in queer Latinx studies have thought about the relationship between practice, care, community, and space in the club. Ramón H. Rivera-Servera offers his experience in “Choreographies of Resistance” that are quoted at length:

The club offers me a space to experience what freedom from homophobia, and sometimes from racism, feels like. The club also provides me with spaces where experiences of discrimination can be addressed and exorcised in the company of others who, like me, understand the at times difficult and pleasurable path of being a queer of color. My experience in the club not only allows me to feel desire, love, and community, but gives me the confidence and the knowledge to step proudly into other, more dangerous venues and seek, even demand, similar experiences from the world outside it. The club provides me with strategies of survival, but also with the comfort of knowing that I can return to its realm and experience once more this utopian<sup>3</sup> community of queers (Rivera-Servera 2011, 259–60).

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<sup>3</sup> Both José Esteban Muñoz and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera use utopia to speak to a looking forward to a horizon that draws on the past. I shift away from this utopia to think about how current navigations facilitate an imagining of an unthinkable future (Cacho 2012).

The ephemerality of these spaces and their constant mobility from place to place unravels hooks's spatial construction of homeplace. The club offers queer Latino/as a space to engage in the work of politicization that hooks outlines in the home. As mobile actors who create an alternative theorization of place, UndocuQueers simultaneously deploy the "caring for one another," as described by hooks, that is not limited to one place or community. Much of the drive to accomplish this formulation of networks and homes comes from a desire to care for and be cared by others.

Entre Hermanos (hereafter EH) illustrates this disidentificatory development through their Noche Latina. At their founding in 1991, years after other queer organizations focusing on HIV/AIDS (Brown and Knopp 2014, 106), EH offered services around HIV/AIDS to queer Latinxs and hosted a Noche Latina for people to come together to socialize. Noche Latina is a night for queer Latinxs to dance to music primarily in Spanish with other queer Latinxs. The crowd tends to predominantly be older men, and the music reflects the music they listened to growing up. The DJ does include music that remixes the music that my parents listened to as well as those that I listened to, such as Celia Cruz and Selena Quintanilla. EH works with a gay night club called Neighbours to host a Noche Latina every Sunday night.<sup>4</sup> Walking in, one receives a small, clear plastic packet with a condom, lube, and a business card with the services EH offers listed. The keen observer immediately notices that the sonic landscape varies than that of other nights: music in Spanish. Most of the people present have heard about Noche Latina from their friends, through direct communication with the staff at EH, or via one of their various

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<sup>4</sup> Noche Latina began at Neighbours once a month, switched venues for a few months and then returned to the same night club where this night has been held since.

Facebook pages. Noche Latina hosts special events a few times in a month and has brought hundreds of queer and trans Latinxs together for mingling, dancing, and dating.

Rather than move from a social to an HIV/AIDS organization, EH continued to add people, programs, and events to their list of activities. In the early moments of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, queer organizations engaged in informal practices to support those dying (Brown and Knopp 2014; Brown et al. 2014). The one-way trajectory from informal advocacy on the street to formal organizations does not fit with the way EH has operated; EH has not moved away from hosting a night of dancing. Noche Latina arose because the people who organized EH wanted a place for them to be able to dance. Many of the organizers migrated to the U.S. as adults rather than youth and have rarely found music in Spanish at other dance spaces that center young gay white men as their main audience. Many Latinxs, particularly queer ones, describe the importance of dancing for them and this social practice became a cornerstone for much of the organizing in which EH engages. EH worked to create a social space for queer migrants of color who may not always have family in Seattle and whose social circles may be limited. Luis Fernando describes how EH was informal at first and eventually sought to acquire resources and funding from the state in order to provide services to their community. Entre Hermanos became formalized through needing to acquire this funding and other sources of funding. Their institutionalization as a nonprofit in 1995 helped them acquire funds from foundations and businesses. EH envisioned that Noche Latina would become a space where community would come together, where they would be able to provide a place to share resources with people. As a space for dancing, Noche Latina helps EH develop community of care for queer Latinxs, many of whom are undocumented, through a space where they can express and be themselves. Dancing affords that space.

Many of the UndocuQueers in Seattle describe Noche Latina as a space where more than just dancing occurs. Jacque describes how “we had to come together to create those spaces,” pointing to the ways in which Noche Latina was formed by and for community members who have been “denied access to so many spaces.” For Jacque, bars and clubs are “places where we come together to create other venues for us to be.” Carlos similarly describes how they would use the club to connect with people because that is when “people are really being themselves.” Carlos felt unprepared in leading a campaign, but they would spend the time to go to the club to meet the people who worked two jobs and could not show up for events, meetings, or marches during the day. Ray also describes how the club scene for him is a “home because it’s a space where you meet people, it’s a space where people know you, it’s a space where you can be yourself...in some ways, it’s very much a safe space.” For them, this is where people come together to care for each other.

While dancing can be a form of individual self-care, queer people of color experience dancing as a communal experience, as a communal practice of care. Scholars have complicated the notion of identity and community that expands rather than constrains how we think about forming communities. Cathy J. Cohen proposes that “the process of movement-building be rooted not in our shared history or identity, but in our shared marginal relationship to dominant power which normalizes, legitimizes, and privileges” (Cohen 1997, 458). Cohen further insists that “through political work our identities become remade and must therefore be understood as *relational*” (461). To challenge bounded identity categories, “[t]he reconceptualization not only of the content of identity categories, but the intersectional nature of identities themselves, must become part of our political practice” (ibid). This expansive definition of community suggests that a coming together for UndocuQueers does not occur simply through an identification to

identity; rather, the ways in which UndocuQueers have articulated their identity rests upon their *experiences* as undocumented and queer. Considering what dancing means for queer Latinxs and how the club has the potential to be more for UndocuQueers, we can see how dancing can become a communal practice of care that develops into a community of care. Their experiences bring them together to create a space that becomes a home, validating practices that help them shape their own reality and make worlds.

### *World-making as Present and Future*

The practices that I have outlined thus far describe the present way that UndocuQueers have had to navigate situations to survive a harsh reality. Many of these practices, as such, are necessary for UndocuQueers to deploy. In this section, I argue that world-making delineates both a present understanding of the world and an imagining of collective, subversive futures. This distinction helps nuance how world-making can be a way of navigating the current world through practices that both affirm and challenge processes of subjection while envisioning a future that legitimizes and values other ways of being. I ground this reading within UndocuQueers' narratives to think about how notions of world-making come about through care, particularly in conceiving a world where its foundation is care.

Scholars who have engaged with queer people of color critique have drawn from Jose Esteban Muñoz's *Disidentifications*, a text that specifically considers queer people of color's relationship to and performances in the world. Muñoz argues that communities have been able to produce worlds through their ability to disidentify from mainstream, dominant publics; for many UndocuQueers, this means a disidentification from communities that identify solely as Latinx (read: straight) and queer (read: white). Muñoz's identities-in-difference theorizes that, through

this disidentification from dominant publics, minoritized communities produce a performance that fosters community relations and resistance that contest, for example, the criminalization of racialized, undocumented communities. I draw on Muñoz’s theory of world-making to analyze how the performative, quotidian acts of care that UndocuQueers engage in produce present and future ways of being: “World-making delineates the ways in which performances—both theatrical and everyday rituals—have the ability to establish alternative views of the world” (Muñoz 1999, 196). These views function as “critiques” (ibid) of processes of subjection that place marginalized peoples in their precarious conditions, and do the political work of “reshap[ing]” reality (ibid). Muñoz’s notion of world-making is essential to grasping how UndocuQueers express their identification as UndocuQueer.

Muñoz’s development of world-making offers two insights to this project that develop an understanding of 1) a different geographic story of UndocuQueers’ navigations of the world and 2) the futures that validate a multiplicity of ways of being that UndocuQueers affirm. Firstly, the performances that Muñoz mentions speak to the navigations that UndocuQueers and Entre Hermanos engage in from Chapter 2. The ways in which UndocuQueers have navigated their precarious conditions and EH has negotiated being a community-driven and state-funded organization resonate with the “establish alternative views of the world” that Muñoz outlines. How UndocuQueers, and other queer Latinxs, describe dancing at the club expand the political work that space does for this community, and allows scholars to thread how the care exhibited in these places challenge some of the processes that construct their vulnerability.

The narratives and experiences of UndocuQueers help us understand how programs that initially came from activism on the ground and became formally established as government programs, such as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, are both limited and

necessary. DACA, to continue this example, offers material benefits for undocumented migrants who are constantly exploited for their labor. As mentioned in the last chapter, Lukas Rogelio spends some of his time with farmworkers to sign them up for DACA. He does this so that people can find employment that pays them higher wages to support their family and offers other benefits, such as healthcare. Lukas, however, understands that DACA reaffirms the good immigrant narrative and does not do the liberation work that he would like to see happen in his community. Lukas can critique DACA while he uses its resources to shape the world that he wants to see, one that provides material benefits to families within his community. I argue that this view of the world helps frame how disidentification is part of the UndocuQueers' navigation of world-making in a society that oftentimes fails to grasp the complexities of their whole selves.

Secondly, the notion of world-making speaks to a making of the world UndocuQueers want to see, of a making of a future that allows for the possibility that identities and experiences are neither fixed nor static. I view this reshaping of reality that Muñoz puts forth as drawing on current navigations of reality in order to conceive of futures that politically appear as unthinkable for some while desired by others (Cacho 2012). Take the story of Carlos Padilla presented at the beginning of this chapter. Carlos had experienced education as a site that had devalued their contributions to class due to how they felt racially profiled by their educators. The harm Carlos experienced in high school compounded when they arrived in college, where they felt out-of-place—or not intelligent enough—and subsequently dropped out. Carlos's narrative draws on Muñoz to critique the prevailing view of education. Despite these experiences, Carlos disidentifies with how education has worked for marginalized peoples and, instead, identifies with the idea that a community-driven approach to education still affords these communities opportunities for “empowerment” that are otherwise difficult, albeit not impossible, to find

elsewhere. Their approach to education might seem unviable, but Carlos hopes that this vision can materialize and create a space for people to come together to become politicized.

It is difficult to differentiate between the present and the future of world-making, not that I propose that scholars do that since I would rather emphasize their mutual constitutive nature. Both operate simultaneously and in a cyclical fashion. Many UndocuQueer create spaces that allow for them to come together to socialize and seek to engage in political actions. Many of these practices of care and kinship are acts of labor that seek to support one another through people's current conditions, but people also come together to change their future. The experiences and knowledge people share when together help produce the "alternative visions of the world." These visions, in turn, do not exist within a vacuum. They have the potential to also change how people experience the world around them now. UndocuQueer artists, such as Julio Salgado, draw on this affect of hope to produce art that resonates with UndocuQueers' imagining of a world that serves all. In fact, Julio centers the bodies and experiences of queer people of color to envision a future that does away with the borders and boundaries—nation-state borders, the limits of identity politics, and the processes of subjection that bound and constrain communities to marginalization and exploitation—that separate communities.

In "On Brownness, queerness, and borders," Julio Salgado stands defiantly with his middle fingers up in front of a fence that marks the border between the U.S. and Mexico. Yosimar Reyes, another UndocuQueer and collaborator to Julio, wrote the poem that sits to the left of Julio's image. Yosimar writes about how "they" force queer people of color to "choose a side" between communities and reaffirm the discursive and material power of the border. Yosimar states that "We are everything in between," that the border is what Gloria Anzaldúa refers to as a borderland where their hybridity comes into being (Anzaldúa 1987). Yosimar

signals the relationality between queer brown communities, and how they hold potential within those spaces to be “everything.” These spaces do not force people to choose what appear to be diametrically-opposed categories; rather, they open a space for people to engage in disidentifications that make sense to them, to theorize the world in terms that resonate with their lived experiences. Yosimar ultimately concludes his poem with “I am manifestation / that all borders will fall.” Yosimar’s poem declares that borders will far for the people cannot be made to choose a side when they encompass everything that may fall between those very categories. Muñoz’s disidentification is meant to validate the myriad practices of queer people of color, which UndocuQueers strive to do in their art. They materialize the world-making in an image that demonstrates the unthinkable politics that UndocuQueers imagine. UndocuQueers have refused the distinction between their identities and have instead sought to produce kinship relations that look beyond the nuclear family and liberal identity politics.



(figure 2: *On Brownness, queerness, and borders*, 2016, permission from Julio Salgado)

World-making occurs when people come together to care for themselves, whether emotionally or materially, others' well-being, and the sustainability of their communities. Marlon Bailey draws on Muñoz's theories to think about how members in ballroom culture participate in a project of world-making that engages with relationality, care, and kinship. In *Butch Queens Up in Pumps* Bailey claims that "as a community, Ballroom culture creates a multidimensional

world in which Black and Latino/a LGBTQ people, as well as various people throughout the globe, can reconstitute, affirm, and celebrate their LGBT identities and lives” (Bailey 2013, 8). These participants disidentify with the notion of family but identify with a different construction of kinship that draws on caring for one another and critiques the phrase that “Blood is thicker than water.” Bailey approaches performance as one of the ways that “human beings fundamentally make culture, affect power, and reinvent their ways of being in the world, especially for those with limited or no access to State power or privilege” (Bailey 2013, 18). Similar to ballroom culture participants, UndocuQueers engage in performance labor, kin labor, and a labor of care when they come together to support each other emotionally, socially, politically, and materially, effectively taking on the work of kinship and love that society fails to do. Much of what UndocuQueers do is attempt to create a relationality between people that they hope to see in the world. In creating these networks, these UndocuQueers are seeking to do that.

Kinship networks are part of the story when thinking about how UndocuQueers use relationality to frame their political work, particularly around detention and deportation. Feminist geopolitical scholars have developed relational geographies around difference through a care lens to theorize the interactions between peoples, places, and geopolitical processes. In looking at gender-based development programs and securitization efforts in Turkey, for example, Jessie Clark (2013) critiques how individualistic security frameworks (whether for nations or for communities) fail to situate people within their relations to people, locations, and objects. She argues that “the relational elements of life” bring to the fore the collective “concern for the well-being of people” (2013, 846). Clark proposes that the question should not be who, or what, should be secured but that the argument is that human life is relational (851). In so doing, care helps us see embodied experiences as relational, like a network, to other experiences, spaces, and

processes of surveillance, security, and power. In this way, rather than perpetuate individualistic frameworks of security and care, UndocuQueers have deployed language around relationality and care when supporting people who have been targeted by ICE, as well as for queer people of color who experience various forms of geopolitical and cultural exclusion.

Seeking justice and equity for a wide range of people is part of the project of world-making in which UndocuQueers engage. If justice is about changing the state-sponsored, extra-legal, and administrative violences that marginalized peoples experience, then UndocuQueers are in the process of “reshaping” the world to one that serves those most often overlooked. Many UndocuQueers have known each other, and much of the work they conduct remains connected to one another’s despite the geographic distance. They have foregrounded their relationality with each other in engaging in the political work of creating a vision of a better world.

Many UndocuQueers used virtual spaces (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram) to connect with and develop networks alongside other people who identified as undocumented and queer. Some view this relationality as part of the networks of care and support that they have constructed. Carlos understands UndocuQueer as a practice of care that attempts “to create a global world where we are all connected to each other as a support network.” They explain how, for them, UndocuQueer is “an ideology that challenges a heteronormative patriarchal binary system and also the concept of immigrants” through a recognition of the processes that have led people to be in their current situations. Carlos states that their ability “to connect with [their] networks” facilitates the political work they have engaged in through the Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project and other campaigns throughout Washington State. Similarly, Ray Corona came to identify as UndocuQueer through his relationships with another organizer, Jorge Gutierrez. Ray met Jorge through Facebook, and they spoke about how to build “community

amongst people of color and queer people of color, you know, who many times were undocumented themselves.” Carlos and Ray cared about issues of sexuality, race, and documentation status; they connected with one another in Seattle and reached out to people across the U.S.

UndocuQueers, in other words, reach across place to connect with others. The usage of the term brings people together virtually and physically. Jorge Mena Robles describes what it means to identify as UndocuQueer as such:

I think being UndocuQueer also serves a purpose, right? Like it brought a lot of us together, and so I think for a lot of people who identify as UndocuQueer at some point, they might not identify as UndocuQueer now for marriage reasons, but they still found a community through that label as UndocuQueer. Folks locally and nationally. And I think it serves a purpose personally.

The coming together of undocumented youth that Jorge describes came about through a desire to care for one of their friends who was at-risk of being deported. Based in Chicago, Jorge organized with twenty other undocumented youth in 2009 because one of their friends was in a deportation hearing. Meant as an organizing space, people came together in a room “full of tears” and ultimately formed the Immigrant Youth Justice League. Jorge mobilized undocumented youth in Chicago but kept close ties to other UndocuQueers throughout the US. Due to the obstacles UndocuQueers face trying to connect with other undocumented queer migrants in a single location (because not everyone publically identifies as undocumented or queer socially or politically), they have constantly sought out others to create and craft their networks of communal support.

As with Noche Latina, these spaces usually hold simultaneous purposes. The organizing meeting became a gathering for people to socialize with one another and a space for developing political strategies. This homeplace for UndocuQueers fosters a social support network as well as

a political one. The intermingling of people help people navigate the current geopolitical climate, as well as offer suggestions on what a future without deportations can look like. The embodied experiences of the people in these spaces, who have come together because they have someone in their family who is undocumented or who may be undocumented, help shed light on a vision of the future that centers relationality, care, and justice. In this way, UndocuQueers engage in a project of world-making through their experiences as undocumented at the hands of the state, as racialized as Latinxs (albeit at various degrees), and as queer in many social and political spaces for undocumented migrants and people of color.

### *Conclusion*

The nation-state's construction of vulnerability for UndocuQueers does not preempt them from being agents in the production of social, political, and spatial practices; rather, they are constantly engaged in a process of world-making that is caring, expansive, and relational. Rather than view undocumented queer migrants as passive recipients of subjection, this chapter demonstrates how UndocuQueers are active participants in producing space. UndocuQueers engage in a project of world-making that addresses their present situation and imagines one that centers marginalized communities who experience processes of subjection. I draw on bell hooks to think about how care and place are part of the journey of politicization that UndocuQueers undergo, particularly thinking about the creation of spaces where none existed before. Muñoz describes some practices that queer people of color engage in as disidentification, which I argue also produces a space for UndocuQueers. Noche Latina was created by and for queer Latinxs to come together, and it became a place where EH could also support the sexual health of their community in a space where they would most likely attend. Dancing becomes a practice that

produces space, relationships, and alternative political networks that are not easily translatable from the work other nonprofit organizations do with queer communities.

I argue that UndocuQueers engage in a project of world-making through the care practices that they deploy to navigate the world and support each other. World-making is about producing the reality in which queer people of color want to partake, and I take this up to think about some of the geopolitical processes that also inform how UndocuQueers take up this project. UndocuQueers create spaces to come together, and in these spaces, people engage in social relations, crafting kinships with one another that are not limited to the nuclear family and its spatial imaginations that restrict these relationships to the home. These spaces allow for UndocuQueers to imagine a world where their social and political practices to be validated, where practices that have yet to be articulated can be considered with open arms. UndocuQueers in Seattle welcome other undocumented migrants and queer Latinxs. Their social practices are caring, affectionate, and intimate, and they use these social connections as part of their kinship network. The kinship relations they develop enable them to ask people to show up for political actions, to let undocumented queer and trans migrants stay at their home if they need a place to stay, and to provide financial support if need be. I think about how these spaces, communities, relations, care networks, and perspectives helps us imagine a future where we can think about world-making, in the present and the future. UndocuQueers deploy world-making to visualize, to feel, a future where care centers as its foundation. I conclude describing how world-making is a political project to both currently navigate the world and a declaration of a future that UndocuQueers want to live in.

### **Conclusion: Experience, Navigation, and World-Making**

I grew up in a northern suburb of Chicago, near one of the earliest sanctuary and destination city in the United States. In 2007, Elvira Arellano became a symbol for undocumented migrants when she sought refuge for twelve months to avoid a deportation order in the United Methodist Church in Chicago. Around the same time, the City Council at my hometown passed a law that would give local police officers permission to ask people they find suspicious for identification, effectively becoming collaborators with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. I grew up in a mixed-status household, but my mom told her children that we were all undocumented. I believed that I grew up undocumented despite possessing a social security number, a number that systematically excludes those who do not have one. Reflecting on my childhood, I remember the experiences of growing up as undocumented. I am reminded of moments when someone in my family was sick and could not seek out healthcare, when my parents did not feel comfortable calling the police, or when my sister would threaten to have my mother deported if she did not allow her to spend time with her friends.

As a child of migrants, I became a hybrid of both parent and child. My hometown is predominantly migrants who speak Spanish, and my parents felt no need to learn how to speak English to navigate their immediate world. My parents eventually, however, had to attend parent-teacher conferences and relied on my siblings and me to translate their conversations. While my parents cared for us, they also expected us to be present with them in their daily lives to translate for them if the need arose. My mother despite how strong she is, spent time talking to me about her problems. When my sister would run away from home, my mom would ask me to sit down with her. She expressed her sorrows and confusion, repeatedly crying on my shoulder. My mother needed to share her struggles with someone, and she found me to be her listening ear. I

attempted to care and understand my mom but did not extend the same courtesy to her. I believed that a conversation around the confusion I was experiencing around my sexuality would push her away rather than bring her closer.

I share my personal account to demonstrate where my passion for this project originated. First, being undocumented for me became about the experiences I had rather than an identity marker. In thinking about experience, I emphasize how being undocumented is more than the stereotypical images that the media portrays. Being undocumented is about understanding the complexities of those who are placed in precarious conditions through geopolitical processes. I wanted to think about experiences because I hoped to produce a project such as this one. I sought to bring the myriad pieces of life together for those who identify as undocumented and queer. Secondly, I have understood care as complicated. Scholars need to interrogate care to stress that this concept is not clear-cut. My experience with care demonstrated that our intentions behind care do not materialize in ways that we hope; care can help people navigate their situations and reaffirm harm, such as within the healthcare system. The narratives that I drew from this project highlighted how care played a significant role in the way UndocuQueers experienced life, navigated systems of subjection, and sought out to support their communities. We could not disentangle the various complexities of care within UndocuQueers without centering and examining their embodied experiences navigating their reality and creating the world they want to see come to fruition.

### *The Journey Thus Far*

This research offered both an empirical account and a theoretical framing for UndocuQueers' experiences. Few geographic studies have explored the experiences of

undocumented queer migrants and their spatial navigations. This study meant to fill an explicitly missing gap within geography, though geographers have explored how queer Latina migrants engage in reproducing heterosexuality on the streets of Los Angeles (Muñoz 2017, cite). This literature encouraged me to seek out a range of theories to synthesize and formulate ways of thinking that would most accurately represent the stories of the UndocuQueers in this project. I do not propose to suggest that these stories encapsulate the entirety of those who identify as queer and undocumented; the people I interviewed, in fact, represent those who are active within the UndocuQueer community, or within queer, undocumented, and Latinx communities generally. Because I sought out activists, or people who were identified as politically active within their communities, the questions I posed during the interview focused on how they framed and sought out justice as UndocuQueer. Black geographies, queer people of color critique, feminist geopolitics, and care ethics enabled me to reach some of my findings.

The findings of this study do not operate linearly despite the structure of the thesis. Rather, they function cyclically and continue to inform one another through space and time. In the introduction, I sought to highlight the ways that UndocuQueers identify as such. Many UndocuQueers drew from their experiences at the margins of society to critique the systems that subjected them to everyday violence. I attempted to achieve this through two points. Language around identity politics became a tool that UndocuQueers used politically, as well as public events, to mark themselves at the intersection of undocumented and queer justice movements. They focused on their identity because of the political saliency this possesses when speaking out to a large audience. Identity politics do not erase the ways in which people experience and express their reality. While those who participated in this study view UndocuQueer as an identity, they also view being undocumented and queer as an experience. I believe that

UndocuQueers understand that they need to consider their past experiences to make sense of how they came to be where (both literally and metaphorically) they are at. I also believe this is the difference between the political, which has a tendency to fixate meaning, and politics, which allows for a wider spread of practices that have political valiancy. This study found that UndocuQueers view themselves as actively producing space, as active participants rather than passive recipients of the world around them. In this way, the study set up how UndocuQueers navigate their reality, particularly with the state, to make and increase their life chances. I forefront UndocuQueers' agency to move away from the constant focus of violence committed onto undocumented, queer, and racialized communities. I wanted to portray how UndocuQueers construct their own life chances, how they construct their joy and seek change, despite the backdrop of flows and processes of subjection that contain them.

In Chapter 2, I draw on Jose Esteban Muñoz's notion of disidentification to frame the practices that UndocuQueers use to negotiate their circumstances with the state, as well as to expand the scale to one of a nonprofit organization in Seattle. Firstly, undocumented queer migrant Latinxs have had to negotiate with the state to construct their life chances. Many undocumented youth fought to formalize the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA), which has allowed many of them to receive work permits. While many have critiqued this program as an effort by the state to pacify resistance (clarify), I recognize that DACA has offered material benefits to people that reach far beyond the idea of a revolution. I would struggle to sit in front of someone and tell them to not participate in DACA, a program that might financially uplift their family from poverty. It is this type of change, I believe, that makes a radical moment for UndocuQueers. UndocuQueers recognize that existing in a society that

perpetually marginalizes them requires a reconciliation, a compromise between the radical potential of a revolution yet to come and the material benefits of a life currently existing.

Secondly, I focus on a nonprofit in Seattle. Entre Hermanos is an LGBTQ Latinx organization that has served Seattle and the greater Washington State for over twenty years. I argued that Entre Hermanos is both part of the state and the community, and that the way the organization has engaged in their work and negotiated with the state's guidelines resembles that of Muñoz's notion of disidentification. I wanted to highlight how people and organizations must negotiate with the state so that we do not place blame onto some of the most vulnerable people in society but, instead, remember that survival is a messy process. I emphasize this seeming contradiction to prompt others not to paint the state as solely reproducing harm; this reframing facilitates arguments that strip funding from services that the most vulnerable in society rely on for survival, that they need to continue living. Many of the undocumented queer and trans\* migrants from Latin America that seek out services from Entre Hermanos have a sense of distrust around government agencies and queer organizations. EH's Noche Latina has remained a cornerstone of their community work, which differs from the measured progress of other gay mainstream organizations. Rather than pit themselves against measures of productivity, formalization, and institutionalization, they stress the importance of their political work alongside the significance of the space of sociality that Noche Latina affords to queer and trans undocumented migrants. Similar to UndocuQueers, Entre Hermanos engages in a performance of disidentification, of attempting to create a world that holistically supports their community.

In Chapter 3, I sought to think about how communities of care and homeplace are constitutive in nature, and how Noche Latina offers a space that is both caring and a home for queer Latinxs, many of whom are undocumented. I interrogate Entre Hermanos as an

organization that engages in both informal and formal work to predominantly support undocumented queer migrants from Latin America. Entre Hermanos recognizes the significance of sociality for their community, emphasizing the productive potential of Noche Latina for EH to conduct their work around health and immigration. I sought to emphasize how UndocuQueers are actively producing the space around them, and this process is fluid, open, and relational (Massey 2008). EH and UndocuQueers engage in care practices to create a space that centers their stories and does not exploit them for their labor. I sought to emphasize care to balance the counter-productive narratives that solely depict undocumented migrants and queer people of color as experiencing violence and death. In the second section, I conclude with an investigation of how a project of world-making animates UndocuQueers to move toward unthinkable politics that produce a world they want to live in. The nation-state construction of vulnerability for UndocuQueers does not preempt them from being agents in the production of social, political, and spatial practices; rather, they are constantly engaged in a process of world-making that is caring, expansive, and relational.

### *Space as Under Construction*

I interviewed Jorge Gutierrez and Jennicet Gutiérrez after Donald Trump became President of the United States. Both Jorge and Jennicet highlight the changes that they are experiencing as undocumented queer migrant Latinxs under the new administration. Jorge emphasized the increased importance of collectivities for resisting Trump's policies and executive orders. He talked about the worries he has now around surveillance practices, and how organizers, activists, and people participating in networks of safe places need to be more careful if we want our communities to survive until radicalization. Jennicet's claim that "Mi existir es

resistir” is particularly salient under a regime that is further producing vulnerable conditions for society’s most marginalized. Jennicet perceives her actions as already acts of resistance and has traveled across the U.S. to encourage people to center trans women of color. The current administration reframes some of the claims in this thesis.

This project possesses several directions for future development. I began this project in the summer of 2016 when popular opinion, particularly in Seattle, assumed that Donald Trump could not be elected as President. At a time when Trump has become President, what are the differences between the claims made pre-Trump and post-Trump in this project? In the era of Trump, do we have less room now to make claims that care can be not political? Communities throughout the U.S. are experiencing an increase of fear due to the implicit threats the President has made around those most marginalized around race, gender, class, queerness, trans, sexuality, disability, and other axis of difference. Future projects can explore a specific place and the ways in which UndocuQueers shape and are shaped by that space. For example, an examination of UndocuQueers’ affective attachments to the U.S. border might offer different geographic stories of the borderland that might contrast with existing literature.

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