

DEPARTMENT OF

Ethnic Studies

Spring Colloquium Series

William Perez

Assistant Professor of Education
Claremont Graduate University

April 12, 2010

3:00PM

CHASS Interdisciplinary Building North
Room 4043

“Exceptional Students, Marginal Lives: Civic Engagement and Academic Achievement Among Undocumented Latino Youths”

Approximately 3.2 million children and young adults under the age of 24 live in the United States without legal status. Latinos represent approximately 75% of this population. Prof.

Perez will discuss results from a mixed-method study that examined the academic achievement and civic engagement of college-eligible undocumented Latino students. Despite various risk factors such as socioeconomic difficulties, low parental education, fear of deportation, elevated feelings of societal rejection, unsupportive teachers and counselors, and the inability to access financial aid for college, undocumented students reported high academic success and civic engagement. Often students become involved in political activism and social issues that directly impact their lives such as poverty, educational access, and immigrant rights. Student narratives indicate that feelings of rejection and marginalization in broader society often serve as a key motivator for undocumented students civic engagement activities as they present an opportunity for self-empowerment. Policy implications of the continued legal marginalization of highly talented undocumented Latino students will be discussed.

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